




# Retention Toolkit

A huge thanks to Girlguiding Midlands for their support on this resource.

Ideas pack for retaining our valued members.



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## Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to Girlguiding Cymru. We understand that retention remains one of the main challenges and we are extremely grateful that you're constantly tackling it.

We hope this resource will help give you some new ideas and motivation to keep as many girls and volunteers in Girlguiding. This resource is split into different sections to make it as accessible as possible. These ideas can also be applied at any level. We also recognise that you are currently doing many of the things mentioned within this resource. We hope that you will find something useful to take away to implement in your district, division or county.

As a commissioner for Girlguiding Cymru, you play a vital role in your area. We want to say a huge thank you for everything you do and we'll look forward to hearing your retention ideas and experiences.

Lesley Mathews  
Chief Commissioner

Membership  
dropped by

**3.5%**

in the last  
12 months

(Nearly 740 members)



We have just  
**under half**  
the number of  
Guides as Brownies

If each unit retains  
1 girl, we will retain  
**1200 members**  
across Wales.



**108** districts  
could be **108**  
retention ideas!

## Notes

# Value your volunteer

## Opportunities

There are many opportunities in Girlguiding, from social events to international camps. Getting involved with opportunities locally and further afield enables you and fellow volunteers to get the most out of guiding.

Read national, Cymru, county and local newsletters to find out about all the different opportunities available and how you can get involved.

Help keep other volunteers up-to-date with opportunities, particularly new volunteers and young leaders.

Try flexible guiding. If leaders and girls are struggling to commit to a weekday night, try running a unit that meets monthly at the weekend for a few hours. This could enable girls who share time between parents in different places and leaders who work till late on weekdays to take part in Girlguiding. In high-demand areas, you could even consider running parallel units to reduce waiting lists and to ensure all girls get the same opportunities. For example, leaders could hold weekday meetings for one unit in the first week and weekend meetings for another unit in the second week using similar programmes but girls need to be involved in decision-making.

You could also encourage leaders to create unit teams including leaders who are available on an ad-hoc basis to step in to cover illness but who may not wish to run their own unit every week, for example students who are home in longer holidays or local Trefoil members. You never know when an extra pair of hands might come in handy!



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## Managing Your Unit

Effectively managed units and districts are essential to retention as they not only ensure that girls have a clear journey through their guiding experience, but also that volunteers join forces to share the workload.

### Key online search terms:

- Membership Systems
- Transfer
- Waiting List

Information online: Membership administration, Mapping toolkit, Handling personal data, Using GO - our membership system.

[www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)



# Managing your unit

## Keeping your data safe

Keeping data in check can be a mundane task but it is a really important aspect of retention.

As you're all aware GDPR has recently come into effect and to help you understand what the law means for you as a volunteer or member, Girlguiding UK have created some useful FAQs. Please see their website for details: [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)

How often do leaders in your district check that their unit's GO data is correct? To keep information up to date you may ask parents termly or annually to inform you of any changes to their contact information.

It can also be another opportunity to remind parents about current volunteering opportunities, gift aid and volunteering. Remember to destroy any forms and information once you have finished using it and delete any downloaded files from your computer.

# Value your volunteer

## 1

## Roles in units

Encourage leaders to share the load, create a team and use everyone's strengths and experience to reach their unit's full potential. There may be other leaders, unit helpers or parents with skills they would be willing to share, for example, accounts, risk assessments, administration, or fundraising.

As life changes and brings new challenges for our volunteers, it's important to recognise what they're able and willing to do. Recognise when a change is needed and support this transition so that volunteers stay with us.

Encourage volunteers and existing leaders to visit other units to see what works for them and to share best practice.

## 4



# Value your volunteer

## Saying thank you

Encourage leaders in your area to nominate people for thanks and recognition, but also think about how leaders in your district are acknowledged more informally for their contributions and dedication to the organisation.

