



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Including disabled young members

Good practice guidance

Being inclusive of all girls is important to us so this guidance is to help you as a volunteer ensure that we can welcome disabled girls and volunteers into guiding.

Follow these simple steps to make sure you're including disabled young members and doing your best for them.

At a glance

- Talk openly and honestly to the young person about their impairment
- Work with the parent or carer as allies, if applicable
- Explain that we are a charity and our services and activities are delivered by volunteers
- Keep communications open with the parent or carers
- Keep a record of conversations, what's planned and agreed - for you and the parent or carers
- Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions - get informed
- If you need to recruit volunteers to support, be specific about the skills and role
- Make sure you put any reasonable adjustments in place before a new member starts
- Review plans and reasonable adjustments with the parent or carers to check how things are going
- Always make plans based on what the young member can do
- Don't forget you can get funding from HQ for disability support

Get informed

Talk to the person, and the parents/carers if a young member, and ask about their disability and how it affects them. Work as allies with them - they are the experts and may have creative solutions to share.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is thinking they shouldn't ask questions about what support or adjustments someone might need to participate. If you don't ask you won't know how you can adapt things. Ask your questions sensitively and collaboratively.

Focus on what they can do and not on what they can't.

They'll be able to help you with suggestions on adaptations, adjustments and possible things to do, so work together on things.

Questions you could ask are:

- These are the kind of things we do in Rainbows... what do we need to think about so you can join in?
- We'd like to take the guide unit camping, which involves these things... what do we need to have in place so you can come along with us?
- If you are getting anxious or upset would you like a quiet space to yourself? What would that look like?

Get any agreed adjustments in place as soon as possible, so the new member can quickly and easily have safe access to guiding.

Make sure that the parent or carer is aware that we are a charity and that all our activities are run by volunteers, and you may not be able to meet the same support standards as the young person's school, for example.

There may be times where you can't reasonably make adjustments for some young people because of cost or need for additional volunteers etc. Every effort should be made if it is reasonable to do so. But some young people may have needs that can't be accommodated, and this is ok.

If you are concerned that you can't meet the needs of a disabled member, you can contact the infoteam@girlguiding.org.uk for more support.

Get planning

With some young members you might need to use one of our care plans to help with conversations and to plan what support they may need. You can find more about these on the Girlguiding website.

It's ok to ask parents and carers if they want, or are able, to help with supporting their child in unit meetings. If they can't or think it would be good for them to have some independence, chat about what needs to be in place, for example one-to-one support, specialist equipment, sign language interpreters, before a member joins the unit.

Ask if they have any suggestions about where this support could come from. How does it work at their school or elsewhere? If you think it will take time to get things in place, say so and come up with a plan together. Can they support in the interim to get the young person involved straight away?

There may be situations where a young person needs to slowly build up their involvement with a unit, because of their impairment or behavioural needs. This is ok. How it happens should be agreed with the parents and young person, and you should keep the parents informed about how it's going. Plan how you'll approach this together as allies and agree review points where you can check in on how things are going.

Remember, not all disabled members will need adaptations or adjustments.

If you are taking the unit away or deciding what to do in unit meetings this term, get the young member, and parents or carers if applicable, involved in planning for things - and do it right at the start of your planning.

Don't book venues and activities before talking to a disabled young member. You should be getting all young members involved in unit activity planning, so ask people what they want to do and check that this is going to work for everyone.

Where possible choose inclusive activities that everyone can take part in, but where that isn't possible, make sure there is an alternative. For example, rock climbing or photography. Not everyone likes rock climbing, so having an alternative available means more girls can have a choice.

Use the inclusive risk assessment to make sure that you can all be confident that everything's been covered.

Get ready

If you agree with the parent/carer to bring in a volunteer to provide specific support, you can recruit someone with the extra skills you need. It's ok to be specific, and you are more likely to get the person you need if you're clear about the role. For example:

- *NEEDED: Volunteer with BSL level 4 qualification to help at weekly Brownie unit meetings. Is this you?*

You could ask the parents to help you advertise locally through connections they might have. Search for the unit helper role description on the Girlguiding website to find your ideal person.

If you agree that the support is minimal, a buddy may be the right thing. They could come from a Ranger unit or a school or college. Search for our buddy role description on our website.

If you need specialist equipment or need to pay a little more for trips, we have our fund for members with disabilities available from HQ. Search our website to check how to apply. You might also be able to get funding locally too so search online for other opportunities.

Parents, carers or other volunteers may know of local funding available, for example from your local authority, or where to buy specialist equipment. Remember it's not the parent's responsibility to pay for any adjustments.

Take a look at our online guidance by searching our site for 'Including all'. There's more information there about making reasonable adjustments and supporting people with different needs and impairments. Also remember that there might be a charity local to you that supports people with specific impairments, so they might be a good connection to make too.

It is always ideal to provide a space for a new young member in their preferred unit. Making people travel because of a lack of support or confidence is not advisable and should only ever be a last resort. Following these steps should help any unit leadership team to be able and ready to welcome disabled young members.

If you are supporting a disabled volunteer in your unit or district/division then this guidance is a good start to making sure that they get involved and can participate in guiding safely too.

Remember that every situation will be different. People's impairments will vary in complexity and severity, and some disabled people might not need any support or adaptation. Approach each case in person-centred way with the focus on working together.

Further support

If you need any help with a specific case, you can talk to your commissioner or local special needs/inclusion advisor. You can also contact the info team nationally infoteam@girlguiding.org.uk

Disability confidence training is available if there's several units or leadership teams in an area who all require a bit more knowledge. Contact your local training coordinator to find out more.

Remember, any new volunteer will need to do recruitment checks if regularly helping!

The Girlguiding website contains a lot of useful resources on supporting disabled members. You can search Girlguiding.org.uk to find more about -

- Care plans
- Inclusive risk assessment
- Fund for members with disabilities
- Including all guidance
- Reasonable adjustments