



# SAFELY TOGETHER

2022





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## **SAFELY TOGETHER**

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# **THE BASICS OF A SAFE DEVELOPMENTAL ENVIRONMENT IN GUIDING AND SCOUTING**

The Guides and Scouts of Finland (Suomen Partiolaiset – Finlands Scouter ry, SP-FS) is the largest youth organisation in Finland and the federation of all Finnish Scouting and Guiding activities both in Finnish and Swedish. SP-FS is a member of the two world organisations for Guiding and Scouting, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM). SP-FS is their representative in Finland.

SP-FS promotes the world organisations' Objectives in Finland and ensures that their principles are followed during Finnish Scouting and Guiding activities. Activities are organised in local groups (lippukunta), of which there are approximately 750 in Finland. Local groups in the same regions are organised into Scout Districts (piiri), which are tasked with facilitating Scouting in their regions and supporting local groups.

The core concept of Scouting and Guiding is to create an environment in which children and youth can participate in the planning of activities, deciding upon them and carrying them out. According to our principles, Scouts and Guides are given responsibility, and they learn to lead groups from an early age. In a nutshell, Scouting and Guiding could be defined as activity for children and youth supported and facilitated by adults. Scouting and Guiding activities are mostly supported by volunteers.

Scouting and Guiding is a politically and religiously nonaligned movement that invites any and all to join. Our goal is to bring up – both in terms of personality and habits – balanced, responsible, active and independently thinking members of local, national and international communities. The Scout Method, our Ideals, and our Educational Objectives show us the way to reach this goal. Our Ideals and our Educational Objectives are also the foundation for creating a safe growth environment in Guiding and Scouting.

## THE IDEALS OF SCOUTS AND GUIDES

- To respect others
- To love nature and protect the environment
- To be honest and reliable
- To build friendship across boundaries
- To know one's responsibility and to take action
- To improve oneself as a human being
- To search for the truth in life

## THE EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF GUIDING AND SCOUTING

- One's relationship with oneself refers to life management, creativity, healthy lifestyle choices, taking action, and forming one's own worldview.
- One's relationship with other people refers to valuing humanity, seeing diversity as richness, the ability to put oneself in another's position, solidarity, fairness, and expressing one's feelings and opinions in a way that suits the situation.
- One's relationship with society refers to one's ability to act in a group and organisations larger than a group, the willingness to take care of shared interests, valuing one's own culture as well as that of others', and the ability to understand oneself as part of the local, national, and international community.
- One's relationship with the environment refers to a positive relationship with nature, the ability to move in Finnish nature, acknowledging the need for environmental conservation, feeling responsible for one's living environment, and respecting nature.

The activities of SP-FS are rooted in promoting safety. Participants are expected to be responsible and respectful towards others and include safety as an aspect of all event planning. Both the national organisation and the Scout Districts support and train youth and adults to be capable in carrying out their responsibilities.

The safety of Scouting and Guiding activities is based on the following instructions and guidelines by SP-FS: The Safety Guidelines, Safety Instructions, and Guidelines for Sea Scouting Activities, the Instructions for Crisis Communications of the Finnish Scouts and Guides, and the Drugs Directive of the Finnish Scouts and Guides. These are complemented by guidelines of individual Scout Districts. SP-FS has created this Safely Together guideline in addition to the aforementioned instructions and guidelines to promote the wellbeing of children and youth in Scout and Guiding as well as outside of it.

# **THE BASIS FOR THE SAFELY TOGETHER GUIDELINE**

SP-FS wants to do its part in ensuring that children and youth can grow and develop in a safe environment. This guideline is a step to guarantee that young people and adults know how they can shape a safe growth environment for children and youth with their own actions.

Although providing a safe growth environment is a primary goal in Scouting and Guiding, children and youth can still experience harassment, bullying, mistreatment, or violence during Scouting and Guiding activities or outside of them. We must prepare ourselves for these unfortunate circumstances, be able to intervene as soon as possible and above all prevent these unwanted situation especially during Scouting activities. We also wish to make sure that young people and adults know what to do if they notice any of the aforementioned situations.

This SP-FS guideline for the promotion of child and youth wellbeing is based on current Finnish legislation, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the charter of the Guides and Scouts of Finland. The goal of this guideline is that scouts and guides commit themselves to practices that promote the safety and wellbeing of children. By safety and wellbeing, we mean the realisation of a child's basic and fundamental human rights as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SAFETY AND WELLBEING THIS MEANS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT**

- Children are treated respectfully
- The personal integrity of a child is respected
- The safe growth and development, and the wellbeing of children is supported
- Children are protected from bullying, violence, sexual abuse, the use of drugs and alcohol, and other things threatening the safe development of a child

The Safely Together guideline is primarily meant as a tool for all adults participating in Scouting and Guiding, and all youth acting as group leaders. Therefore this guideline focuses on how those adults and youth can promote the wellbeing of children and youth through their own actions and example. It is equally important, however, to consider how children and youth can promote the wellbeing of each other with their own behaviour. We seek to address this challenge with the Youth Programme of the Guides and Scouts of Finland.

This SP-FS guideline for promoting the wellbeing of children is also intended as a tool for volunteers and employees that work with Guiding and Scouting. We also wish to communicate to our partners, such as parents, stakeholders, and other parties interested in Scouting, that the wellbeing and safety of children is a high priority for SP-FS. This guideline applies to all Scouting and Guiding activities, and the Scouts, Guides, and other participants taking part in activities.

With this guideline, active communication, and training we strive to make sure that all participants associated with SP-FS, both employees and volunteers, know how safety is promoted in Scouting and Guiding. All participants must also know what to do when they suspect a child or adolescent's safety and development is under threat.

