

The Role of the Nights Away Adviser



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This is one of a set of factsheets on the Nights Away Permit Scheme. It explains the role of the Nights Away Adviser, together with the skills and training required to do the job.

Further editions of this factsheet will be published in the light of experience. The publication of future editions will be notified in Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

The procedure for managing the assessment process itself is set out in the factsheet *Application for a Nights Away Permit* (FS120432).

Overview of the Nights Away Scheme

Camping and similar residential events are among the most popular activities that we can offer in Scouting. The Nights Away Permit Scheme has been introduced to promote quality residential and camping experiences for young people.

The Scheme is simple to operate, provides reassurances to parents/carers and recognises the skills of the adults involved.

The Permit is credit card sized and gives authority for an adult to lead Members under the age of 18 years on a nights away event in one or more of these three categories:

- **Indoor** - for any Sleepover, indoor Pack holiday, youth hostelling or similar event.
- **Camp Site** - camping on sites where there are toilets, water and waste disposal facilities.
- **Green Field** - for camping where all facilities need to be provided by the camp team – for example, a summer camp on a farmer's field.

The Nights Away Adviser

All Districts and Counties/Areas will need to appoint one or a number of Night Away Advisers. They will have three key roles:

- Meet with those adults with experience in leading successful residential events to ensure they understand the workings of the new Scheme. They can then be recommended for the appropriate Permit so that they can continue leading quality nights away events. This is a '*fast tracking*' procedure for experienced adults.
- Meet with those adults who are less experienced to assess them against the eight core skills and as required to assist them to gain an appropriate Permit.
- Advise on camping and residential issues and to generally promote nights away opportunities within the District or County/Area.

A Nights Away Adviser will already be experienced in leading residential and camping events. They will hold either a Wood Badge or have completed the validation for Module 16 *Nights Away* in The Scout Association's Adult Training Scheme. All Advisers must complete Module 25 Assessing Learning. Depending on their prior learning and experience, training either by formal course (usually about five hours) or by workbook may be necessary. Validation must be completed for the module. The validation requirement for the module is to take two people through the Permit Scheme. Full details of validation requirements can be found in the *Adults Personal File* and the *Training Advisers Guide*.

The Scout Association

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Further advice is available from the Regional/County/Area Training Manager.

The importance of the role

Spending nights away from home is a fundamental part of the Balanced Programme. The Nights Away Permit Scheme is central to ensuring that those leading such activities have the knowledge and experience to make them safe, exciting and fun.

The role undertaken by a Nights Away Adviser is essential for encouraging adults to plan and run good quality events and for ensuring that young people have a high quality experience.

The overall aim of the Permit Scheme should be to increase the number of quality residential events being run. If encountered, fear or resentment of the assessment process must be overcome.

The Assessment

The assessment for a Nights Away Permit should not be a test or trial but an opportunity to help the applicant develop the skills and confidence necessary to gain a Permit.

Advisers should be flexible in conducting assessments. They should recognise that camps and residential experiences can legitimately be run in different ways.

Each adult, whatever their experience, needs to apply for assessment on the appropriate form (FS120432 *Application for a Nights Away Permit*).

Fast Tracking

Under the new Scheme, adults who are well known for running high quality residential events, the Scheme does not require a practical assessment by the Nights Away Adviser. However, it should not be assumed that everyone with some experience should automatically receive a Permit, or that those who participated as a youth member are fitted for a role of leadership. For those with experience, a discussion with the Adviser to ensure that they understand the workings and conditions of the Permit Scheme will generally be sufficient. During this discussion, the

Assessment Form will be completed and signed in order that a recommendation can be made for the issue of an appropriate Permit.

For others who are less well known, it will be necessary to discover what events have been run recently, where they took place, how many young people participated and details of the programme. Some past paperwork could be viewed or an event visited to see the adult in action before recommending the issue of a Permit.

Practical Assessment

Where an applicant's knowledge and ability is not known, an assessment is required. This is likely to take place across three stages:

STAGE ONE: During planning of the event

STAGE TWO: During the event itself

STAGE THREE: After the event, at the evaluation session

At each of these stages, the Nights Away Adviser will assess the applicant's knowledge and ability in the following eight core skills:

1. Planning a nights away event
2. Ensuring the effective administration of an event
3. Preparing and co-ordinating a programme of activities
4. Choosing and preparing the event team
5. Choosing, organising and maintaining the right equipment
6. Ensuring the health, happiness and safety of self and others
7. Organising good catering
8. Making best use of the venue

Recommending a Nights Away Permit

Having met with the applicant for either fast tracking or visited for a more detailed assessment, Nights Away Advisers should use the attached form (FS120433) to make a recommendation to the appropriate Commissioner (or nominee).

It is often better to restrict a Permit rather than refuse one altogether. A Permit may be restricted to a specific Section, campsite/venue, or time of year - for example '*Beaver Scout Sleepovers for own Colony only*'. The Permit should be issued by the relevant Commissioner with the minimum of delay, and any restrictions explained.

Promoting Nights Away events

It is an important part of the role of the Nights Away Adviser to promote nights away events. Every survey reveals that camping is regularly voted as one of the top three activities that the Movement offers, and yet camping nights are in decline. Some Scouts have never been to camp.

