



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

*London and South East  
England*

**Stay with Girlguiding**



**Girlguiding LaSER**

**Stay with Girlguiding**



*With thanks to Girlguiding Midlands who developed  
the initial Stay with Girlguiding resource.*



## Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for all you are doing to grow guiding in your area! There is a lot of great work going on across the region.

We are delighted to provide you with 'Stay with Girlguiding', a pack full of ideas for growth, focusing on the retention of both young members and volunteers. We hope that you can use this pack in your district, division or county to grow our membership and retain those who are already involved.

Your role as a commissioner is vital in growing Girlguiding LaSER and we hope that you can find ways to use this resource - feel free to adapt the activities so that they best suit the needs of your area.

Each district that trials at least three activities within the pack will be able to send off for a special 'Stay with Girlguiding' badge for every adult in their district. The badge is free, we just ask you to pay postage and packaging. The order form is contained within the pack and also available to download from our website along with the full resource. We will be offering the badge until stock runs out.

We are really keen to hear your growth and retention success stories, so please share them with us! Send us your stories and photos (with correct photo permissions) to [info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk](mailto:info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk).

Good luck with your growth and retention ideas and we hope you enjoy using the pack!

Best wishes

Sally Christmas  
Chief Commissioner

Tora Shand and Helen  
Beecher Bryant

Lead Volunteers Growth &  
Retention

# Resource sections:



Unit Management



Retention



PR and Marketing



Value your Volunteer

# Unit management

Effectively managed units and districts are essential to retention as they not only ensure that girls have a clear journey through their guiding experience, but also that volunteers join forces to share the workload.

## *Key Search Terms:*

- **Membership Systems**
- **Transfer • Waiting List**

*Information online: Membership administration, Mapping toolkit, Handling personal data, Using GO - our membership system.*

## Data

How often do leaders in your district check that their unit's GO data is correct? Print out copies of each unit's data to:

- Take to district meetings so that leaders can understand the importance of keeping records up-to-date.
- Provide you with the bigger picture of which units have capacity for more girls and who needs more adult support.

A secure way to carry out an update to the girl's data is to annually issue parents with a paper copy of their GO record for completion and return.

Put these in a sealed envelope and hand them directly to parents where possible so that there's no risk of current information falling into the wrong hands. It can also be another opportunity to remind parents about Gift Aid and volunteering.

Remember to destroy any forms and information once you have finished using it and delete any downloaded files from your computer.

## Anniversary badges

Continuous membership is essential for achieving anniversary badges, so make sure a girl's membership doesn't get interrupted, for example when she moves to the next section, or around the time of annual subscriptions.

### Here's an interesting fact:

If a girl was removed from GO each summer during her journey from Rainbow to Ranger, she would lose one year of her total time in guiding.

Consider adopting a district approach to transferring girls between sections so that all girls have the same opportunity to gain anniversary badges.

Encourage units to think about choosing a termly date on which to give out anniversary badges, for example at a special event such as World Thinking Day or the beginning or end of term, to make managing anniversaries easier.

Why not discuss in your district or division meetings how anniversary badges are presented and how the girls enjoy receiving them?



## Transfers

What happens when a girl moves unit? Consider a district method of handling transfers so that records can be found easily and moved to the correct unit. This may also involve working with local districts.

Moving girls on GO becomes much simpler if you know their membership number, so make sure parents or girls have a record of it.



## Support

GO can be overwhelming for some, so consider introducing local teams to support the management of GO. For example, could leaders ask a unit administrator to input programme information?

Or could you, as commissioner, delegate the management of volunteer enquiries to one member of the district team, while another analyses retention data?

For more ideas about supporting volunteers, have a look at the Value your volunteer section.

If you have any specific GO queries, or for guidance on a topic not covered here, try searching 'Membership system' on the Girlguiding website or 'phone the Membership Systems helpline on 0800 999 2016.



## Know your neighbours

Make sure leaders know which local units their girls can move up to, where and when they meet, and who their main contact is.