## Our goal is that

- All activities under SP-FS, whether they are organised by local groups, Scout Districts, or the confederation, including all volunteers and employees, promote the wellbeing of children and youth,
- Participants of the SP-FS have enough knowledge to protect children and promote safety during activities,
- SP-FS participants take the Safely Together guideline into consideration in all situations and treat all children and youth with respect, and that
- SP-FS has a Code of Conduct to prevent the abuse of children and youth and for taking care of any suspected case of child abuse.



# **SP-FS PROMOTES THE WELLBEING AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The Youth Programme of the Guides and Scouts of Finland in itself promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of children and youth. In spite of this, things that threaten wellbeing may happen or be discovered during Scouting and Guiding activities. In case of these situations, it is important that Scouts and Guides can act pre-emptively. We train and educate participants to prepare for various situations in advance and to strive to create an environment that supports wellbeing. SP-FS wishes to raise, empower and involve children and youth in a way that allows them to recognise ways of promoting the wellbeing of themselves and others.

## **SP-FS promotes child and youth wellbeing by**

- Developing and sustaining the safety education included in the Youth Programme
- Supporting local groups to organise high-quality Scouting and Guiding activities
- Familiarising and educating employees and volunteers of the organisation as well as local group members according to the Safely Together guideline as part of the education system of Scouting and Guiding
- Examining the Safely Together guideline regularly and updating the guideline if need be
- Ensuring that SP-FS works on child protection issues in partnership with the appropriate officials as well as
- Offering support to people of all ages who notice abuse or become the object of abuse, and, if need be, directing them to external help.

## **SAFE PRACTICES IN LOCAL GROUPS**

In Scouting and Guiding we do our best to organise high-quality activities and prevent any risks for child development. To accomplish this, activity organisers must have the support they need. Here are some practices that ensure this.

We recommend that all Scouting and Guiding groups are lead by pairs. This means that each group has at least two leaders that plan, carry out, and assess group activities together. Two leaders have a better chance of addressing the needs of all group members and providing role models the group members can rely upon. Local groups should make an effort to gain the resources required to provide every group two leaders. A prerequisite of safe activities is that group leaders know their members well.

Local groups must identify one or two Safe Adults over the age of 18 who have a good understanding of this guideline, safe practices, and of what to do in an abuse case. They are tasked to support other local group members in matters relating to this guideline. It is important that children and youth in the local group know they can ask and tell the Safe Adults about any abuse they have seen or experienced. If a local group's Board does not identify a Safe Adult separately, the duties fall to the Chair of the Board, most often the leader of the local group. To make sure children and youth are familiar with the Safe Adults, it is a good practice for them to participate often in local group events. A Safe Adult's duties also include applying for criminal records extracts, which will be discussed later on.

All education and training provided by Guiding and Scouting promotes safe, high-quality Scouting and Guiding activities. This guideline introduces the Safely Together online course as part of the education and training. We recommend that all scouts and guides over 18 take part in this course as soon as possible. The course can be completed online and takes approximately 1–2 hours. All adults and group leaders participating on the 2016 Finnjamboree must have completed the course and after the fall of 2016 all adults and group leaders of all ages are required to have completed the course. The Board of a local group is responsible for making sure all of the aforementioned people have completed the course. The course will be part of the education system of SP-FS. It is valid for five years after completion, after which it must be retaken. A description of the position of a Safe Adult is attached to this guideline.

## PRACTICES THAT INCREASE SAFETY

In Guiding and Scouting adults, youth, and children come together in different circumstances. Interaction between different people is an essential part of Guiding and Scouting. The shape of these interactions and how people are treated during them has great meaning for child wellbeing and safety. In Guiding and Scouting, the principles of respectful conduct with children and youth can be found, for example, in our Ideals and our Educational Objectives. Adults and youth who take part in Guiding and Scouting have a significant role in creating a safe environment and passing on these principles and values. Their juniors will follow their example and adopt the ways their elders treat others. If someone notices that these principles are not present during Scouting and Guiding activities, the situation should be addressed immediately.

Scouting and Guiding is an educational organisation, but the primary responsibility for a child's education lies with their guardians. Creating a safe developmental environment in Scouting and Guiding requires the co-operation of parents. Co-operation at its minimum means communication about trips and events. At its

best it is parent nights, inviting parents along for trips and sharing concern for children and youth between both sides. It is to let children know that Guiding and Scouting works side by side with their families.

Guiding and Scouting is a hobby in which we work actively against bullying. It is of the utmost importance that children, youth, and adults are able to recognise bullying so they can intervene and prevent it when necessary. In everyday language, we often refer to disagreements and teasing as bullying. These are rather common and short-lasting phenomena and are not targeted at one person. More serious bullying occurs in situations in which purposefully hateful behaviour is continuously targeted at one person. This kind of bullying often includes an imbalance of power: the bully has in one way or another more power than the bullied. Bullying can be verbal (name-calling, verbal abuse), indirect (shunning, spreading mean things about a person), it can target property (taking things or breaking them on purpose), and it can also be harmful communication via the internet or mobile phones.

We must intervene in any and all bullying cases in Guiding and Scouting, whether they are individual case of teasing or continuous bullying. It is important for both the bully and the bullied that the bullying is addressed and stopped. Taking action against bullying is as important to other children. It sends a message that we are responsible for one another and that every human being deserves respectful treatment. Tools for dealing with bullying can be found for example in Christina Salmivalli's work (Koulukiusaamiseen puuttuminen (2010) available in Finnish).

The Guides and Scouts of Finland have a Mukavasti yhdessä guideline that provides advice on how to prevent and deal with bullying. You can find the guideline on the website of the Guides and Scouts of Finland at [partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa](http://partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa) (in Finnish). If you need help in resolving a bullying situation, talk to the Safe Adult in your local group.