You can thank volunteers for their hard work in many ways: the giving of a small gift; going to their unit to say thank you; an afternoon tea, perhaps with a wall made from good things that have been said about them; a surprise party, or by sending out Christmas, World Thinking Day or National Volunteer Week cards.

## Awards

Find out what awards are available nationally, regionally and locally and what the criteria is for each award.

Girlguiding Cymru now has an annual Inspire Awards Day. Find out how you can get involved and nominate people for your own county and division awards, as well as for the Cymru Chief Commissioner Award for services at the unit level. Share the process with your local area when nominations are requested each year.

Present service awards in a special way, perhaps at an event, or at their unit meeting in front of their girls. You should try to include them in this decision if possible.

# Managing your unit

## 4

## Anniversary Badges

Continuous membership is essential for achieving anniversary badges, so make sure a girl's membership doesn't get interrupted, for example when she moves to the next section, or around the time of annual subscriptions.

### Here's an interesting fact:

If a girl was removed from GO each summer during her journey from Rainbow to Ranger, she would lose one year of her total time in guiding.

Consider adopting a district approach to transferring girls between sections so that all girls have the same opportunity to gain anniversary badges.

Encourage units to think about choosing an annual date on which to give out anniversary badges, for example on World Thinking Day or on the penultimate week of the summer term, to make managing anniversaries easier.



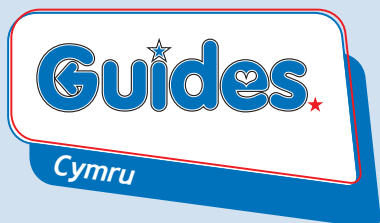
## 1

# Managing your unit

## Transfers

What happens when a girl moves unit? Consider a district method of handling transfers so that records can be found easily and moved to the correct unit. This may also involve working with local districts.

Moving girls on GO becomes much simpler if you know their membership number, so make sure parents or girls have a record of it.



# Value your volunteer

1

## Division and district teams

Share the load by breaking district and division roles into tasks and dividing the tasks. For example, have a unit visitor, a minutes' writer, or an events team. This activity may make roles such as that of commissioner more achievable.

Have social events to help build relationships within districts and divisions, building up support networks for volunteers and for you.

## District meetings

Make a note of key discussion points from division meetings and email them to leaders prior to the meeting. This gives them time to develop their views, allows them the option to send in their thoughts if they can't be there, and it may reduce meeting times!

Consider including leaders who can't physically attend by using Skype.

Reduce the meeting time to encourage more to attend.

Vary meeting days and venues to make it as fair as possible for all to attend.

4



# Value your volunteer

## Support and encourage

District meetings can be intimidating places. Offer to take your volunteer to their first meeting, introduce them and explain the agenda items as you go through, avoiding jargon as far as possible or being careful to explain it. Perhaps find a leader who could bring them next time.

Talk about training opportunities. Some people think they lack the skills and don't have the confidence to be a leader. However with a good mentor, training and support over time they may surprise themselves.

Take time to talk about the local and wider structure of Girlguiding. When your volunteer has chosen the role that they feel best suits what they're looking for, request a mentor. Keep in touch with your volunteer to make sure that the mentor relationship is working well. If in doubt, seek advice.

You may find a buddy system beneficial for your volunteers. Matching people with similar ages and backgrounds may be a starting point. For example, matching two volunteers who both have young children, or are both in university, may give them a common understanding and perspective.

4

# Managing your unit

## Support

GO can be overwhelming for some, so consider introducing local teams to support the management of GO. For example, could leaders ask a unit administrator to input programme information?

Could you, as commissioner, delegate the management of volunteer enquiries to one member of the district team, while another analyses retention data?

For more ideas about supporting volunteers, have a look at the Value your volunteer section.

If you have any specific GO queries, or for guidance on a topic not covered here, try searching 'Membership system' on the Girlguiding website or 'phone the Membership Systems helpline on 0800 999 2016.



