

## **Ignite podcast: Sleepovers transcript**

Short musical introduction

Intro: Welcome to our Ignite podcast. Today we are joined by Lorraine, lead volunteer for girl experience, Beatrix a leader from Angus and Anne a leader from Edinburgh. They are going to be chatting about their experiences with sleepovers and the processes to follow.

Lorraine: The first steps we do when we are planning our sleepovers.

Anne: I think the first thing you need to do is you need you need to chat to your girls and make sure they would like to have a sleepover. The next thing is, you've got to then make sure that one of the event leadership team has their going away with module or is working towards their going away with module.

Anne: And the next step then would be to speak to your commissioner before organizing anything further. The commissioner will explain if you don't know what a REN is, you need to complete the part one of your residential event notification form and submit that to your commissioner and your county outdoor team. Your commissioner will tell you what the process is in your county and that needs to be sent in 12 weeks before you, your event with a risk assessment and an outline program.

Lorraine: Absolutely. And Beatrix, with your when you're planning a sleepover or even if it's one night, what do you look for as being part of your event leadership team?

Beatrix: So, for even for one night, I think a lot of the event leadership team is similar to, you know, if you're going away for a bit longer. So, you're going to have someone with of going away with qualification or working towards it.

Beatrix: So, they would be responsible for planning and finding people to fill the other roles on the team. And you'll need a first aider. So, someone who's done the first aid course and it's best to have someone else there who's also got first aid knowledge and a caterer. So, someone who's going to work out the menu by the food and they'll be responsible for the equipment and food hygiene at your sleepover, and then you'll probably need others, depending on how many girls you've got.

Beatrix: Coming on your sleepover. And it's important to make sure that we're maintaining the ratios as per, the ratios on the Girlguiding website as well.

Lorraine: Absolutely. I think the sometimes get caught out with that, I know with our unit we usually try and take more adults and we actually need just use that is that last minute emergency that somebody can't attend.

Lorraine: And you know, with that you can still safely run your event and all your checks have been done. It's not new, but relatively new to some of us who have been going away for a long, long time as a home contact and having the form signs in the need to be home contact, because sometimes we find it tricky finding a home contact, because we can't have somebody who has a family member and you know, they have to be a Girlguiding.

Lorraine: UK member and they can't be related to somebody on the sleepover. And sometimes even with bigger events, you find that quite tricky.

Beatrix: Yeah, I find locally we tend to try new, so we've got a district leaders Facebook page and a county leaders Facebook page. There're usually some requests on there, people looking for a home contact, and that's usually quite good because by using the county Facebook page, you're broadening that number of people.

Beatrix: who are probably not going to be coming to your unit sleepover, who are members, who you know, who could be your home contact.

Anne: Yeah, we have something similar. But also, I tend to have the Brownie leader who meets the same venue as our Guide unit, usually is my home contact, and then I'm her home contact when she's away.

Lorraine: Absolutely, we just need to remember to have to be a member.

Lorraine: And of course, anyone over the age of 18 and staying overnight has to have completed the recruitment and vetting procedure.

Lorraine: And yes, and of course, young leaders, when we have young leaders going away with us. We need to, they should always be supervised, and they're not included in the ratio. Is there anything else that young leaders we need to ask?

Anne: if they're going, a young leader attending a residential event overnight, they have to have completed the safe space training for 14-to-17-year olds

Lorraine: And of course, making sure that the parents and carers are always updated and fully aware of what's happening, and plans is always recommended.

Beatrix: Yeah, so we've done it a couple of different ways. We've done the sort of more traditional parents meeting; we've done it face to face and we've done it on Zoom as well. And I think it's a good chance for us to give, especially for the rainbow. Some of them, it's their first ever time away, kind of reassure the parents of all the plans and they know the menu and they can tell us "Oh my daughter won't eat whatever".

Beatrix: And it's kind of, for I think for us with the rainbows especially, it's useful for parents to know everything that's going on, but also an opportunity for them to tell us anything we might need to know.

Anne: And I think from my point of view with the guides, mobile phones is always an issue, and one parents meeting we had had.

