

Factsheet:

11: Working with Under-18s (Child Protection)

Last updated: November 2021

Last reviewed: November 2021

1. Overview

This document is intended as an overview of the different policies SSAGO has and how they can be implemented when running activities and residentials for SSAGO members under-18s. This document should be used in conjunction with both the 'Safeguarding' policy and the 'Activity Guidelines & Nights Away' policy which can be accessed here: <https://www.ssago.org/resources/index/policy>,

If any SSAGO committee or member has any doubt on whether a certain activity requires SSAGO members to have a DBS check, or if any member has any concern about safeguarding, they should contact the National Exec for advice. The Exec are happy to help clubs follow these policies and can confirm details with The Scouts and/or Girlguiding where necessary to ensure we are complying with their policy.

All members under the age of 18 are classed as young people within SSAGO, there are no regional variations.

2. Introduction

Whenever you expect an under-18 to join your club, attend an activity you are running or an event you are organising you must inform the National Exec immediately. It is essential that The Scouts are kept fully informed and given as much notice as possible to ensure there is sufficient time to implement this policy. Girlguiding must also be informed if the young person is a member of Girlguiding. Any violations of safeguarding policy will be taken very seriously, and SSAGO must work with The Scouts and Girlguiding to ensure the safety of the attending young person.

3. Responsibility of the Leader in Charge

Under-18s attending events should have designated "Leaders in Charge" who take responsibility for the under-18 at the event or in club events. These leaders should be members of the SSAGO SASU, holding a DBS check and completing the necessary training for this role. There should be at least two leaders present at all activities and on all platforms with an under-18.

The young people must at all times know who their responsible leaders are and how to contact them. The leaders must not be under any influence of alcohol at any time they are responsible for the young person at an online or in-person activity. A designated leader may go 'off-duty' however the young person must be fully aware of who their current responsible leaders are. An 'off-duty' leader may consume alcohol, when they return to duty they should not be under the influence. There must never be a point where they don't know who to go to.

4. Under-18s in online spaces

a. National SSAGO Spaces

All users of the SSAGO Discord must hold a SSAGO Account. The National Exec holds a list of all under-18s active on the SSAGO Discord. All areas of the server should be set up to prevent a situation where an under-18 can come into 1:1 contact with an over-18.

When members request to join private SSAGO Facebook Groups their membership status should be confirmed.

b. Online Events

When a club, project, regional or national committee is hosting an online event which an under-18 is attending, at least one responsible leader with a valid DBS certificate must be present. You must ensure more than 1 other person is present during all activities and communications, whether these are in person or online. The SSAGO Exec may request any online event which allows participants to drop in to make provisions for a responsible leader when it's likely an under-18 may choose to attend.

c. Club Spaces

Where a club has online spaces (for instance a Discord Server, Facebook Group, Facebook Chat, Whatsapp Group, etc...) they should ensure that the people joining these platforms are all known SSAGO, SAGGA, Scouting or Guiding members. Membership of these private groups should be reviewed to ensure the information shared is appropriate for the current members. There should be no situations where an under-18 can have a 1:1 conversation with an over-18. At least two leaders in charge present in all platforms the under-18 is in.

5. Under-18s at in-person SSAGO events

As with any event, an event with under-18s in attendance must comply completely with SSAGO policy and by extension the relevant sections of The Scouts's POR. Failure to follow policy will be taken seriously and reported to The Scouts and Girlguiding as outlined in the 'Behaviour & Disciplinary Procedures' policy.

Every single person attending regardless of responsibility must follow the Yellow Card (The Scouts safeguarding guide), specifically the following are examples of what should not occur at events with under-18s:

- Physical Contact games involving under-18s and over-18s.
- Forfeits, of any kind.
- Use of inappropriate, suggestive or threatening language; including in campfire songs.

All attendees of the event should be provided with a copy of The Scouts's [Yellow Card](#) and [Green Card](#), and Girlguiding's [A Safe Space](#), as a reminder of their responsibilities under these. It is recommended that this is displayed digitally to all attendees during the booking process for national and regional events. Clubs with under-18s may make their members aware of these terms by email or other means for their club events. Some copies should be available physically at all events, for instance at event check-in. Attendees should be aware they must ensure they are not 1:1 with any young people in any situation.

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/safeguarding-and-risk/a-safe-space-pocket-guide.pdf>

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safe-scouting-cards/young-people-first-yellow-card/>

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safe-scouting-cards/scouting-and-alcohol/>

6. Nights Away Permits

Residential events with under-18s must have a designated permit holder for the event holding:

- A Scouts Nights Away permit holder holding a valid permit suitable for this event if the under-18 is not a member of Girlguiding.
- A Going Away with Licence if the under-18 is a member of Girlguiding.