When investigating bullying, it is important that the guardians of the child or youth are also taken into account and, where possible, involved

in cooperation matters. If the efforts of a local group and its Safe Adults are not enough to deal with the bullying and ending it, local groups can ask for help from their Regional Instructor. In exceptionally difficult cases the Instructor can ask for additional support from the Scout District office.

## Principles of Respectful Conduct for Every Leader

- Think of every child and youth you meet as an individual
- Respect and appreciate the diversity of children and youth
- Take into account the individual characteristics of every participating child youth as much as possible
- Every child and youth should feel like they are recognised in Guiding and Scouting
- Listen to children and youth
- Take the things children and youth tell you seriously
- Speak respectfully to children and youth (not shouting or demeaning)
- Speak respectfully about children and youth
- Treat children and youth fairly
- Be honest with children and youth
- Children and youth have to be able to trust adults in Scouting and Guiding
- Help children and youth when need be
- Share the responsibility of taking care of children and youth
- Respect the personal integrity of children and youth
- Be truly present, both physically and mentally, when you interact with children and youth

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SITUATIONS REQUIRING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Situations which require a child welfare needs assessment or other actions may occur or be discovered during Guiding and Scouting activities. Any and all concerns about a child's wellbeing must be addressed regardless of the situation or timing.

### What is child welfare?

The objective of child welfare is to protect a child's right to a safe growth environment, to balanced and well-rounded development, and to special protection. According to the Child Welfare Act, child welfare includes an investigation by a social welfare professional of the need for child welfare as well as the child welfare support measures provided by municipalities. Preventive child welfare refers to promoting child wellbeing, growth and development in, for example, education and youth work. (no 417/2007, 3§)

In this guideline, preventive child welfare is discussed in the chapters about general child and youth wellbeing. In all other contexts, child welfare refers to situations which require an assessment whether a child or youth needs to be directed to municipal child welfare services and a child welfare notification is made.

Situations in which child welfare services are required must always be taken seriously. For this reason, it is imperative that all group leaders and every Guide or Scout over the age of 18 must familiarise themselves with these matters by completing the Safely Together online course.

### Recognising abuse

Even though SP-FS does its best to promote child and youth wellbeing and safety, it is impossible to entirely avoid situations in which wellbeing and safety are threatened.

Child abuse refers to all physical, mental, and sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation, commercial or otherwise, that disrupts a child's balanced development and health, and violates their human rights. The UN convention on the

Rights of the Child states that children must be protected from violence, neglectful treatment, and exploitation. It is vital that we recognise the different forms of these so that we can protect children and youth from abuse.

Any and all abuse that happens in Guiding and Scouting must be addressed immediately. The District office can be contacted if you need help with addressing the situation. In sudden and severe cases, officials must be contacted directly. Assaults and sexual offences are always police matters.

### **ABUSE IN GUIDING AND SCOUTING CAN BE, FOR EXAMPLE**

- An adult begins a relationship with a minor considerably younger than themselves
- A Scout assaults another Scout at a Guiding and Scouting event
- A Guide threatens another Guide with violence
- An adult promises a minor alcohol in exchange for sex

### **TYPES OF ABUSE**

- Physical abuse: an activity that causes or might cause physical pain, impediment, or damage to a child, such as a beating or pulling hair
- Psychological abuse: an activity that harms or might harm a child's physical mental, moral, or social development, but does not cause bodily damage. Examples include threats, discrimination, exclusion, and mocking.
- Neglect: a guardian or another adult responsible for a child neglects to offer the care required by the child, which harms or might harm a child's physical mental, moral, or social development. Care includes health, education, cognitive development, nutrition, shelter, and healthy surroundings.
- Sexual abuse: an adult or an elder adolescent presses or forces an underage child into sexual activities such as showing them pornographic materials or touching them in a sexual manner. According to Finnish criminal legislation, any children or youth

under the age of 16 are considered underage (also known as the age of consent).

- Commercial exploitation: exploiting a child for compensation and gain of others, an activity that harms or might harm a child's physical mental, moral, or social development.
- Spiritual abuse: a person in a position of spiritual authority abuses their power and gained trust with the purpose of controlling or manipulating a child.

## **Code of Conduct in Child Welfare situations**

Situations in Guiding and Scouting that might require child welfare intervention can be when, for example

- A child is not picked up after a meeting or a camp
- A parent picks up their child after a meeting or a camp clearly under the influence of alcohol
- A child or youth has signs of physical abuse on their body
- A child or youth tells you about neglect and/or abuse they have experienced
- A child or youth talks about their drug or alcohol use or a leader becomes concerned about it
- The behaviour of a child or youth causes concern
- A child says they do not want to go home or are afraid to go home
- A parent's drug or alcohol problem or the state of their mental health causes concern that it is threatening the wellbeing of a child

## **Prepare**

Leaders of local group should discuss how they can act in situations that require child welfare. All leaders should be aware of these practices. It is best to find out how and to whom a child welfare notification is made in your home municipality. (You can, for example, look for the phone numbers needed and post them up on the local group notice board where everyone can see them). A local group's leader must also be familiar with the general safety



instructions in Guiding and Scouting and the crisis communications instructions for their Scout District. By educating leaders and promoting leader education, a local group can make sure that its leaders have the skills to promote safety and deal with any situations that require intervention.

### **ASK FOR HELP!**

Local groups do not need to be able to take care of child welfare issues by themselves. Leaders of a local group do not have to deal with child welfare cases by themselves. Officials, professionals, and scout Districts are there to support both local groups and individual leaders. There is no need for anyone to play hero at their hobby. Ask for help when you need it.

### **ASK AND LISTEN**

When abuse or anything else causes concern, the situation must be addressed immediately. An unfortunate situation or information about it might come up suddenly. The concern may grow gradually. Any issue must be discussed with the child in question. It is recommended that the discussion includes another leader, preferably the other leader of the child's group. The situation is easier to keep in hand with another adult present, the emotional burden can be shared and the situation can be reflected upon afterwards with the other leader. It is always better if two pairs of ears have heard the same story.