Make it as easy as possible for girls to stay in Girlguiding when they move by providing parents with a list or flyer (paper or electronic) of all the unit options so they can choose the unit that's right for their daughter. Parents will then need to tell their daughter's leader which unit they want to join so that the leader can record their choice on GO. Take care regarding GDPR and the information you include in the list.

If there are long waiting lists in your area, you may want to decide on a district or division approach to getting names on waiting lists for moving between sections and for signposting enquiries within your own section (see the Retention section). Use the 'Total unit capacity' feature of GO to help you see which units have available spaces.

At a district level, mapping local units, their meeting times and capacity using online tools such as Google Maps may help with placing new enquiries to the most suitable unit according to their postcode, as well as quickly seeing alternative options if their preferred unit is already full.

Many districts share borders or even towns, so also think about cross-district collaboration when moving girls on to the next unit, trying to manage a long waiting list, or dealing with new enquiries.



## Member journey

As a district, track a typical journey through sections to spot possible gaps in membership. For example, if there are 3 Brownie units but only 1 Guide unit, this may limit the number of girls that can move to the next section. Although not all Brownies will become Guides, it is important to plan ahead for retention and growth opportunities taking unit capacities into consideration.

It's worth looking at this pre-emptively so that leadership teams can be found and units opened in readiness for the increasing numbers.

Be aware of local planning developments as these are often fantastic opportunities to open units and grow guiding in a new area. Other areas may no longer need a unit, where the population has aged for example, so you could consider moving units away.

Changes in meeting place, day or time are radical but sometimes necessary to attract more girls and support transition to the next section. Perhaps another well-attended club takes place on the same day, or a meeting place poses inclusivity issues.



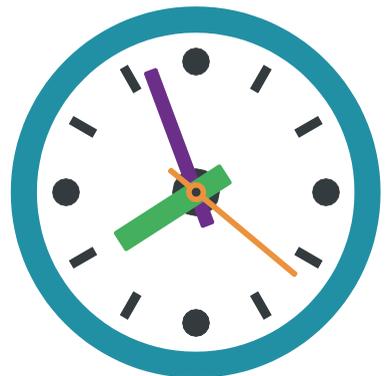
## Waiting lists

Encourage transition by putting girls on the next section's waiting list in advance so they don't have to wait for a place. Leaders should ask girls' parents for permission to add them to the next section's waiting list around a term after they join the unit.

If a girl leaves she will be invited to join the next section when she becomes eligible, hopefully bringing her back into guiding (see the Retention section).

Make sure that leaders are regularly maintaining, updating and using their waiting lists when inviting new members to join.

Although this sounds like common sense, it's surprising how many waiting lists across the region contain girls that are now too old to join simply because they haven't been contacted or moved on.



# Retention

Try these ideas for retaining the girls and young women in your area and helping them through the difficult time of transitioning. Often transition in guiding can happen at the same time as changes in school, so providing stability and continuity is particularly important. Retaining our volunteers and all their experience is vital too.

2

### Key Search Terms:

- Checklists
- Transition • Retention

**Information online:** *Doing our best checklists for The Five Essentials, Safety and Safeguarding, and Making Guiding Happen.*

# Retention

## The guiding family

Have a district diary of events held by the commissioner that everyone can add to. It allows leaders to coordinate locally to:

- Arrange for a leader to take another unit to an event when a leader isn't available to take them herself.
- Share the costs of transport, or the costs of the event itself if more units attend.
- Raise awareness of local events.

Collaborate locally to ensure the quality and consistency of the programme across units. The aim of the programme is personal development and progression.

- Learning and developing is much more fun done together. Have local trainings or 'airing and sharing' evenings.
- Visit other units to see how they do things and manage their unit.
- Think about unit teams and the skills they could share.
- Bring young leaders together at intervals to share ideas and feel part of a wider group.

Make use of the checklists online for:  
*The Five Essentials, Safety and Safeguarding, and Making Guiding Happen* (see the tips box for key search terms).