1

# Managing your unit

## Knowing your neighbours

Make sure leaders know which local units their girls can move up to, where and when they meet, and who their main contact is.

Make it as easy as possible for girls to stay in Girlguiding when they move by providing parents with a list or flyer (paper or electronic) of all the unit options so they can choose the unit that's right for their daughter. Parents will then need to tell their daughter's leader which unit they want to join so that the leader can record their choice on GO. Take care regarding GDPR and the information you include in the list.

If there are long waiting lists in your area, you may want to decide on a district or division approach to getting names on waiting lists for moving between sections and for signposting enquiries within your own section (see the Retention section). Use the 'Total unit capacity' feature of GO to help you see which units have available spaces.

At a district level, mapping local units, their meeting times and capacity using online tools such as Google Maps may help with placing new enquiries to the most suitable unit according to their postcode, as well as quickly seeing alternative options if their preferred unit is already full.

Many districts share borders or even towns, so also think about cross-district collaboration when moving girls on to the next unit, trying to manage a long waiting list, or dealing with new enquiries.

# Value your volunteer

## 1

## Supporting new volunteers

To grow guiding we need more volunteers. Being a new volunteer can be an overwhelming and daunting experience, so here are a few tips to help you maximise your new volunteers' potential:

- Introduce each volunteer to several people so that they have a support network in place from the start and different personalities to get to know. Choose people who can provide support across different aspects of Girlguiding.
- Encourage volunteers to visit different units and sections so that they can identify the role, section and unit that best suits them.
- Stay in touch with your new volunteers. It may be that they haven't settled into a particular unit, so you may need to help them to find one that suits them better. Being a familiar point of contact will help them to feel comfortable reaching out for support.
- Not all new volunteers will want to be or are ready to be leaders straight away. They may want to help in the background, or on an ad-hoc basis. Perhaps they can help with fundraising, unit administration or look after the unit's accounts.

*Useful online UK resources: 12 Steps to becoming a great leader*

## 4

# Value your volunteer

## Young leaders

Young leaders are our leaders of the future. They need access to training and development opportunities and support networks to help them develop and thrive.

Talk to young leaders about their future role, what section do they want to work with? What unit role would they be happiest in? Avoid making assumptions based on their current unit.

Young leaders' lives change significantly as they move through their study and on to university or working life. If they move away, help them by finding units in their new local area with whom to link up. You can do this on GO by using the Transfer tab and inserting the postcode of the new area above the map to expand the search. Something familiar may be a comfort as they adjust to their new independent world so stay in touch while they're away and include them in their former unit on their return for holidays.

Set up a young leader network. Hold half-termly meetings for young leaders to get to know each other, share ideas and support each other, and to find out about opportunities open to them.

# Managing your unit

## 4

## Member journey

As a district, track a typical journey through sections to spot possible gaps in membership. For example, if there are 3 Brownie units but only 1 Guide unit, this may limit the number of girls that can move to the next section. Although not all Brownies will become Guides, it is important to plan ahead for retention and growth opportunities taking unit capacities into consideration.

It's worth looking at this pre-emptively so that leadership teams can be found and units opened in readiness for the increasing numbers.

Be aware of local planning developments as these are often fantastic opportunities to open units and grow guiding in a new area. Other areas may no longer need a unit, where the population has aged for example, so you could consider moving units away.

Changes in meeting place, day or time are radical but sometimes necessary to attract more girls and support transition to the next section. Perhaps another well-attended club takes place on the same day, or a meeting place poses inclusivity issues.

## 1

# Managing your unit

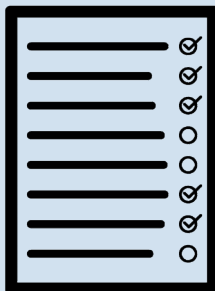
## Waiting lists

Encourage transition by putting girls on the next section's waiting list in advance so they don't have to wait for a place. Leaders should ask girls' parents for permission to add them to the next section's waiting list around a term after they join the unit.