The Nights Away Adviser should propose ways of encouraging more young people to taste the excitement of nights away. This could include such initiatives as suggesting venues or sites, arranging help from more experienced Troops and Packs for others with less experience. Purpose designed District or County/Area events could be organised with central provision of facilities and appropriate supervision.

Publications

Support material may be found in the following publications available from the Scout Information Centre or downloadable from ScoutBase UK (www.scoutbase.org.uk).

- *Policy, Organisation and Rules*
- *Nights Away – An Adults' Guide to Camping, Holidays, Expeditions and Sleepovers*
- *FS120000 Risk Assessment*
- *FS129999 Safety in Scouting - Safety Checks*
- *FS120431 The Nights away Permit Scheme – An introduction*
- *FS120432 Application for a Nights Away Permit*
- *FS120434 The Nights Away Permit Scheme – Guidelines for District and County/Area Commissioners*
- *FS315059 Camping Standards*



Nights Away Assessment

This form is to be used by a Nights Away Adviser as a checklist to support an application for a Nights Away Permit. The applicant must satisfy the Adviser that he or she can safely oversee Nights Away events in one or more of the three categories. This form may also be used for 'fast tracking' those with appropriate experience. Parts 1 and 2 should be completed at assessment. The District or County/Area Commissioner (as appropriate) subsequently completes Part 3.

Name of Applicant			
Address			Postcode
Current Scouting appointment <i>(if applicable)</i>			
Group; District; County/ Area			

The applicant should have sufficient knowledge of the following core skills:

1. Planning a nights away event

- define the purpose for which the event is being organised, taking in to account the needs of the young people
- draw up a timetable for the planning of the event
- select a suitable venue/location and gather local information
- select the most appropriate form of travel

2. Ensuring the effective administration of an event

- ensure overall costs and individual fees are calculated, based on best predicted numbers
- appropriate banking arrangements are made, bills are paid promptly and final accounts are produced
- parents/carers are informed and permission sought in advance
- the home contact system is set up correctly

3. Preparing and co-ordinating a programme of activities

- the resources needed, including human, material and financial, are available at the right time
- the needs and characteristics of the young people concerned are taken in to account
- the Scout Association's safety rules for the activities to be undertaken are observed
- a balanced programme is developed, allowing for alternatives for adverse circumstances

4. Choosing and preparing the event team

- identify the number of support team members required for the event and the range of skills and experiences needed
- ensure roles and responsibilities are adequately covered (eg catering, First Aid, quartermaster, programme co-ordinator)
- effective briefing of and communication between support team members

5. Choosing, organising and maintaining the right equipment

- ensure the equipment required for an event is obtained in good time
- ensure the equipment is checked and that any damage or defects are dealt with before use or on return
- the equipment meets safety standards and is appropriately insured
- equipment is used correctly and stored properly

6. Ensuring the health, happiness and safety of self and others

- recognise the limits and capabilities of both young people and support team members
- undertake appropriate Risks Assessments for the event
- ensure control of and adequate supply of medication and of emergency aid cover or medical equipment
- be aware of safety regulations and emergency procedures at the venue eg evacuation routine
- know the steps to be taken in the event of an accident, including the need for keeping records
- ensure adequate provision for maintenance personal hygiene and privacy.

7. Organising good catering

- a menu is planned that takes account of all the activities scheduled, the time of year and any special dietary requirements
- hygiene standards are met in the handling, preparation and storage of food
- there is a safe and suitable source of drinking water and of fuel
- responsible disposal of waste material is carried out

8. Making best use of the venue

- make good use of surrounding facilities and attractions
- plan the allocation of space and equipment
- ensure all participants know the house or site rules
- plan ahead for departure from the venue and ensure it is left in an acceptable condition
- ensure borrowed or hired equipment is returned in good order, on time, and with thanks

PART 1 – To be completed by the Nights Away Adviser

I have assessed the applicant against the eight core skills above. Subject to any conditions/restrictions listed below, I believe he/she has the appropriate skills and leadership qualities to lead nights away events for young people in these category(s):-

Indoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Campsite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Green Field	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Detailed below are appropriate conditions/restrictions and/or general comments.

Date of Assessment(s)		Venue(s)			
Signature		Name		Date	

PART 2 – To be completed by the Applicant

I have had the Nights Away Scheme explained to me and believe I have the appropriate knowledge and experience of the eight core skills to lead events for young people in the category described. I undertake to observe the Rules of the Scheme and will notify the appropriate Commissioner(s) of all Nights Away events which I lead.

Signature		Name		Date	
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PART 3 – To be completed by the District or County/Area Commissioner

Please complete either Part 3a and if appropriate 3b. If Part 3b is completed, this form should be returned to the Nights Away Adviser to enable further support to be arranged for the Applicant.

3a) I am happy the applicant has been appropriately assessed and has the qualities needed to lead nights away events in the category indicated below. I have detailed any specific conditions or restrictions below and on the Permit.

Category	Specific conditions/restrictions

3 b) I wish the applicant to benefit from additional support and assessment as outlined below:

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Signature		Name		Date	
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