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## Transition

Invite girls along to an event or meeting taking place in the section they will move to next. Perhaps this could be a Promise ceremony or a special evening that's been organised.

Invite the Guides to run a meeting for the Brownies to give them a taste of what it might be like in Guides. Remind the Guides that activities need to be age appropriate if they're involving the whole Brownie unit and that they can use skills builder activities or UMAs for inspiration. They can also tell the younger girls about all the exciting opportunities they have access to at Guides.

Most girls leave Guides around the age of 12 ½ so encourage leaders to talk to their girls this age about the opportunities to join Rangers in your area or become a young leader. They can then ask parents to give them permission to add their daughter's name to the Ranger waiting list on GO. If they're on GO, leaders can contact girls when they reach 14 years of age, even if they have already left Guides. It gives us the chance to move them on or bring them back in, either as Rangers or young leaders.

Leaders can work together to put girls' names on GO waiting lists for the next section with parents' permission. This can be between all sections. Once a girl has settled into Rainbows (around a term), unit leaders should ask for parents' permission to add the Rainbow to the Brownie waiting list and so on. Providing the details have been added to GO for the purpose of the girl joining the next section, we can contact them at transition time to offer a place. It gives us several opportunities to move girls on or bring them back into Girlguiding.

2

# Retention

Encourage leaders to visit local units of the section below where possible to show girls that Girlguiding is bigger than just their section and to give them a familiar face if they move up to that unit. It also helps leaders build a supportive local network and maintains links for girls later becoming Rainbow or Brownie helpers.

As they visit their connected sections/units, leaders can share information about what girls have achieved using skills builders. Knowing this will help girls settle quickly into the next stage of their development journey.

Encourage girls to achieve their Gold Award and celebrate it in a special way. It will give them opportunities to discover more about their next section and you could involve their next leader in the celebration.

Communication is key to successful transition across all sections: communication between leaders, between both leaders and parents, and of course between leaders and the girl preparing to move. Although the skills builders give them consistency in what they will do along the way, they still need to be carefully prepared for the changes they will experience.

Talk to them about what it will be like being a Brownie or Guide. Ask the next section for a 'buddy' to take care of their recruit when she starts, and introduce them when they attend a meeting or event. Take the opportunity to talk about new concepts and terms: Brownie sixes becoming Guide patrols, sixers becoming patrol leaders, and so on.

As with retention, be prepared to share your ideas in your district and create a consistent approach to provide the best possible end to one section and start of the next for every girl moving on.

2

# Retention

## Training

It's vital for volunteers to get all the right messages and information when they join us, so training and development opportunities are essential.

Make sure volunteers know they're not alone in Girlguiding. We have training available to provide the required skills, e.g. First Response, Safeguarding, GDPR, as well as lots of programme support to guide them through their meetings.

Walking into a room alone can be daunting, especially when everyone there seems to know someone, so encourage new volunteers to attend trainings with their unit team, another district member or take them with you. You could also consider informal meetings or gatherings to welcome new volunteers and help them to build a network.

Organise an 'airing and sharing' event in your district for everyone to join in, new and experienced. This kind of informal environment makes it easy to share ideas and best practice and to ask lots of questions. You could invite a local leader to run a session on GO, or on the programme for a small group, or one-to-one. It's also a great opportunity for new volunteers to meet fellow leaders and make new friends.

2



## Resources

Girlguiding has many great text-based resources available online and in local shops. They cover the programme, qualifications, policy and more. County and region websites are also a great source of information, as too are our fellow leaders!

In addition, leaders in the area may have equipment, materials and other resources they would be happy to share.

- Create (or find out if someone already has) a list of resources available to borrow in your district, division, or county. Make a note of whether these need to be booked in advance. Share the list with leaders in your area.
- Take new volunteers through some examples of resources available and show them where to look for more.

2



# PR and marketing

Shouting out about Girlguiding is the best way to ensure that we have enough volunteers to enable all girls to move to the next section and to stop units from closing. There are plenty of ways to spread the word in your area from using the national recruitment campaign posters to sharing social media content. Use these ideas to help boost volunteer numbers so that more girls can stay in guiding.