Anne: Our discussion with the girls and vote as to whether or not they should take their mobile phones, which I didn't want them to do. But I thought we have to get the girls on board. And the parents of the two that were very vocal about why they had to bring their mobile phone. As soon as I mentioned it to the parents meeting, the parents said they're not taking their phones.

Anne: I think that's a great idea. No need to take the mobile phones with them. So that's another, another reason to get your parents on side, although it could have gone the other way. But generally, the parents have all agreed that it's a good idea that they leave their phones at home. And there's also the chance that they might they phone home their friends said something not very nice to them or they're too tired and they're in their bed and they phone home, and you know nothing about it till a parent arrives in the middle of the night saying "My daughter's distraught, she's having a terrible time".

Anne: And by this time the girl was fast asleep and quiet and the next morning quite happy.

Lorraine: So, yeah, absolutely. And of course, making sure that we use the information and consent forms so the parents. Quite timely I think as well, it is quite useful to have as much information as early as possible, would you agree?

Beatrix: Yeah. I think also I try and tell the parents, you know, the more information you give is the better.

Beatrix: There's nothing you're going to write on there that's going to stop them being able to come. But if we know of anything like, you know, food, you know, foods they won't eat or especially with the rainbows, maybe they wet the bed. Something like that is better, we know beforehand. So, I always encouraging them

to write everything possible on there it's better to know and then not need to know in the end and then be surprised, you know, closer to the time.

Lorraine: Yeah, absolutely. Definitely. Yeah, yeah. And I do the other thing I think sometimes a sticking point and I'm sure you've all heard it is the emergency contact not being available because there you know you've not been able to get a hold of the parent or the carer and because of taken advantage of being child free and perhaps going out for dinner.

Lorraine: But the emergency contact also for dinner with them and you know that that can sometimes be quite tricky trying to get across, you know, emergency contact should be contactable. Have you got any tips on how you get that over or do you just.

Beatrix: So, I usually make sure they know the phone numbers that we might potentially phone from because we've got some parents, if it's a number they don't recognise, they just don't pick up.

Beatrix: So, if they know that, then at least it's not, you know, that's not the reason they don't pick up and try to make sure that they you know, they don't use, like they try and pick other people as emergency contacts, not just mum and dad. There's also maybe an auntie or granny or, you know, kind of spreading that chance of someone picking up in out a little bit.

Lorraine: Yeah, that's quite good, I'm writing that one down, Beatrix, because I've not thought of that.

Lorraine: This is the fun bit we're heading on to finding out about the way we would do sleepovers and residential within our units. Anne you've done lots of different sleepovers as a leader, do you have a favourite?

Anne: I have done lots of sleepovers, it's really hard to choose one as a particular favourite.

Anne: But I think the sleepouts that we've done for, the sponsored sleepovers that we've done to raise money for homeless charities have been a bit different and a bit unusual compared to the normal camps and holidays. The first one we did with our unit; we went up the local campsite. The guides all brought their cardboard boxes, and we had a barbecue, then a campfire, and then they constructed their shelters,

Anne: Out of their cardboard boxes, but they all had lots of, they were told to bring lots of spare clothes with them, they had their sleeping bags, they had the camping mats all inside, and hat and gloves and all inside the big orange survival

bags. So even though, even if it rains, they're still dry. And also, to we made sure there was enough to accommodate an available if there was a sort of torrential downpour during the night.

Anne: And that gives the girls a real sense of achievement. That's real challenge for them while they're helping other people at the same time. So, it is just a bit a bit different and something that, it's not something you would repeat every year, but it is it can be good fun, not so much fun in the rain. And my only advice, if you are going to do such a sleepover, if it is very wet, abandon the idea of the cardboard.

Anne: Because at our last event, last November which the county one, my lasting memory of having had no sleep all night cold, tired, wet, pouring rain by this point, chucking wet, soggy cardboard into the back of a van was not a pleasant experience. So, but the other ones we've done when it's been, it's been dry. It's the girls have had fun constructing the shelters and it does give them a little bit of a taste of what it is like to be to be homeless.

Lorraine: Yeah, and for a good cause as well. Beatrix, you're a rainbow leader.

Beatrix: Yep.

Lorraine: And what are your top tips for taking rainbows on a sleepover?

