

Parent/Carer Conversation Framework

Initial Conversation



This framework is designed to support initial conversations with parents or carers, where a youth member with additional needs or disabilities wishes to join Scouting.

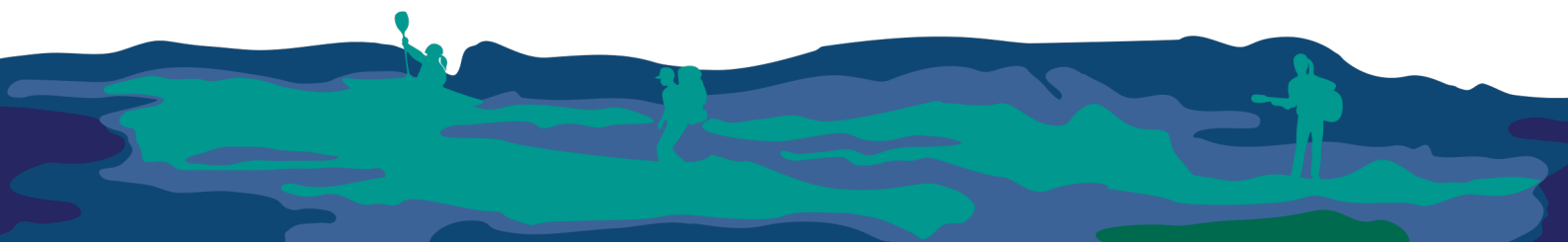
Planning the Conversation

Plan an appropriate place for the conversation to take place. This should be a neutral and comfortable space, where you will be able to talk without being interrupted. The conversation should involve the Section Leader and another Leader in the Group; the parent or carer; and if appropriate, the youth member themselves.

Before the meeting, you may want to refer to Scouts Australia's Diversity & Inclusion Standards and Factsheets for guidance and identify which Branch Diversity & Inclusion resources might be helpful to refer to during this process, so you feel prepared and confident.

Tips for during the Conversation

- Ensure that the parent or carer feels like it is an informal conversation and not an interview. It is just the starting point of an ongoing partnership.
- Be honest about your level of knowledge and skills. You can explain you are keen to learn from them, as the expert on the young person's needs.
- Be positive but realistic. Help them understand what to expect from Scouting, and depending on the conversation, what may be needed from them.
- Take the lead from the parent or carer (or the youth member) in the words they use to describe the young person's additional needs or disability.
- Remember that each youth member will be different, so avoid making any assumptions.
- Explain to the parent or carer how you plan to store and share any information you record and ensure that they are happy with this (Note: it is important they feel the young person's information is being held confidentially – be guided by your Branch procedures and practices)



Starting the Conversation

Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the conversation – so that the Scout Unit can best support the youth member’s involvement in Scouting.

If the family is new to Scouting, start by giving an introduction to Scouting and to your Group or Unit. Within this, or throughout the conversation, explain:

- Scouting is led by Youth, supported by adult volunteers.
- Scouting is all about supporting youth member’s development, through adventurous, fun, challenging and inclusive activities.
- We do our best to support the full participation of all young people.
- There is a lot of flexibility within Scouting to meet individual needs.
- What the Program and activities are like by giving the parent or carer insight into the Program, and a sense of how a typical Unit meeting is run. This will help them give you the most relevant information about the young person’s needs).

Ask some simple introductory questions, which will also start to give you an insight into the young person. Example questions: *How are you hoping the young person will benefit from joining Scouting? What does the young person want to get out of Scouting? Does the young person know anyone attending the Unit?*

A key tip is to start using the young person’s name from the outset. This shows both respect and a genuine level of interest in them.

The Conversation

Example topics and questions are provided below to help identify the young person’s individual needs and plan support strategies or adaptations to enable their access to Scouting. You can adapt these questions to suit your context.

Explain that you would like to ask some questions to help you start to understand the young person’s, and work with them to plan any reasonable adjustments to help them to enjoy and participate in Scouting. Be aware that some areas of the conversation may raise emotions and it is important that the parent / carer feels they are supported throughout and are in no way being judged.

You should reassure the parent or carer that any information you record will be used for Scouting purposes only and will be kept securely.

Interests and strengths

This is important to keep the conversation positive and focused on the unique needs of the young person. This may also support you in getting to know them and help them settle into the Unit and make friends.

- Example questions: *Tell me a bit about [name]? What do they particularly enjoy? Do they have any special interests? What are their strengths? What type of activities do you think they would particularly enjoy in Scouting?*

Challenges and support strategies

It is important to think ahead and anticipate any particular challenges a youth member may have in Scouting, to enable you to plan an inclusive Program, and also consider any potential adaptations needed.