Ask questions and explain the situation to the child openly. It is important to use exact phrasing and direct questions that cannot be misunderstood. Violence and other things should be talked about directly. If the child is afraid to talk about something, they must not be forced, but an effort should be made to encourage them. It is best to avoid leading questions such as "Did your dad hit you?". A good question would be something like "What happened to you?". A child or youth must not be promised anything, such as "It's good that you told me this, now it can never happen again." The child or youth should not be promised that their guardians will not be told. If possible, it is recommendable that notes are taken during the conversation, so that they can be reviewed afterwards if need be and a leader does not have to try and rely on memory.

If possible, the most important points in a child's story should be written down as direct quotes.

The concern about the child should be discussed with their guardian, if necessary. The primary caregivers of a child are their guardians, and it is rarely wise to dismiss them. Asking guardians questions to clarify the situation should not be avoided. However, if there is a reason to suspect that the threat to a child's safety is at home, child welfare officials must be contacted immediately. In these kinds of situations, the officials will consider the best course of action and whether the guardians should be contacted.

### **MAKE A CHILD WELFARE NOTIFICATION IF NECESSARY**

When there is concern for a child's wellbeing and the issue has been discussed with the child and their guardians, if necessary, the local group has to decide whether a child welfare notification should be made. A child welfare notification is an expression of concern, based on which child welfare officials will begin an investigation into whether child welfare actions are required. Child welfare actions may take the form of family or home services, a support family or person, and in more serious cases, the child can be placed away from their family. If a Guide or a Scout is unsure about how to proceed, they can call the municipal social official themselves and ask for advice. The call can be made anonymously. If this feels too difficult, the District office can offer help. The District office employee will then take responsibility for following up with the case, if need be, and making the child welfare notification. Your local group's Safe Adult can also offer support. Any situation that requires a child welfare notification must be reported to the Scout District's office, even when the local group files the child welfare notification by themselves. This way Districts and the national organisation can collect data on the number and type of child welfare notifications. The District office is also able to support the local group, if needed, even if the need for support hasn't come up in the local group yet.

People working with children and youth are required by law to make a child welfare notification if they become concerned about

a child's safety. People that are required to report include those working in the social and healthcare industries, day care, education, youth work, as a police or in congregations. However, everyone has the right to make a child welfare notification.

## How to make a child welfare notification

- In a non-urgent situation, call the child welfare official in the home municipality of the child during office hours. Contact information can be found on the municipality's website or by calling the municipality's main switchboard.
  - In urgent cases (for example when a child tells you they are afraid to go home due to some serious threat), call your municipality's emergency social service number. If you can't find it, call 112.
  - Give the employee filing the notification the child's full name and social security number (if available). Prepare to also give them the name and contact details (phone numbers) of the child's guardians.
  - Describe what caused the concern for the child in as much detail as possible: e.g. the child told you at a meeting on this date that their parents were drunk the entire weekend.
  - Tell the employee whether you want to make an anonymous notification or not. Please remember that it is very difficult to file a child welfare notification without any details about the notifier, such that it has been made by a Scout or Guide leader. The child and their guardians have the right to read the notification in full. You can discuss how the notification will be written with the employee receiving your call. To take the issue further, it is better if the notification includes the notifiers name.
- Tell the child or their guardians that you are making a child welfare notification.
  - The employee receiving the call will ask you for further details, if necessary, and all the information required to process the notification.
  - In non-urgent cases, the notification can be filed by the board of the local group or by an employee of the Scout District office.
  - The notification must be remade if the issue of concern does not pass or new points of concern are discovered.

A child can make the child welfare notification by themselves, but, in Guiding and Scouting, we believe a child must receive adult support and help to make the notification. It is vital that children know who they can talk to about their concerns in Guiding and Scouting and that they can trust a notification will be made. If the guardians of the child in question contact you after the notification has been filed, they can be directed to contact a scout District employee or the social welfare official, who will answer any questions. If the issue keeps bothering you or a fellow Guide or Scout, talk about any thoughts you have about the matter with the leader of your local group. If this is not enough, the District office can be contacted for counsel about how to proceed.

# **CHECKING A VOLUNTEER'S CRIMINAL BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the Act on the Investigation of the Criminal Background of Volunteers Working with Children (hereinafter referred to as the Criminal Background Act) is to protect the personal integrity of minors and, thus, to promote and safeguard the growth, development and well-being of minors. The law is an important step in improving the quality of leisure activities and the growth environment for children.

According to the Criminal Background Act, the organizer of a volunteer task, such as a Scouting local group, must establish guidelines or procedures for its activities that are necessary to achieve the purpose of the law and assess the voluntary tasks for which the criminal background of volunteers shall be investigated. The Safety Together guidelines of the Guides and Scouts of Finland provide local groups with guidelines and procedures that a local group may adopt to meet the requirements of the Criminal Background Act.

One of the tools provided by the Criminal Background Act is to find out a volunteer's criminal background in certain situations. Although there is no legal obligation in the Scouts to check the criminal background of volunteers, the law has been applied since 2014. One of the sources for this guideline is the standard guideline written in collaboration by the Finnish confederations Allianssi, Sostery and Valo, called the "Code of Conduct – practices that increase child safety and criminal background checks for volunteers." It includes appendices such as a consent form for applying for a volunteer's criminal records extract and a commission contract between organisations that belong to the same national organisation (i.e. between local groups, Scout Districts and the national organisation).

In these instructions, a local group applies to the activity organiser referred to by the Criminal Background Act. In some situations, the activity organisers might also be another party such as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran church.

