



Giving Responsibility for Younger Children to Young People under 18 Guidance for Leaders

Introduction

The BB seeks to develop and empower young people and part of that empowerment process is to encourage them to take responsibility for a range of roles within the Company or Section.

These roles often include the young person taking some responsibility in supervising activities for Anchors and Juniors, or younger people in the section. This may be in a variety of settings; it could be to organise games on a Company night or to work for a few weeks in Anchors or Juniors or to be a Tent Commander at camp.

It is important that proper support and information is available to a young person undertaking these roles. This is important for the young person's own confidence and learning as well as to safeguard the younger children in question.

This guidance is intended for BB leaders whose job it is to assist young people to take on these responsible roles.

Good Practice Guidance

Our work with young people is often about providing a safe place where they can be themselves and feel relaxed. Coupled with this we try and challenge young people, when they are ready, to extend their experience and try things they might not have otherwise considered.

Giving responsibility to a young person for a group of younger children can have immense benefits for all involved and offer opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

The first thing to consider when giving responsibility is:

- Are they ready?

Giving too much responsibility too soon could have a negative effect. So how do we decide if a young person is ready for this responsibility? The leader who knows the young person well is best placed to assess this, and discussing the role with the young person will give an indication of their readiness. Other signs will be a young person who shows evidence of developing maturity and responsibility in other aspects of Company life.

Another way of assessing a young person's readiness to help supervise children is to explore their attitudes to younger children. Below are a few questions that you could ask. Remember: as the adult leader, you can help the young person to think through their answers to these questions and possibly challenge any attitudes that you identify as not compatible with good practice.

Possible questions to ask:

- What experience do you have of looking after children? Brothers and sisters/ nephews, nieces etc?
- What do you enjoy most about looking after children?
- What do you think is unacceptable behaviour?
- How would you deal with unacceptable behaviour?
- What would you do in an emergency?

The second consideration is:

- What support and information can I give?

A good way to promote a successful outcome is to give proper support and information to the young person and some of that information will be connected to the questions above.

The young person being given responsibility needs to know that the responsibility is never solely theirs. There will always be a qualified leader on hand. In the case of Tent Commanders, it is good practice to ensure the young person knows exactly how to contact an adult leader if they can't cope or if they need some extra support or advice.

It is a good idea to give the young person a copy of our Code of Good Practice card and go through the relevant points of safeguarding.

Other support and information may be appropriate to your own particular circumstances.

The third consideration is:

- Safety net – or what to do if things go wrong

With the right preparation and support, there should be very little that can go wrong. You will need to go through the obvious list of things that can occur when working with children – minor accidents, conflict, challenging behaviour, illness or distress – and the young person should be clear about what to do and where to get help.

This risk assessment of the activity they are helping to supervise is, in itself, a good skill to learn and should help to increase confidence.

Finally:

- Praise and Review

Remember to talk to the young person at the end of the activity, or role and give positive feedback about what went well. Encourage the young person to say what they think went well and what they have learned. If there is anything they think they might have done differently, make sure you emphasise that this is how we learn. If possible arrange for another opportunity to put any learning into practice.

Summary

For the young person to get maximum benefit from their experience, remember to consider:

- Are they ready?
- What support can I give?
- What safety nets are in place?
- Praise and review.