Asking about how the youth member communicates and any challenges with understanding is particularly useful, to help you plan how instructions are given. It is also important to find out about any challenging behaviours and their usual triggers, along with support strategies. You may wish to cover the following topics:

- **Difficulties or Challenges-** Example questions: *Is there anything about Scouting that you think they might find difficult? Do they have any particular dislikes or fears?*
- **Communication** - Example questions: *Does the young person need any support with communicating or understanding instructions?*
- **Behaviour** – Example questions: *Does the young person have any challenging behaviours that you are aware of? Do they need any support in managing their behaviour? Are there any known causes/triggers for the behaviour at home or school?*
- **Support** – Example questions: *What can we do to help manage these difficulties? How do you think we could best support your child in Scouting? Are there any physical modifications (such as ramps) required to the Scout hall? What works well at home or school? Does [name] get extra support at school – please can you tell me about that? Is there any paperwork (support plans, etc.) used at school that you might be able to share with us? What would you advise we do if...?*

Safety

It is important to identify any particular activities in the Program that might be of high risk to the young person, and plan measures to support them as part of your risk assessments. It may be that you need the parent or carer to attend some activities to provide additional support (e.g. nights away, activities outside of your regular meeting place).

- **Note:** *If a young person requires regular one-to-one supervision at all times in Scouting, the Unit is not obliged to provide this. The parent or carer or a professional carer may need to attend to support the young person.* At all

times in Scouting, all adults must follow their Branches' Child Safety procedures and practices.

- Example questions: Do you have any concerns about the young person's safety in Scouting? Is [name] likely to wander/runoff? What strategies could we put in place to manage this?

Diagnosed conditions, medication and personal care

- Example questions: Does the young person have a diagnosed neurodiversity, mental or physical health condition that we haven't discussed yet?
- Does [name] have an NDIS funding plan? If yes, are you planning to include Scouting as part of the plan?
- Does the young person have any medical needs, or take any medication that we should be aware of? Does taking of medication need to be supervised?
- Is the young person independent with their personal care / toileting?
- Is the young person on a special diet, or do they have any allergies or intolerances? Are there any foods that should be avoided?
- ***Note: If a youth member requires personal care support (eg. support with toileting; support with eating), this must be provided by the parent or carer, or a professional carer.***

Nights away

Explain that sleepovers or camps will be part of the Program and identify any additional support that is needed. It may be helpful to note that these activities (and all activities in Scouting) are optional.

- Example questions: Does [name] ever spend time away from home overnight? How comfortable are you with the idea of overnight experiences? Is there anything we should consider to support [name] with these experiences?

Anything else?

- Ask the parent or carer if there is anything else they feel you need to know.

Closing the Conversation

Thank the parent / carer for their time and reassure them that the Unit will do as much as possible to support the young person to participate fully in Scouts.

Next steps – You could ask if the parent or carer would like to arrange a pre-visit to the section or to the meeting place, for themselves and the young person. It is also worth asking if they would like to attend the first meeting alongside the young person.

Staying in touch – Find out the best contact details for the parent or carer during a meeting, and the best time and method to contact them to discuss how the young person is getting on at Scouting. Explain who the parent should contact if they have any questions/problems, and how.

Review - Agree when you will discuss how things are going (e.g., bimonthly). Be honest and open with the parent or carer. It may be appropriate to explain here that there can be situations where a Unit doesn't have the capacity or resources to meet the needs of a young person, and in which case the local Adult Support Team will seek to find an alternative Unit for the young person.

Finish by checking if they have any other questions or any concerns.

After the Conversation

Summarise your notes from the conversation and share with other Leaders as necessary (you may like to use the Youth Member Support Plan template for this purpose). It is recommended that you also share a copy of your notes with the parent / carer to ensure mutual understanding.

As with any young person when they join Scouting, take time to get to know them as an individual. Take time to speak to them at an appropriate time about anything they are finding difficult and anything you can do to help.

Stay in touch with the parent / carer regularly to check-in on how things are going and discuss or revise any support strategies.

Remember, this conversation will just be the start of an ongoing partnership with the parent or carer.

Further Support

Remember you're not alone and you are not expected to be an expert. Your Branch Diversity and Inclusion lead is there to support you, and sometimes just getting a different perspective on a situation can be really valuable. Information and guidance is available via <https://scouts.com.au/members/key-resources/>

For any further support, please contact your Branch D&I team.

To provide feedback about this resource, please email d&i@scouts.com.au