## **PREEMPTIVE ACTIONS TAKE PRECEDENCE**

According to the Criminal Background Act, checking a criminal background is only a preemptive measure which will only affect the recruiting of people who are previously unknown to a local group and who have been convicted. The safety of the growth environment can be improved more effectively by verifying criminal backgrounds by developing policies that reduce the potential for harmful conduct in interactions between adults and children or youth and between children and youth. Such procedures include, for example, other Safe Together guideline procedures.

A background check is to be made of everyone who start leading a group alone (except for Explorers who lead a group alone as part of their Explorer Programme).

If leader positions are advertised to adults, the advertisement must include a note that anyone who will lead a group alone is required to have their criminal background checked.

# CRIMINAL RECORDS EXTRACTS AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

A local group must ask a volunteering applicant for a criminal background check in situations where all of the following apply

1. A local group's board has approved the Safely Together guideline as part of their own guidelines
2. A person will be the only adult leader of a group (excluding group leaders taking part in the Explorer Programme)

Example: A Ranger or a Rover starts leading a group of Cub Scouts alone after leading Trackers alone or together with someone else  
> get a background check

Example: A former Cub Scout leader returns to the local group after three years  
> get a background check.

Example: a former Cub Scout leader, whose criminal background has already been checked earlier, returns to a local group after two years  
> no new background check required

Example: An adult leads a group of Adventurers together with an Explorer  
> a background check is to be carried out

3. The group the person will lead has regular meetings. Groups here refers to those with underage (under 18-year-old) participants, i.e. Cub Scout, Adventurer, Tracker and Explorer groups as well as groups of underage leaders of any other age groups including leaders acting as an Adult Support and Local Age Section Managers.
4. The position is of a permanent nature for at least one year and by large performed alone.

A background check is made by asking the written consent of the volunteer with the application form included as an appendix (Appendix 1). The application form is sent to the designated person at a Scout District office. The Scout District will fact check the application and forward applications in larger quantities to the Legal Register Centre. The Legal Register Centre will send the criminal records extract directly to the local group. Appendix 3 describes this process in more detail as well as any further actions required.

The criminal extract is a subject to a fee and the fee is paid by the local group. The criminal extract generally includes convictions for sexual, drug, and gross violent crimes. An extract always contains personal information of a sensitive nature, so only those authorised by the board of a local group (such as Safe Adults) may handle the extract. They are required to keep the contents of the extract secret. The decision to recruit someone based on the extract's information cannot be made by the board. Note! Even the information whether an extract includes any convictions or not must be kept a secret.

The duty of confidentiality should be taken seriously, as any violation can be punished under the criminal code as a crime or breach of confidentiality (Chapter 38, Sections 1 and 2 of the Criminal Code 39/1889).

It is also important to remember that a local group may not add any other information, besides that an extract has been checked and the date of the extract, to any volunteer records. A volunteer's record cannot in any circumstance include any information about what a criminal records extract includes. A criminal record extract may not be reproduced. The volunteer's personal data must never be marked as to whether or not their extract contains a criminal record. The local group must provide the volunteer with the extract as soon as it has been reviewed



The local group must return the extract to the volunteer immediately after it has been checked. The Legal Register Centre will send the extract to the address written on the application. In practice, this will mean the home address of a Safe Adult or a leader of a local group. After reading the criminal records extract, a Safe Adult will make the final choice about recruiting a volunteer. The central office strongly recommends to take this into serious consideration whenever an extract includes any offences. A criminal records extract only includes

the most serious convictions for sex, drug, and violent offences. A local group can contact any Scout District office or the central office for advice in this matter.

If a person will not give their consent for a background check, they are not to be recruited as the only leader of a group.

A local group has to prepare themselves for the time it takes to apply for criminal records extracts, as it will slow down recruiting especially at the beginning of semesters.

See appendices 1–3

# **SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL GROUPS FROM DISTRICT AND CENTRAL OFFICE EMPLOYEES**

## **Scout Districts offer support to local groups with the following measures.**

- The District tracks the overall situations of child wellbeing in local groups in the area (volunteer support).
- The Scout Districts use straightforward crisis communications instructions and District employees know what to do in crisis situations.
- Beginning from autumn 2016, all group leaders and scouts over the age 18 that participate in training or other events organised by the District must have completed the Safely Together course or the course is part of the training.

## **SUPPORT PROVIDED BY DISTRICT OFFICES IN CHILD WELFARE MATTERS**

The employees of District offices are tasked with supporting and advising local groups with child welfare issues and can help with the filing of a child welfare notification if needed. District office employees gather general data about the number and type of child welfare concerns that come up in Guiding and Scouting based on notifications made by local groups.

The crisis management instructions given to SP-FS employees include instructions on how to handle child welfare cases that are discovered in Guiding and Scouting. They also include instructions on what actions need to be taken

when something threatens child and youth safety in Guiding and Scouting or when Guides and Scouts need advice or material support in these kinds of situations.

This guideline is based in the belief that local groups do not need to be able to handle child welfare situations by themselves. When a leader is concerned for a child or youth, it is important that they know they can contact a District employee for advice. The employee can either give the advice themselves or direct the leader to another employee with the necessary resources. Guiding and Scouting offices have designated employees to take on any incoming questions about child welfare matters. It is important that local groups know who is the best person to talk to about child welfare matters in their own District.

District office employees are to make sure that local groups get the help and support they need in the aftermath of child welfare cases. Anyone who needs additional mental support or needs to talk to someone will be guided to professional help. For instance, if a crisis situation bothers you for a long time after it happened, professional help can be reached through health centres. Support and additional materials for crisis intervention are also available from the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Red Cross, and from congregations.

## DISTRICT OFFICES OFFER SUPPORT FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Scout Districts have a designated person or persons who can answer any questions about criminal background checks and the required process.
- The Scout Districts use the application process created by the national organisation, which helps local groups to take action.