3

## Key Search Terms:

- Making Guiding Happen
- Marketing • Growth
- Recruitment

*Information online: Recruitment Campaign Guide; Our Plan for membership growth and retention.*

# PR and marketing

## Talk about Girlguiding

The best people to encourage volunteers into Girlguiding are those already involved. Encourage leaders to share their passion and enthusiasm for the organisation with those around them. You never know who you might inspire to join.

Find leaders in your district who are confident in talking about the organisation and who seem to enthuse and inspire those around them easily. How do they do it? What do they say? Ask if they'll run a short session at a district meeting to support and encourage other leaders to follow suit.

Remind leaders that sharing their stories and enthusiasm in daily life can bring rewards too.

3



# PR and marketing

## Social Media

Social media has two functions :-

### For private communication:

- For members to chat, share, encourage, and enthuse.
- For unit leaders to share information with parents quickly and effectively.

### For sharing a positive image with the general public:

- To provide a means to promote the exciting opportunities available as a Girlguiding member.
- To generate interest and involvement in the wider public.

If you use social media in your guiding activities, make sure you follow Girlguiding's guidelines available online for setting up and using social media, setting up groups on Facebook and staying safe online.



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## Marketing and recruitment resources

Marketing guidelines and campaign materials such as postcards, posters and flyers are available from Girlguiding. They can be ordered free from the official Girlguiding online shop or alternatively, contact your local volunteer shop. Locate your nearest at [www.girlguidingshop.co.uk/find-a-volunteer-shop](http://www.girlguidingshop.co.uk/find-a-volunteer-shop).

You can download images in the Online Design Centre and create local campaigns. You can borrow Girlguiding banners and other recruitment resources from your county to make a big statement at an event. Why not fundraise for district marketing materials?

Look online for help with recruitment, for example the downloadable Recruitment Campaign Guide which tells you all you need to know to plan and run a successful campaign.

Alongside Stay with Girlguiding is a booklet listing all of the recruitment and publicity resources available from Girlguiding. It is a useful inventory of what is available to use at any recruitment event. Remember to check if local districts or divisions have items you could borrow. All counties in our region have a set of recruitment materials available to borrow.

The resource Our Plan for membership growth and retention is also downloadable from the Girlguiding website and helps you to identify the current situation within your area, where it wants to be and how to get there.



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## Recruitment activity

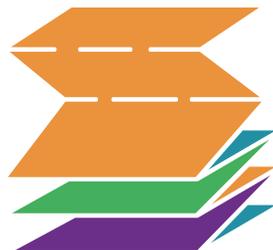
Regular emails from Girlguiding, your region, county and division will give you the most up-to-date information about forthcoming events and campaigns. Have a read to see what's going on that might benefit your local area.

Talk within your district and decide on an organised approach to displaying posters and flyers to best effect. For example, you could leave old guiding magazines in the GP surgery or dentist waiting room.

Look at upcoming local and community events and see whether any offer opportunities for advertising and recruitment or girl participation. Perhaps events are taking place in an area where volunteers are most needed, or happening on days of the week when units need volunteers? Is WiFi access available so that you can encourage people to sign up on the spot? The best advertisement is getting out and about with your girls and letting people see them having a great time.

Units don't always need extra leaders, they often need help with particular tasks. Before any campaign, plan so that you're clear about what you need help with and then you'll be ready to offer opportunities for those who would like to help but don't want to be unit leaders (see Recruitment Campaign Guide).

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# PR and marketing

## 'Invite a parent' week

Quite often, parents are unaware of all the fun their daughters have at their units, and they are also a group of people who are likely to offer help and become a volunteer with the organisation.

As a district or division, why not try 'bring a parent' week? Agree a week that suits your area and then ask each unit to invite parents along to their normal unit meeting to take part in the activities with their daughters.