If a girl leaves she will be invited to join the next section when she becomes eligible, hopefully bringing her back into guiding (see the Retention section).

Make sure that leaders are regularly maintaining, updating and using their waiting lists when inviting new members to join.

Although this sounds like common sense, it's surprising how many waiting lists across the country contain girls that are now too old to join simply because they haven't been contacted or moved on.



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## Value your volunteer

Volunteers are paramount to everything we do as an organisation, so we need to make sure that new volunteers are welcomed and supported. Making sure that existing volunteers feel valued is also key to retaining them and in turn, to retaining girls.

This section contains lots of ideas for keeping all of our volunteers, including young leaders, happy and in guiding.

4



## Invite a parent week

Quite often parents are unaware of all the fun their daughters have at their units, and they are also a group of people who are likely to offer help and become a volunteer with the organisation.

As a district or division, why not try a collaborative bring a parent week? Agree a week that suits your area and then ask each unit to invite parents along to their normal unit meeting to take part in the activities with their daughters.

During the evening, the commissioner or one of the leaders tells the visitors about guiding in their area (how many units there are, how many girls benefit each week from the opportunities that guiding offers, and so on) and it's an opportunity to ask if anyone wants to help!

Make clear that it can be flexible, helping at a unit once a term or becoming a unit treasurer.

For unit leaders there's no extra time commitment, they just need to plan an activity that is fun for girls and parents, like a team quiz. Parents will see the fun their daughters have and learn a bit more about what happens in the unit and how they could help.

*If you're planning an 'Invite a parent' event please get in touch and we'll be happy to support your event with recruitment resources and freebies.*

Email: [waleshq@girlguidingcymru.org.uk](mailto:waleshq@girlguidingcymru.org.uk)



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# 3

## Let's talk retention

Support girls as they move up sections and they are more likely to stay with us.

Often transition in guiding can happen at the same time as changes in school, so providing stability and continuity is particularly important. Hanging on to our volunteers and all their experience is vital too.

- Visit a Brownie unit with Rainbows ready to move up.
- Get girls to explore which interest badges and skills builders they would like to try in the next section.
- Hold a taster meeting or joint activity day with another section.
- Invite members of Rangers to do a Ranger Gold award.
- Ask Guides to plan and run a meeting for a younger section.
- Take a group from your unit to an older section's meeting or to their residential event for a day.

Information online: The Five Essentials, Safety and Safeguarding, and Making Guiding Happen.

Visit Girlguiding Cymru's website for information about their transition events.

# 2



# Let's talk retention

## Connecting with others

Have a district digital diary of events held by the commissioner that everyone can add to. These can be created in Google Calendar and don't forget your county team-up calendar. It allows leaders to coordinate locally to:

- Arrange for a leader to take another unit to an event when a leader isn't available to take them herself. The favour can be repaid later.
- Share the costs of transport, or the costs of the event itself if more units attend.
- Spread awareness of local events.

Collaborate locally to ensure the quality and consistency of the programme across units. The aim of the programme is personal development and progression.

- Learning and developing is much more fun done together. Have local trainings or 'airing and sharing' evenings.
- Visit other units to see how they do things and manage their unit.
- Think about unit teams and the skills they could share.
- Bring young leaders together at intervals to share ideas and feel part of a wider group.

# PR & Marketing

## 2

## Recruitment activity

Regular emails from Girlguiding Cymru, county and division will give you the most up-to-date information about forthcoming events and campaigns. Subscribing to the newsletter will help to see what's going on that might benefit your local area. You can also visit the members area on the Girlguiding Cymru website.

Talk within your district and decide on an organised approach to displaying posters and flyers to best effect. For example, you could leave old guiding magazines in the GP surgery or dentist waiting room.