## SUPPORT OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR SCOUT DISTRICTS AND LOCAL GROUPS

### THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION IS TASKED WITH

- updating the Safely Together guideline when needed
- the communications about Safely Together in partnership with the Scout Districts
- tracking the development of safety nationwide in partnership with the Scout Districts
- developing the Youth Programme to strengthen the safety skills of children and youth as well as their respect for diversity
- to introduce safety skills into all age sections of the Youth Programme and activities or units that underline the value of diversity
- adding the Safely Together guideline as a part of the education system in Guiding and Scouting.
- updating the Safety Instructions for Guiding and Scouting to include child welfare, and the Safely Together guideline and training.

# COMMUNICATIONS IN CHILD WELFARE SITUATIONS

All child welfare cases must be reported to a District office even if the notification is made independently by a local group. The child's name does not need to be revealed, but a general description must be given. The purpose of this is to gather general data about the number and types of child welfare concerns in Guiding and Scouting rather than creating a database of child welfare cases.

Discretion is essential in all child welfare cases, and the privacy of the child and their family must be respected. The concern must be handled by as few people in possible in the local group (e.g. the leader of the local group or a Safe Adult), and

no outside parties are to be told about a child welfare notification or any of its contents.

Child welfare cases discovered in local groups cannot be announced or commented upon in public. All questions by e.g. the media will be answered by officials, the District or the national organisation. If the situation requires internal crisis management (for example if several members have seen violence or an otherwise threatening situation), the situation is to be explained as generally as possible and the privacy of the child and their family must be preserved. The District office can offer support and advice in these kinds of situations.

# SOURCES

(IN FINNISH)

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- Mukavasti Yhdessä -ohje, vinkkejä ja keinoja kiusaamisen ehkäisyyn ja siihen puuttumiseen. [partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa](http://partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa)

# APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Volunteer Consent Form for Criminal Records Extract Application

Appendix 2: Commission Contract – Criminal records extract applications

Appendix 3: Description of the criminal background check process

Appendix 4: Safely Together in a nutshell

Appendix 5: Position description Safe Adult



## APPENDIX 1:

# VOLUNTEER CONSENT FORM FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS EXTRACT APPLICATION

This consent form is based on the Act on criminal background checks for volunteers working with children. Volunteers must give consent before the volunteering organiser or any such party can apply for a criminal records extract from the Legal Register Centre.

The activity organiser: .....

Volunteer: [First and last name] .....

Social security number: Birthdate: .....

Member ID: .....

Volunteer position: .....  
[the position this application relates to]

☐ I consent to this criminal records extract application.

I have been informed about the following before signing this application:

- The criminal records extract is requested to protect the personal integrity of underage children and youth it will be checked by the organiser of the position.
- The extract will include information on certain sex, drug and violent offences.
- The organiser must turn the extract over to me immediately after checking it.

☐ I have been informed that the extract will be applied for by the Scout District and/or national organisation by the request of the volunteering organiser.

### DATE AND SIGNATURE

Place and date

.....

Name of local group

.....

Name of person entitled to sign in behalf of the organisation

.....

.....  
Name of volunteer

Delivery of the extract

.....

Volunteering organiser

.....

Recipient (person)

.....

Address

.....

Post code and city

.....

## APPENDIX 2:

# COMMISSION CONTRACT – CRIMINAL RECORDS EXTRACT APPLICATIONS

This commission contract is based on the Act on criminal background checks for volunteers working with children. By the written commission of a volunteering organiser, a criminal records extract can be applied for by a central organisation or other organisation that belongs to the same organisation as the volunteering organiser.

**Principal of the contract:** (Name of local group) \_\_\_\_\_

**Contractor:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Name of Scout District) Suomen Partiolaiset – Finlands Scouter ry  
(The Guides and Scouts of Finland)

Commission: The contractor will apply for a person's criminal records extract on behalf of the principal

The principal affirms that the volunteer has been informed of this commission before the volunteer has given consent.

The Legal Register Centre will send the criminal records extract directly to the principal.

### DATE AND SIGNATURE

Place and date  
\_\_\_\_\_

Principal  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contractor  
\_\_\_\_\_