If there are multiple under-18s with a mix of Girlguiding and non-Girlguiding members both types will be required, however, they may be held by different people. This person should meet with the event organising committee and the under-18's club to ensure that all the necessary camp facilities for the under-18s are provided. The permit holder has similar responsibilities to if they were taking their group to a catered district, division or county camp.

Scout permit holders should be members of the SSAGO SASU to allow their permit status to be confirmed by the SSAGO Exec. The SSAGO Exec will verify Girlguiding permits directly with Girlguiding.

The event will need to complete the Nights Away Notification process as outlined in the 'Activity Guidelines & Nights Away' policy. This will need to be demonstrable if an issue does arise. This includes all aspects of normal nights away with young people, including obtaining the permission of their Explorer or Ranger section leader (if applicable) and

parental/guardian permission. Permission may be obtained through any means, including verbally, by phone or email. <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.56>

7. Activities

Activities which can be run under Adults in Adventurous Activities for over-18s will need to be run in accordance with either the permit scheme or run by an external provider for young people. This includes having staff holding the appropriate activity permits (e.g. hiking in T1 / T2 terrain, archery, shooting etc.).

Further guidance around activities can be found in the 'Activity Guidelines & Nights Away' policy and associated Factsheet.

8. Sleeping Arrangements

There must be separate sleeping arrangements for under-18s. It is recommended at national events that it forms a designated 'under-18s' camp field (or segregated area). As they should always know who their responsible leaders are it is recommended the permit holder camps within this space so they can be woken in an emergency by the young people.

9. Alcohol

Alcohol is to be taken incredibly seriously, and no person who is responsible for an under-18 can be under the influence of alcohol. This includes when on activities, when on site, during travel to the event, etc.

Very strict measures need to be taken to ensure no alcohol can get into the hands of under-18s. Unless impossible this should include adult-only areas where alcohol can be served (e.g. an adult only bar area separate to the activity area).

The Scouts Green Card regarding alcohol must be followed:

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safe-scouting-cards/scouting-and-alcohol/>

There should be a separate space where under-18s can go to which is an alcohol-free zone and young people should be informed where this is.

10. Responsibilities of all adult attendees

Safeguarding arrangements need to be made clear to all participants. Every single over-18 in attendance needs to be made aware and agree to their obligations, regardless of which club they come from. People behaving inappropriately could be banned from The Scouts and Girlguiding.

Adults with any responsibility for under-18s should be members of the SSAGO SASU. This includes the entire event committee, representatives from their club and permit holders.

Consideration should also be given for staff on their choice of activity and who shall have responsibility for them during this time.

At no point should there be any situation where an under-18 and an over-18 can end up in a 1:1 situation.

11. Responsibilities of the National Exec

All risk assessments must be approved and signed off by the National Exec, and must ensure that all appropriate measures and precautions have been taken. National SSAGO will then take joint responsibility and will be held accountable for compliance.

The presence of young people will have an impact on the risk assessment for the activity and therefore these will need to be adapted to accommodate the young people being present.

After having prepared all the above, this must be checked and verified with The Scouts. If the under-18 is a Guide then they should also be verified by Girlguiding. <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/programme-and-activities/guidance-on-activities/activities-with-other-organisations/>

12. Under-18s Joining a Club

Where an under-18 wishes to join a SSAGO club the club must obtain permission from their parent or guardian for them to join.

Parent's/Guardian's should be given advance (minimum 7 days) notice of all club activities taking place and are able to revoke permission for a member to take part in any activity. If parents/guardian's have received the programme with appropriate notice then, without other emails, permission for the young person to take part may be assumed. Specific confirmation should be received for nights away activities.

All activities with under-18s must have a minimum of two adults designated as in charge of the activities, usually members of the club's committee. These members should be full members of the SSAGO SASU, allowing them to have completed the necessary safeguarding training and holding a DBS check. If an activity does not have two such adults present, then no under-18s are allowed to attend.

13. Accepting Under-18s & Students' Unions

SSAGO clubs must take reasonable measures to accept under-18 members. If a SSAGO Club feels they are unable to accept a member due to their age they must report this to the SSAGO Exec by emailing exec@ssago.org, outlining the reasons they can not accept the member. This is detailed in the 'Equality and Inclusions' policy.

Where a students' union has its own policy for under-18s then clubs must follow both

policies, applying the stricter of SSAGOs and their SUs policy in each situation.

Where SSAGO policy contradicts SU policy then the club should inform the SSAGO Exec and their SU. The National SSAGO Exec, liaising with The Scouts and Girlguiding, will aim to resolve this with the SU, and clubs may not accept under-18 members until a resolution is made.

14. Running Events for Local Scouting and Guiding

When running events for under-18 members of Scouting or Guiding who are not also members of SSAGO then you should follow the relevant policy from both organisations. You are able to use the SSAGO SASU for DBS checks however may implement your own alternative procedures inline with each organisations rules.