

Young Leaders' Scheme

Making Scouting Accessible



Module F

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0845 300 1818

What is a Special Need?

How many people you know are left-handed? Two, three - more? Most of us know someone who writes with their left hand at least. Have you ever asked them how they manage with a pair of scissors? If not, ask them. They will probably have mastered it by now, but for left-handed people, using scissors designed for right handed people can be a problem. If you want to know how this feels try using a pair of normal scissors in your left hand – not easy is it? Fortunately you can now buy left handed scissors.

Why are we talking about scissors and being left handed? Well being left-handed might be regarded as having a Special Need as it poses some problems for those who sometimes need different equipment to make life easier.

Perhaps you thought that having a special need meant being in a wheelchair, having to use a walking stick or being visually impaired. Well, all of these are special needs, but so are many other things. Most of us have some sort of Special Need – it's just that we don't think of them as such.

What Special Needs might I find in my Section?

There are numerous common things, which could be thought of as being a Special Need:

- ◆ Wearing spectacles
- ◆ Having a stutter
- ◆ Being asthmatic
- ◆ Being allergic to nuts or other foodstuffs
- ◆ Wetting the bed at night

- ◆ Being overweight
- ◆ Being slightly deaf in one ear.

In addition, there are more specific medical conditions, which definitely make life more difficult:

- ◆ Having epilepsy
- ◆ Being blind
- ◆ Having spina bifida
- ◆ Having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- ◆ Suffering from cerebral palsy
- ◆ Having diabetes
- ◆ Being dyslexic
- ◆ Having cystic fibrosis
- ◆ Having a heart condition

What does this all mean for me as a Young Leader?

Well, as a Young Leader, you will almost certainly face some of these conditions in your Section or amongst the Section leadership team. You must learn to accept individuals for what they are, not for what they suffer from. No condition should pose an insoluble problem.

With a little thought and attention to detail, young people suffering from just about any medical condition or other less serious problem can be fully integrated into your Section programme. You might need to make a little extra preparation to make things work well:

- ◆ Change the rules of the game so that everyone faces the same degree of difficulty.
- ◆ Adapt an activity so that someone in a wheelchair can take part.
- ◆ Check the meeting hall for hazards for someone with poor eyesight.
- ◆ Avoid activities where things need to be written down or read if someone in the Section is dyslexic.
- ◆ Speak to the parents of the affected Member so that you are well aware of all of the aspects of the problem.

Having a wide variety of young people in your Section makes life fun. No two people are alike. Having someone with an extra challenge in life can make your experience even more worthwhile. Making their involvement in your Section's programme possible by a little thought and extra preparation gives them the satisfaction of having participated, it also gives you the satisfaction of helping to make it possible.

People with Special Needs deserve to be allowed to enjoy what Scouting has to offer. Everyone else will benefit from the experience of having worked beside that person.

What have I learned in this module?

In this module you will have learned that most of us have some kind of Special Need. You, as a Young Leader will have learned that those with Special Needs can take a full part in our programme if we take the time to make little changes to how we do things.

At your next Section meeting, think how you might change the way a game or activity is played to allow someone with a Special Need to take a full part.

Further reading

Relevant factsheets have been produced by the Special Needs department to give advice and information on the majority of Special Needs. These can be downloaded from www.scoutbase.co.uk or from the Information Centre on 0845 300 1818.