Beatrix: I think with rainbows you have a huge range of experience with sleepovers when they go, so some of them will be super excited. They've maybe been on a few sleepovers to friends and family before, they kind of know a little bit more what it's like to sleep away from home.

Beatrix: And for some of them, they will never have, ever slept away from their mum and dad before. So, you're going to have this huge range in excitement levels when they get there, some are more excited, some are quite anxious. So, I would say you just need to go in quite open minded about that and have thought about what you're going to do about ones who are quite homesick because I don't think I've ever managed a rainbow sleepover without someone getting a little bit homesick at some point.

Beatrix: And it tends to be in the quieter moments, maybe just after they've eaten when we're sitting at the table or just when we're doing a story or a film before bed. So, it's kind of having a strategy of distraction as well, is what I find works best is, you know, can you come and help me do something, clear the table or, you know, rather than letting them sit and get upset trying to find something fun for them to do.

Beatrix: And even if it's just helping you load the dishwasher, for some of them, that's a novelty that they quite enjoy. And also, just being prepared for the fact, you know, some of them are tiny, your four- or five-year-olds. So spare clothes, spare pants, spare sleeping bag, just in case because you never know and making sure they know where you are at bedtime.

Beatrix: So, you know, they've gone to bed, making sure they know where to find you in the night if they do need anything as well.

Lorraine: What are the favourite themes that you've used on a sleepover?

Anne: I think we've had lots of different themes. There is, we've used the unofficial guide challenge badges as themes for some camps. And we had a superheroes one which is good fun.

Anne: We've had Harry Potter, we've had GDA, the guiding detective agency. We've had a pamper where we have just gone and with the natural face masks and hand massage and foot spas and then pizzas and pyjamas, I think that my Guides anyway love when we go away when we're indoors that the evening they just after tea or just when they arrive if it's just an evening sleepover, they get their jammies their onesies on.

Anne: We get pizzas delivered if we use the budget affords that and then we like to watch a film. We've had thinking day sleepovers as a district which has been good fun, where we've either gone in the evening for a walk in the dark and had our thinking day ceremony or got up early in the morning and not quite early enough to watch the sunrise.

Anne: But up for an early morning hike for lovely thinking day ceremony and then back for bacon rolls with international activities. The Guides often come up with their own, their own ideas of whatever is current at the time.

Lorraine: Yeah, so Beatrix?

Beatrix: So, so we've done lots, lots themed around films that are coming out at the time. So, we've done Mary Poppins.

Beatrix: What else have we done? We've done Little Mermaid and also, we've done, if it's been around, maybe like the Platinum Jubilee we've done through the decades, which the rainbows have no concept of time. So, they like to say so Beatrix, back in the olden days, like, you know, you were born in the Victorian times. And so yeah, I think with the rainbows they like anything kind of

Beatrice: We've done circus skills, we've done little cute spring animal themed and they like anything where there's going to be some craft, some outdoor activities and yeah, I think those are our favourites around movies.

Lorraine: Yeah, definitely. Of what's happening at the time isn't it.

Beatrice: Yeah.

Lorraine: In terms of menus, what you add and we'll start with you Beatrice.

Beatrice: So, I find with the rainbows again because some of them haven't been away before, I try and keep the menu on the safe side of things that we're fairly sure they're going to eat.

Beatrice: So, I tend to do for supper or for tea on the first night, make your own pizza. So, I'll just buy plain margarita pizzas and give them a variety of toppings and I make sure they know they are going to have to eat it before they get carried away, topping it with things they don't actually like, and then they put their own toppings on and then we heat them up in the oven and they have that to eat.  
Breakfast,

Beatrice: I usually go for things like cereals, toasts, the kind of things that they eat at home, you know, like safe food for them. They know they like it. And then other things we've done in the past have been like tomato pasta or macaroni because most of them eat that. And then I just do like vegetable sticks on the side, and they can pick away at those.

Lorraine: Yeah, and Anne what?

Anne: I think actually guides us probably much the same. And when I've done that, been I've also, though my Guide leader have also been to some Brownie sleepovers and pack holidays as well. And what we tend to do is come up with a menu choice and give them: What would you like for supper? You want hot chocolate, hot juice, soup?

