



**DISCRIMINATION? - DISABILITY? - DISRUPTIVE?
WHO CAN JOIN OR REMAIN IN SCOUTS ?**

Leader Support Guide

There is an ever increasing number of parent complaints that we are discriminating against their children wanting to join Scouts. This year these have been mostly to do with physical and mental issues, three or four have been associated with Leaders approach to religion/faith.

RELIGION/FAITH is a concern. The concern occurs when Leaders in non-sponsored Groups see it as their duty to promote their beliefs to our youth members, in direct contrast to their undertaking to Scouts when they applied for an appointment. If these leaders feel they are no longer able to follow their original undertaking to Scouts they need to assess their ethical position and volunteer for work with an organisation that allows them to follow the calling they have. *(The undertaking they made is in the Code of Conduct, (4. Adults in Scouting do not use the Movement to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with Scouting principles.) they should also read LSG 35 Duty to God in Scouting (August 2008).)*

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL issues are the more common cause for complaints, especially when a child is excluded for what Leaders describe as their 'DISABILITY'

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR is also a common cause of complaint in that parents believe their children are being deprived of effective scouting whilst Leaders deal with just one or two children almost every week.

In the past this problem was solved when the parents were informed that it was not the disability at all, but mainly a problem with the safety of both their child and others.

Membership should be open to all young people providing they meet the standard criteria for membership.

The intention is that a risk assessment of sorts is carried out on every child, depending on how he/she is fitting in the first weeks. This could be simply just a passing thought in the leaders mind as to how well a Scout fits in, or if needed, a more detailed one.

It does not matter whether the child has lost a limb, head, brain, is ADD /ADHD, uncontrollable, simply spoilt, needs a good ****, or heaven forbid very normal, they all should be considered as individuals and on their own merits.

All organizations have rules, they have codes often to do with dress and conduct and is the basic criteria which a member is required to adhere to, the same applies to Scouts. *Those who don't meet the criteria should be directed to a Special Needs or Lones Scout Group or suggest there are other organizations they could find. Today there are more and more special groups starting to cater for all*

Simply put, the admission criteria, we basically use and should continue to use is not based on 'disability' but on a series of reasonable and fair measures.

Parents must be interviewed before placement, and not just allowed to drop their child off.

The suggested criteria for a risk assessment of prospective member should be:

Firstly:

- 1 Prepared to make the promise.
- 2 Prepared to follow the dress and conduct code.

Secondly:

It is not uncommon for leaders to be confronted with a youth member who displays unacceptable behaviour and despite their efforts it continues, ruining the smooth running of meetings and discouraging Leaders and other youth members.

From time to time parents insist their child, who is challenged in some way, has a right to be in Scouts and not to admit the child is discrimination.

The answer in both is that a risk assessment **MUST** be done and noted. In conducting such a risk assessment you could be guided by one or more of the examples below and come to a firm decision with other leaders and, if necessary District and/or Region.

There is a responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure we provide a reasonable safe environment for youth members to develop.

1. Each child should be judged as an individual and on his/her own abilities.

No matter what the issue there are different levels of severity in all problems

EG. There are epileptics who fit continuously during a day and those who fit infrequently and who in turn make good members. Their fellow Scouts becoming expert in handling occasional epileptic episodes and ensuring they never let them man the belay in rock climbing etc.

2. A child not present any appreciable increase in risk to other members or themselves. (Especially with some disorders (eg Tourettes) there is a reduced awareness of danger and consequences)

"He only loses his temper and hits people occasionally BUT PLEASE SCOUTING WOULD BE GOOD FOR HIM"

"Why do you worry she runs away from things she doesn't like, she always comes back BUT PLEASE SCOUTING WOULD BE GOOD FOR HER"

"I know. She will never stop when her father or I tell either BUT PLEASE SCOUTING WOULD BE GOOD FOR HIM"

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY? IS IT FAIR TO THE OTHERS ?

3. That there are sufficient appointed leaders, who are adequately trained and experienced in the section, to deal with the numbers and issues surrounding all the youth members.
4. The leaders would not be required to deal with more personal or intimate issues such as toileting and a dressing.