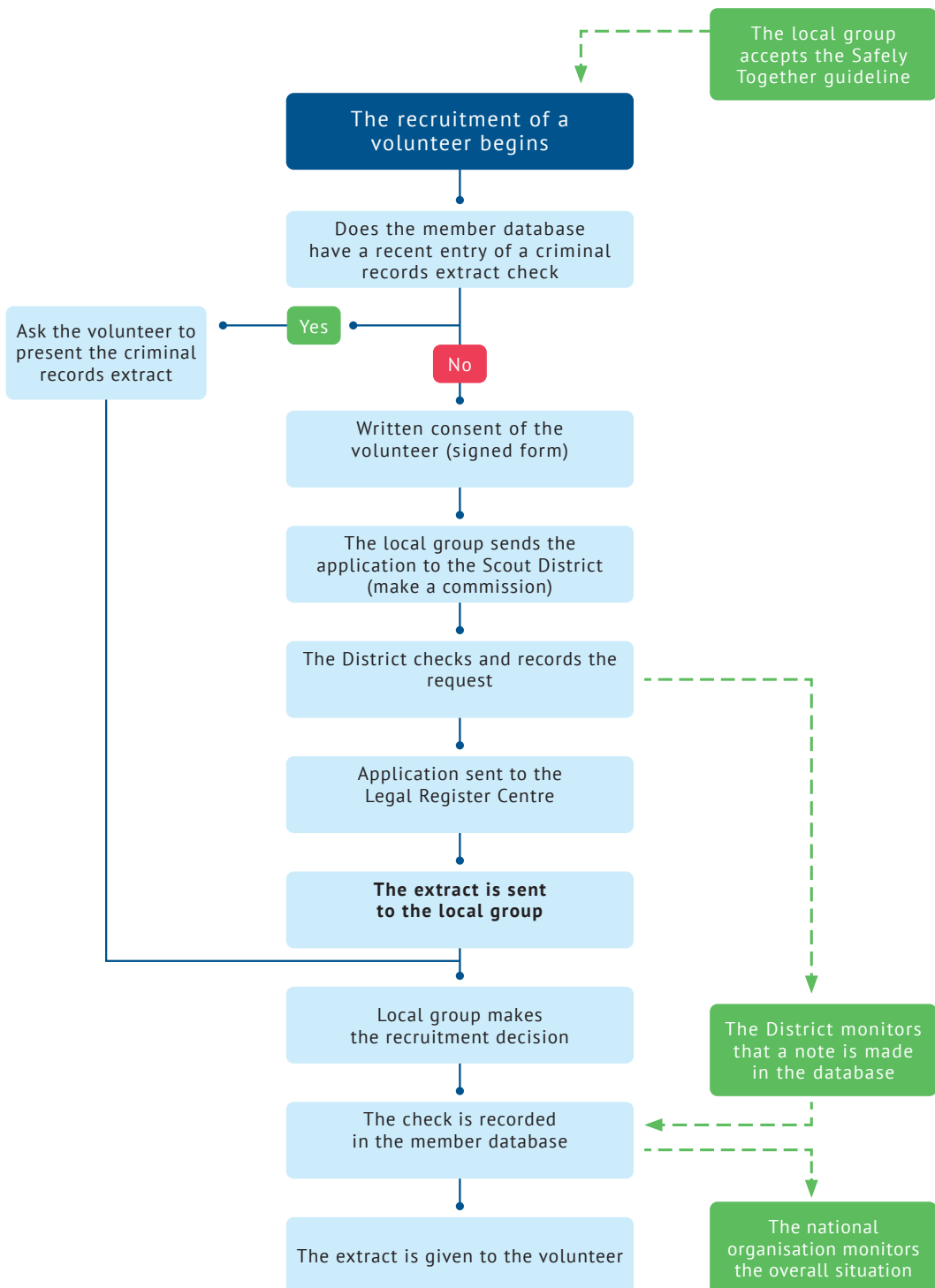
Name of local group  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person entitled to sign on behalf of the organisation  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Scout District organisation  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person entitled to sign on behalf of the organisation  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person entitled to sign on behalf of the organisation  
\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 3:

# DESCRIPTION OF THE CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK PROCESS

1. The local group accepts the Safely Together guideline of SP-FS
  - A local group must accept the Safely Together guideline (the so-called child welfare instructions, maintained by the national organisation) as a document guiding their regular activities. The guideline outlines, for example, how activities are organised safely and what kinds of adult recruitment positions can exist and require a criminal background check.
2. The local group or Scout District asks written consent to apply for a criminal records extract from the volunteer applicant
  - The consent is asked for with the form written by the national organisation. The use of this form makes e.g. fact checking and monitoring easier.
  - A Scout District can apply for a criminal records extract if the volunteer is entering training for a position that is described by the Safely Together guideline and that is organised by the Scout District, and the local group has not requested a background check and the other conditions for an application are met.
  - A criminal records extract is generally applied for from the Legal Register Centre, but a volunteer can also present, for example, a valid criminal records extract they have applied for their job or student internship.
3. The local group makes a commission to their Scout District
  - A local group collects the needed applications at the start or before the beginning of a term and sends them without delay to their Scout District office.
4. The Scout District fact checks and records the request
  - The assigned District employee checks that the request is lawful and fills in the formal requirements
  - A Scout District keeps a database of the requests which includes the personal details of the person in question, the name of the local group making the request, the position in question and other possible statistics details.
5. The Scout District forwards the application to the Legal Register Centre
  - The Scout Districts send applications forward regularly so that there is no unnecessary delay with recruiting new adults. If necessary, the District adds a description of the position in question to the application. The extract can be requested to be sent to the local groups "Safe Adult".
6. The Legal Register Centre sends the criminal records extract to the local group
  - The local group is the activity organiser and therefore the recipient of the criminal records extract. The criminal records extract includes sensitive personal detail and the any person who handles the extract is required to keep the contents confidential (§12).

7. The local group decides whether to recruit the person
  - After receiving the criminal extract record, the local group's recruitment decision must be made by as small a group as possible, only including the people necessary for the decision. (§12)
  - The recruitment decision based on the extract cannot be made by, for example, the board of a local group. Due to confidentiality, the decision to not recruit a person cannot be justified in detail.
8. The local group documents that the criminal records extract has been checked in the membership database and returns the extract to the volunteer
  - The local group records the review of the criminal record extract in the Scout Register Kuksa. The person who has reviewed the extract and the date on which it has been reviewed are entered into the register, but no information on the content of the extract is entered.
  - No notes or copies can be made on the contents of the extract. The extract must be returned to the volunteer without delay.
  - The Scout District monitors the member database to make sure all criminal records extracts are noted in the database.
  - The costs of the criminal records extract application are covered by the local group making the request.