During the evening, the commissioner or one of the leaders tells the visitors about guiding in their area (how many units there are, how many girls benefit each week from the opportunities that guiding offers, and so on) and it's an opportunity to ask if anyone wants to help!

Make clear that it can be flexible, for example helping at a unit once a term or becoming a unit treasurer.

For unit leaders there's no extra time commitment, they just need to plan an activity that is fun for girls and parents, like a team quiz. Parents will see the fun their daughters have and learn a bit more about what happens in the unit and how they could help.

3

Try this in  
your area!

## Stay with Girlguiding

# Value your volunteer

Volunteers are the key to everything we do as an organisation, so we need to make sure that new volunteers are welcomed and supported. Making sure that existing volunteers feel valued is also key to retaining them and in turn, to retaining girls. This section contains lots of ideas for keeping all of our volunteers, including young leaders, happy and in guiding.

### Key Search Terms:

- Volunteer
- Warm Welcome • Flexible

Information online: *Building your team, Commissioners' checklist, Recruiting and retaining volunteers, Volunteer roles in guiding.*

4

# Value your volunteer

## Young leaders

Young leaders are our leaders of the future. They need access to training and development opportunities and support networks to help them develop and thrive.

Talk to young leaders about their future role, what section do they want to work with? What unit role would they be happiest in? Avoid making assumptions based on their current unit.

Young leaders' lives change significantly as they move through their study and on to university or working life. If they move away, help them by finding units in their new local area with whom to link up. You can do this on GO by using the Transfer tab and inserting the postcode of the new area above the map to expand the search. Something familiar may be a comfort as they adjust to their new independent world so stay in touch while they're away and include them in their former unit on their return for holidays.

Set up a young leader network. Hold half-termly meetings for young leaders to get to know each other, share ideas and support each other, and to find out about opportunities open to them.



# Value your volunteer

## New volunteers

To grow guiding we need more volunteers. Being a new volunteer can be a daunting experience, so here are a few tips to help you maximise your new volunteers' potential:

- Introduce each volunteer to several people so that they have a support network in place from the start and different personalities to get to know. Choose people who can provide support across different aspects of Girlguiding.
- Encourage volunteers to visit different units and sections so that they can identify the role, section and unit that best suits them.
- Stay in touch with your new volunteers. It may be that they haven't settled into a particular unit, so you may need to help them to find one that suits them better. Being a familiar point of contact will help them to feel comfortable reaching out for support.
- Not all new volunteers will want to be or are ready to be leaders straight away. They may want to help in the background, or on an ad-hoc basis. Perhaps they can help with fundraising, unit administration or look after the unit's accounts (see Roles in units page).

4

# Value your volunteer

- Offer to take your volunteer to their first district meeting, introduce them and explain the agenda items as you go through, avoiding jargon as far as possible or being careful to explain it. Perhaps find a leader who could bring them next time.
- Talk about training opportunities. Some people think they lack the skills and don't have the confidence to be a leader. However with a good mentor, training and support over time they may surprise themselves.
- Take time to talk about the local and wider structure of Girlguiding. When your volunteer has chosen the role that they feel best suits what they're looking for, request a mentor. Keep in touch with your volunteer to make sure that the mentor relationship is working well. If in doubt, seek advice.
- You may find a buddy system beneficial for your volunteers. Matching people with similar ages and backgrounds may be a starting point. For example, matching two volunteers who both have young children, or are both in university, may give them a common understanding and perspective.



4

# Value your volunteer

## Division and district teams

Share the load by breaking district and division roles into tasks and dividing the tasks. For example, have a unit visitor, a minutes' writer, or an events team.

Have social events to help build relationships within districts and divisions, building up support networks for volunteers and for you.

## District meetings

Make a note of key discussion points from division meetings and email them to leaders prior to the meeting. This gives them time to develop their views, allows them the option to send in their thoughts if they can't be there, and it may reduce meeting times!

Consider including leaders who can't physically attend by using Skype.

Reduce the meeting time to encourage more to attend.

Vary meeting days and venues to make it as fair as possible for all to attend.



