

GROUP SCOUT LEADER'S REPORT

This year has been a difficult period for our scout group. Last year I had to report the closure of our Beaver section, as we were not able to recruit new adult volunteers to keep this section running.

The period 2020-2021 saw two more leaders step down from active volunteering, Sarah Hallett and Bev Brenton. Nicola Thomas will also step down as a Scout leader when her children finish Scouting in September. We're very grateful for everything they've done for the group – and to all our leaders and Committee members.

However, this leaves us with a significant shortfall in leaders at a time when the youth membership has been badly hit by Covid-19 pandemic. We are down to approximately half our former membership and fee income for the period has been only some 25% of the previous period.

My own position is that I have not had young people in the group for over a year now. My family and work commitments have changed. There are many other demands on my time, and I have to be realistic about what I can continue to put into Scouting.

I avoided making any changes to my role during 2020-2021 because it was obvious the group would need stable leadership during the disruption caused by the pandemic. I've done what I can with limited resources and within the restrictions imposed by the pandemic to keep the group running, albeit in a reduced capacity.

However, I've decided that from this September I will begin the process of stepping down as Group Scout Leader. Put simply, after nearly ten years I've done my bit. If new leaders can be found, I will happily work with them to facilitate a gradual and managed transition. Beyond that, I will not necessarily be leaving the group. I'm happy to stay in a supporting role.

What I won't do anymore, as I've done so many times in the past, is step in to cover multiple roles to keep things running. This means new adult volunteers will be needed to keep the group running. I've been telling you this for several years now. But this year, we've reached a tipping point. As matters stand, from September we'll only be able run a single Scout+ section, which is not a viable proposition for the long term.

With new leaders we'll be able to rebuild the group and ensure the next generation of young people in our community can continue to benefit from the fantastic experiences Scouting provides. But if no new leaders can be found, the group will have to be gradually wound down.

We'll be recruiting widely for new leaders. But we know from experience, and from the national data, that most adult volunteers are parents with young people in the group. That means it's up to you.

Volunteering works best when several like-minded people share the role. All our leaders are busy working parents, but when we work together as a team, we're able to work flexibly and share the work. Three leaders running a 12-week programme only have to plan and run four sessions per term. Most people find that very manageable.

Volunteering is also a lot of fun. Since joining Scouting, I've made new friends, shared in new experiences and developed new skills. Learning to motivate and encourage our young people to explore and develop their potential has been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done.

New volunteers will be supported every step of the way by myself and our existing experienced leaders. You won't be pitched in at the deep end (like I was when I started!). But you need to act now, while we still have leaders in place. Scouting may be an international movement. But at its heart, it's a locally based community project, run by local people for local people. It's your scout group. It's up to you.

Get in touch now to find out more, come and see us in action, lend a hand, help us run some games and activities and see how much fun we have. What have you got to lose (apart from your scout group)?

Simon Miles, Group Scout Leader
May 2021