Look at upcoming local and community events and see whether any offer opportunities for advertising and recruitment. Perhaps events taking place in an area where volunteers are most needed, or events happening on days of the week when units need volunteers. Is Wifi access available so that you can encourage people to sign up on the spot?

Units don't always need extra leaders, they often need help with particular tasks. Before any campaign, plan so that you're clear about what you need help with and then you'll be ready to offer opportunities for those who would like to help but don't want to be unit leaders.

Please remember to refer to our Welsh Language Policy and Strategy and consider the Welsh language where possible.

## 3

# PR & Marketing

## Marketing and recruitment resources

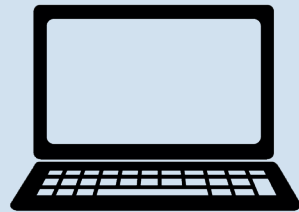
Marketing guidelines and campaign materials such as postcards, posters and flyers are available from Girlguiding UK Website and print centre. They can be ordered free from the official Girlguiding online shop or alternatively contact HQ for further assistance.

You can download images in the Online Print Centre and create local campaigns. You can also download Girlguiding Cymru content from the main social media pages.

You may be able to borrow Girlguiding Cymru banners and other recruitment resources from your division or county to make a big statement at an event.

Look online for help with recruitment, for example the downloadable Recruitment Campaign Guide which tells you all you need to know to plan and run a successful campaign. If you need any extra support you can also contact your PR & Marketing Officer or Growth & Retention Officer at Girlguiding Cymru HQ.

[waleshq@girlguidingcymru.org.uk](mailto:waleshq@girlguidingcymru.org.uk)



# Let's talk retention

3

## Transition

Invite girls along to an event or meeting taking place in the section they will move to next. Perhaps this could be a Promise ceremony or a special evening that's been organised. Girlguiding South West region have created a transition event resource called My Next Step. Contact them through their region website.

Invite the Guides to run a meeting for the Brownies to give them a taste of what it might be like in Guides. Remind the Guides that activities need to be age appropriate if they're involving the whole Brownie unit and that they can use skills builder activities or UMAs for inspiration. They can also tell the younger girls about all the exciting opportunities they have access to at Guides.

Most girls leave Guides around the age of 12 ½ so encourage leaders to talk to their girls this age about the opportunities to join Rangers in your area. They can then ask parents to give them permission to add their daughter's name to the Ranger waiting list on GO. If they're on GO, leaders can contact girls when they reach 14 years of age, even if they have already left Guides. It gives us the chance to move them on or bring them back in, either as Rangers or young leaders.

Leaders can work together to put girls' names on GO waiting lists for the next section with parents' permission. This can be between all sections. Once a girl has settled into Rainbows (around a term), unit leaders should ask for parents' permission to add the Rainbow to the Brownie waiting list and so on. Providing the details have been added to GO for the purpose of the girl joining the next section, we can contact them at transition time to offer a place. It gives us several opportunities to move girls on or bring them back into Girlguiding.

2



# Let's talk retention

Encourage leaders to visit local units of the section below where possible to show girls that Girlguiding is bigger than just their section and to give them a familiar face if they move up to that unit. It also helps leaders build a supportive local network and maintains links for girls later becoming Rainbow or Brownie Helpers.

As they visit their connected sections/units, leaders can share information about what girls have achieved in the Skills Builders sets. Knowing this will help girls settle quickly into the next stage of their development journey.

Encourage girls to achieve their Gold Award and celebrate it in a special way. It will give them opportunities to discover more about their next section and you could involve their next leader in the celebration.

Communication is key to successful transition across all sections: communication between leaders, between both leaders and parents, and of course between leaders and the girl preparing to move. Although the Skills Builders give them consistency in what they will do along the way, they still need to be carefully prepared for the changes they will experience.