Anne: You want hot dogs, muffins, donuts and give them various, a few choices. Sometimes we do get them to plan the whole menu. I think there's a couple of them, one of the skill builder badges, I think Be Well stage 4, I think part of it is to plan up a menu also for the Camp Skill Builder badge 4 it's planning a menu.

Anne: So, we sometimes incorporate that, but they do tend to, they tend to all like pasta and our sort of fall back is usually pasta with tomato sauce or pasta with a cheese sauce or stir fry. They'll tend to like stir fry where they can add extra bit in themselves. And then it depends also what the catering facilities are, because if

we're going just for a sleepover, it's often been in a Scout Hall which may just have quite a small kitchen and a small cooker, so you don't have ovens to cook pizzas for and for breakfast.

Anne: Again, if it's a small kitchen, one frying pan trying to do egggy bread as 30 is or pancakes is very time consuming. So normally for breakfast we would have a bakery if it's an indoor overnight would be a bacon roll or a veggie sausage roll or the girls like, the Guides, tend to like croissants, pancakes and fruit with lots of squishy cream.

Anne: So, which is maybe not most healthy for breakfast. But they are away and there're having fun?

Lorraine: Absolutely. Absolutely. How do when you got girls? I know we have in the past have been more vegetarian going, than non-vegetarians. We have vegetarian weekends which went down a storm. Surprisingly. We discussed it with the girls beforehand and mostly they were up for it.

Lorraine: So yeah, that worked really well for us.

Anne: They also find they can keep the cost down. If you're vegetarian

Lorraine: and yeah, yeah.

Beatrix: I've also found, I've had parents in the past say to me, she definitely won't eat that. So, I think. Right, okay, instead of doing tomato pasta we'll have some plain pasta for her. And then because everyone else is eating it, they eat it too.

Beatrix: So sometimes you can be surprised.

Lorraine: How do you include the girls in the planning? And we'll go back to Anne for that one.

Anne: For our last, for our last unit sleepover, we chose leaders choose or six of these unofficial challenge badges, and then we gave one to each patrol of an outline and a picture of it. So, they had to read through it and decide which one they liked the sound of.

Anne: And if they liked the sound of the one, they'd been given, they then had to pitch to the other Guides to choose that one. And some of them decided they didn't really like the, what they'd been given, so they didn't say much about it. And eventually we chose the chopstick & courage, the Year of the Dragon, which was a really good theme, in incorporated, particular this time of Chinese New Year and based on the Mulan story.



Anne: So other times we just asked the girls to come up with ideas. It was difficult after COVID because none of the Guides we heard had ever been away before, so they didn't really understand what the concept of a theme was. So, but once the girls have been away and they realise how we try and tie the menu in the program into the theme, and it's nice that they get to give them a badge at the end of the weekend as well, so.

Lorraine: Yeah, yeah. Beatrix, how easy is it to involve the rainbows?

Beatrix: So I think with the rainbows you can definitely still get them to vote on a theme. It just takes, you know, you need to narrow it down to maybe two or three options and then let them vote on which one they want then and make sure they know that, you know, how a vote works.

Beatrix: Because, you know, sometimes they think, well, I picked this one, so why are we not doing this one? And they just explaining that the majority wins. I think in terms of activities, I usually have them more involved in picking the theme and then the activities are a bit more of a surprise. But we will talk about, you know, do you want to do more crafts? Do you want to do more outdoor games?

Beatrix: So that they have some input into the activities, even if they don't pick the exact things. But yeah, it's a little bit tricky making sure they know how voting works.

Lorraine: Yeah, I can imagine. I know, I know with our unit, our last one was a bit that Christmas theme chosen by the girls because it was December and they also chose that they would like to have full Christmas dinner, which in theory sounded fabulous.

Lorraine: In reality. I never do that again.

Beatrix: There's reason we do it once a year.

Lorraine: Yeah, absolutely. So I think all it leaves for us to do it is just for I think our chat this evening has certainly, I have certainly taken some notes here of handy tips and and I've been going away for a long time and I picked up a couple of things in this evening on our chat.

Lorraine: So I'd like to thank Anne and Beatrix for their time.

Outro: Thank you for joining us, we hope that you enjoyed it. We would love to hear your thoughts, so please fill out the feedback form on the Ignite Hub webpage.