4

# Value your volunteer

## Thank you

It's really important to thank volunteers and to recognise their contribution, but also think about how leaders in your district are acknowledged more informally for their contributions and dedication to the organisation.

You can thank volunteers for their hard work in many ways: the giving of a small gift; going to their unit to say thank you; an afternoon tea, perhaps with a wall made from good things that have been said about them; a surprise party, or by sending out Christmas, World Thinking Day or National Volunteer Week cards.

## Awards

Find out what awards are available nationally, regionally and locally and what the criteria is for each award.

Present service awards in a special way, perhaps at an event, or at their unit meeting in front of their girls. You should try to include them in this decision if possible.

Nominate people for your own county and division awards, as well as for the region Chief Commissioner Award for services at the unit level. Share the process with your local area when nominations are requested each year.

4

# Value your volunteer

## Roles in units

Encourage leaders to share the load, create a team and use everyone's strengths and experience to reach their unit's full potential. There may be other leaders, unit helpers or parents with skills they would be willing to share, for example, accounts, risk assessments, administration, or fundraising. You can look online at *Roles working with girls for guidance* (see the *PR and Marketing* section for ideas).

As life changes and brings new challenges for our volunteers, it's important to recognise what they're able and willing to do. Recognise when a change is needed and support this transition so that volunteers stay with us.

A leadership pool is a great way to engage volunteers who don't want or aren't able to make a regular commitment, but may be happy to help out 'ad-hoc'. They could stand in if a leader is unavailable for a meeting, or if extra adults are needed for an off-site event. An administrative volunteer could coordinate the pool within the district or division, fielding requests from unit leaders and matching opportunities to those in the pool. The pool could be open to students, Trefoil members, and those who have previously run or supported units. There are 'Division Supporting Leader' and 'District Supporting Leader' roles on GO.



4

# Value your volunteer

## Opportunities

There are many opportunities in Girlguiding, from social events to international camps. Getting involved with opportunities locally and further afield enables you and fellow volunteers to get the most out of guiding.

Read national, regional, county and local newsletters to find out about all the different opportunities available and how you can get involved. Help keep other volunteers up-to-date with opportunities, particularly new volunteers and young leaders.

Try flexible guiding. If leaders and girls are struggling to commit to a weekday night, try running a unit that meets monthly at the weekend for a few hours. This could enable girls who share time between parents in different places and leaders who work till late on weekdays to take part in Girlguiding. In high-demand areas, you could even consider running parallel units to reduce waiting lists and to ensure all girls get the same opportunities. For example, leaders could hold weekday meetings for one unit in the first week and weekend meetings for another unit in the second week using similar programmes but girls need to be involved in decision-making.

You could also encourage leaders to create unit teams including leaders who are available on an ad-hoc basis to step in to cover illness but who may not wish to run their own unit every week, for example students who are home in longer holidays or local Trefoil members. You never know when an extra pair of hands might come in handy!





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Girlguiding

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Girlguiding LaSER

## Badge Order Form

District name	
Level number	
Your name	
Your membership number	
Address for delivery	
Number of badges (1 per adult member)	
Which postage & packaging bracket do you fall under?	
1 - 24	Free
25 - 50	£1.34
51 - 164	£3.48
165 - 330	£5.35
Sum enclosed for P&P (badge is free):	

## Summary of activities

How have you used the resource?

What impact did they have on retention in your district?

What will you do next to continue improving retention in your district?

How could we improve the resource?

Please make cheques payable to **Girlguiding LaSER**.

Please enclose a cheque and return along with this printed form to:

**Badges**  
**Girlguiding LaSER**  
3 Jaggard Way  
Wandsworth Common  
London  
SW12 8SG

*Note: If you would like to place an order for over 330 badges please email [info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk](mailto:info@girlguidinglaser.org.uk) so the team can advise on postage cost.*

*This badge will be available until stock runs out.*

## Girlguiding LaSER

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[www.girlguidinglaser.org.uk](http://www.girlguidinglaser.org.uk)



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