

Guidance for welcoming new volunteers

When volunteer enquiry is received

Acknowledge enquiries promptly: Send a clear, friendly and personalised message.

Discuss potential opportunities: If an enquiry has been made for a specific role, explain the role to ensure the volunteer understands what will be required of them. If the enquiry was not for a specific role, offer a variety of opportunities, including flexible and short-term roles. Explain time commitments and role requirements clearly.

Before first session

Ensure volunteer feels prepared: Before their first session, make sure they have all the practical information such as:

- Where they are going
- What time to arrive
- What to wear
- How to get in the building
- Where to park
- Who to ask for on arrival

Explain the admin: Talk about logging onto GO and processes around completing disclosure checks, safer guiding, and references.

Be clear about costs: Make it clear from the start what costs may be involved with volunteering, and what costs will be covered by the unit or local area (subscriptions, uniform, travel, training, etc.).

First session

Upon arrival: Greet the new volunteer by name and introduce them to all volunteers present. Make sure they are aware of key places in the building, such as toilets, exits, and storage.

Give the volunteer a clear role for the session: Check in throughout to make sure they feel comfortable and included.

Make them feel welcome: Explain any Girlguiding or unit acronyms, traditions and routines as they arise, and ensure volunteers are included in informal conversations, not left on the sidelines.



Girlguiding

North East England

After 4–6 weeks

Check-in with the volunteer: Review how the role is working for them, and make sure the role requirements and time commitments are still working.

Discuss learning options: Check they have completed/are working on mandatory trainings and discuss other options.

Discuss the volunteer's skills and interests: Where possible, assign them tasks relevant to their existing skills.

Encourage questions: Make sure they feel comfortable asking about/challenging any unit process or traditions they are unsure about.

After 2–3 months

Hold a review conversation: What's working well? What's feeling difficult or confusing? Make sure they are happy to continue in the role, and agree on next steps to ensure volunteering continues to work for them.

Remind about development opportunities: Give the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities in the unit, and if appropriate, discuss further learning opportunities such as starting their LDP.

Recognise what they've accomplished so far: Remember to say thank you and acknowledge all they've already given to Girlguiding so far.

Ongoing good practice

Continue to check-in periodically, to ensure the volunteer's role is still working for them, and review flexible options. Keep explaining Girlguiding language and traditions as relevant, and remember to celebrate contributions and achievements, not just longevity.

Remember: staying is a choice - make it feel like a good one.

Culture and inclusion check

- Don't make assumptions about previous experience of Girlguiding or why they have chosen to volunteer.
- Ensure language used is up-to-date and welcoming.
- Explain social dynamics (who's who and how decisions are made).
- Value differences (background, age, culture, confidence, etc.).
- Welcome ideas from all volunteers, no matter their experience.

Value and support

- Give thanks regularly and sincerely.
- Acknowledge and value all contributions, from volunteers old and new.
- Invite feedback and ensure it is listened to.
- Address early frustrations quickly.
- Ensure new volunteers are clear about who they can contact for support..



Girlguiding

North East England