It might be that a leader agrees to undertake these tasks but experience over the years is that they quickly tire of becoming a proxy nurse and we lose the leader.

There was a Thalidomide child with 9" arms who couldn't toilet himself. His parents never stayed in the hall but if they felt there was a need the mother would sit in the Scouters Den and read or Dad would sit in his car and listen to CDs and the radio. In camp they would camp nearby and their son would go to their camp when needed. Interesting in Cubs and Scouts the other members would help him change into swimmers or pyjamas etc. At no time did his parents comment on the meetings or any changes.

5. The child should be able to work in with the six, patrol or other, in a way that typifies the Scouting and Patrol principles.
6. That they do not present a significant negative model to other members.
7. That the parent appreciates that the first six-week trial period is one where both sides assess the suitability of Scouts for this child and there should be a preliminary assessment after the third week, this is so that the parent knows in what way the child is coping and contributing in a positive or negative way.

8. That attendance in Scouting would not require any appreciable change in meetings and overall methods of Scouting such that it is to the detriment of the other youth members.

It is important to note that in assessing the support mechanisms or modifications that might be necessary you consult the Regional Leaders appropriate to the Section and even guidance from parents and others on what they think might be practical and necessary without any drastic changes..

9. That they do not require a parent to be always present in the Troop meetings.
(Jamborees and long standing camp etc are different)

The difficulty here is that parents often become preoccupied with their child's condition and make demands on the running of Scouts to the detriment of the section. Non invasive parents and carers can help but great discretion is required. This has caused significant problems over the years and should only be considered and then on a trial basis, if at all. (see point 4 above)

Parents of children could be asked to be helpers in the Joeys and Cub sections. However, because of the Patrol System in the Scout and Venturer section is incompatible with parents controlling things. When required, parents must be on a rotating roster with other parents, and then simply to provide two deep leadership or a female presence. They often help with test passing and providing for a second person when there is only one leader. Any person there for every meeting is beyond our direct control and should therefore be trained and appointed as an Associate Leader, this way we are able to have them police checked.

SPECIAL NOTES.

Over the years Scouts have had a number of 'special' Groups to cover different disorders.

Whilst we still have some of these, many have tended to disappear for three reasons.

- Firstly the lack of specially dedicated volunteers to train as leaders
- Secondly , that with the passage of time the public's acceptance of differences in people has encouraged a large number of special organizations have developed, which now cater for people in a specific way that take into consideration their abilities.
- The lack of applicants. Insufficient to form such a Group in a specific location.

2.25 Youth Membership of a Group (from O &I 'Group Organisation' about page 122)

2.25.1 The admission of any boy or girl rests with the GL but in normal cases will be delegated to the Leader in charge of the Section concerned who, in the case of a Scout or Venturer Scout, will act in consultation with the Troop Council or the members of the Venturer Scout Unit as the case may be. The admission to a Rover Crew rests with the members of the Crew

*2.25.2 A youth member cannot be a member of more than one Group except in the case of a School, College or University Group or Rover Crew (see para **Error! Reference source not found.**).*

2.25.3 In circumstances where the behaviour of a youth member is considered to be unacceptable or in breach of the Scout Law, the Leader in charge of the Section may suspend the youth member, after consultation with the Pack, Troop, or Unit Council where appropriate. The suspension must be regarded as a temporary measure.

2.25.4 The Group Leader (and in the case of a Sponsored Group, the Sponsoring Authority) must be notified of such suspension without undue delay. The parents of the youth member must also be advised and the reasons for the suspension given.

2.25.5 The approval of the GL is necessary in any case of dismissal of a youth member. The GL of a sponsored Group must first consult the Sponsoring Authority.

2.25.6 In any case of dismissal, the youth member has a right of appeal to the RC (Ops), and the Regional Executive Committee may appoint a small Committee with full power to act for this purpose. The youth member in question must be given reasonable opportunity to attend the Committee's hearing of his/her appeal and state his/her case. In the case of Sponsored Groups, the provisions of para **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. **of this chapter must be observed.****