Talk to them about what it will be like being a Brownie or Guide. Ask the next section for a Buddy to take care of their recruit when she starts, and introduce them when they attend a meeting or event. Take the opportunity to talk about new concepts and terms: Brownie sixes becoming Guide patrols, sixers becoming patrol leaders, and so on.

As with retention, be prepared to share your ideas in your district and create a consistent approach to provide the best possible end and start for every girl moving on.

## 2

# PR & Marketing

## 3

### Social Media

Social media has two functions:

#### For private communication

- For members to chat, share, encourage, and enthuse.
- For unit leaders to share information with parents quickly and effectively.

#### For sharing a positive image with the general public:

- To provide a means to promote the exciting opportunities available as a Girlguiding member.
- To generate interest and involvement in the wider public.

If you use social media in your guiding activities, make sure you follow Girlguiding's guidelines available online for setting up and using social media, setting up groups on Facebook and staying safe online.

Please refer to the Social Media Policy on the Girlguiding Cymru website.



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# PR & Marketing

## Talk about Girlguiding

Being a volunteer is amazing. You give your time to help inspire young girls in your area. Be proud of that! The best people to encourage volunteers into Girlguiding are those already involved. Encourage leaders to share their passion and enthusiasm for the organisation with those around them. This can be done through events, social media and one to one communication. You never know who you might inspire to join!

Find leaders in your district who are confident in talking about the organisation and who seem to enthuse and inspire those around them easily.

### You can also:

- Gather success stories to share on county pages: how being a volunteer has helped them personally and why they love being a part of Girlguiding Cymru
- Encourage leaders to take part in locally organised events such as fairs, festivals, pride, recruitment fairs etc.
- Remind them of the support offered by Girlguiding Cymru. They can offer support with resources, recruitment ideas and help feed messages throughout the Cymru network.

### There are plenty of ways to spread the word in your area:

- Sharing the national recruitment campaign posters
- Sharing content from our Girlguiding Cymru social pages
- Get in touch with local businesses to advertise volunteering opportunities on their social pages and websites, you'll be surprised how many people would like to help
- Encourage parents to share news and positive stories with their online community

*Why not promote you're a volunteer with our new Car Window Stickers? Now available to order online.*

# Let's talk retention

## 3

## Training

It's vital for volunteers to get all the right messages and information when they join us, so training and development opportunities are essential.

Make sure volunteers know they're not alone in Girlguiding. We have training available to provide the required skills, e.g. First Response, Safeguarding, GDPR, as well as lots of programme support to guide them through their meetings.

Walking into a room alone can be daunting, especially when everyone there seems to know someone, so encourage new volunteers to attend trainings with their unit team, another district member or take them with you. You could also consider informal meetings or gatherings to welcome new volunteers and help them to build a network.

Organise an 'airing and sharing' event in your district for everyone to join in, new and experienced. This kind of informal environment makes it easy to share ideas and best practice and to ask lots of questions. You could invite a local leader to run a session on GO, or on the programme for a small group, or one-to-one. It's also a great opportunity for new volunteers to meet fellow leaders and make new friends.

## 2

# Let's talk retention

## Resources

Girlguiding has many great text-based resources available online and in local shops. They cover the programme, qualifications, policy and more. County and region websites are also a great source of information, as too are our fellow leaders!

In addition, leaders in the area may have equipment, materials and other resources they would be happy to share.

- Create (or find out if someone already has) a list of resources available to borrow in your district, division, or county. Make a note of whether these need to be booked in advance. Share the list with leaders in your area.
- Take new volunteers through some examples of resources available and show them where to look for more.



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## PR & marketing

Highlighting and promoting the wonderful things that you do is paramount to recruiting and retaining members within your area. Encouraging leaders to express their enthusiasm for guiding is the best way to ensure that we have enough volunteers to enable all girls to move to the next section and to stop units from closing.

### Key online search terms:

- Making Guiding Happen
- Marketing
- Growth
- Recruitment

3