## APPENDIX 4:

# SAFELY TOGETHER IN A NUTSHELL

## The Guideline of the Guides and Scouts of Finland for Acting in Situations that require child welfare

The essence of this guideline is child abuse prevention, advice for dealing with difficult situations, and, thus, the increased feeling of safety experienced by children and youth in Guiding and Scouting

In Guiding and Scouting, situations that may require child welfare intervention may include

- A child is not picked up after a meeting or a camp
- A parent picks up their child after a meeting or a camp clearly under the influence of alcohol
- A child or youth has signs of physical abuse on their body
- A child or youth tells you about neglect and/or abuse they have experienced
- A child or youth talks about their drug or alcohol use or a leader becomes concerned about it
- The behaviour of a child or youth causes concern
- A child says they do not want to go home or are afraid to go home
- A parent's drug or alcohol problem or the state of their mental health causes concern that it is threatening the wellbeing of a child

## Prepare

- Every local group has to name a Safe Adult who can support local group members in child welfare matters
- The Safe Adult takes care that all leaders of the local group have completed the Safely Together online course

- A local group has to agree on a code of conduct for dealing with child welfare concerns
- Every leader must have the number for emergency social services on their phone in case of sudden child welfare issues

## Ask for help!

- Nobody has to be able to deal with child welfare matters by themselves. Professionals and District offices are here to help all Guides and Scouts

## Ask questions and listen

- If someone is concerned for the wellbeing of a child or youth in Guiding and Scouting, the matter must be intervened with immediately
- Unfortunate situations can occur suddenly or the concern may grow bit by bit
- The issue must be discussed with the child
- It is best if the conversation includes another leader, preferably the other leader of the group. This way, the situation is easier to keep in hand, the emotional burden can be shared, and the issues can be reflected on afterwards with the other leader.
- There is no need to shy away from dealing with the situation and asking questions from the child. Things like violence should be talked about directly.
- It is best to avoid leading questions such as "Did mom or dad hit you?" A good question is, for example, "What happened to you?"
- A child or youth must not be promised anything without justification, such as "Thank you for telling me. This will never happen again."
- It is a good practice to write notes during the conversation, so the issue is easier to return to and a leader doesn't have to rely on memory.

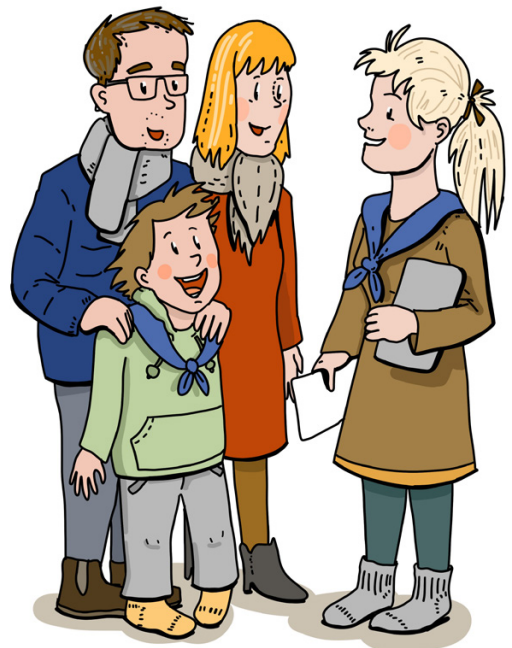


## Contact the guardians

- The issue must be discussed with the guardians of the child immediately, if there is no reason to suspect this will put the child in further danger.

## Make a child welfare notification when necessary

- A child welfare notification is an expression of concern based on which social service official will begin an investigation into whether child welfare services are required.
- If the matter is urgent, call you municipality's emergency social services or 112 immediately. If the matter can wait till the next day, the notification can be made by a Safe Adult, the leader of your local group, or a District employee.
- Calling by phone is the best way to make a notification.
- A child welfare notification can be made anonymously by a Guide or a Scout.
- A child welfare notification must include the child's full name and, if possible, their birthdate and home address.
- The person taking your call will ask you for all the information required.



## APPENDIX 5

# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# SAFE ADULT

### General info on the position

- The Safe Adult position is based on the Scouting Safely Together guideline, i.e., the guideline for the Guides and Scouts of Finland towards promoting the well-being of children and youth.
- A Safe Adult must be at least 18 years old.
- Local group members, as well as group leaders, may turn to a Safe Adult if he/she or another Scout experiences bullying, harassment, or abuse inside or outside the Scouts.
- Safe Adults may also very well provide this service alongside other roles.
- Unless a Safe Adult is specifically designated by the local group board, the duties of the Safe Adult are vested in the chairperson of the local group board (usually the local group leader). It is good practice to nominate two Safe Adults for a local group in order to allow the Safe Adults to share responsibilities and support each other. As a result, members of the local group will also have more people to help.
- If it is not possible to deal with the problem with a Safe Adult in one's own local group, other employees in your district may be contacted in problem situations.

### Safe Adult tasks

#### KNOWLEDGE OF SAFELY TOGETHER AND MUKAVASTI YHDESSÄ GUIDELINES

##### SAFE ADULT

- thoroughly knows the Safely Together guideline, safe operating methods and action in situations of abuse
- has knowledge of the Mukavasti yhdessä guideline

#### PRESENCE, REACHABILITY AND COMMUNICATION

##### SAFE ADULT

- is actively present at local group events and in everyday life, so that they become known
- is easy to approach for children and youth of the local group
- makes sure that everyone in the local group knows that they can be approached
- can receive reports on harassment, bullying or other abuse concerning the Scout's themselves and others
- makes sure that guardians of the Scouts know that the local group uses the Safely Together guideline and communicates the matter to the guardians, for example, at local group parents' evenings.

## **SUPPORT FOR GROUP LEADERS OF LOCAL GROUPS**

### **A SAFE ADULT**

- advises the local group leadership on issues related to the Safely Together guideline
- supports the local group leadership in dealing with situations requiring child protection and, where appropriate, participates in the management of such situations
- monitors the completion of the Safely Together local group leadership online training; and
- ensures that each adult member of the local group and all group leaders have completed the Safely Together online training
- ensures that each new leader of the local group is familiar with the content of the Safely Together guideline
- distributes the Safely Together guideline and the Safely Together fold brochure (the Guides and Scouts of Finland's guideline for dealing with situations requiring child protection) to each new director

## **ACTING AS A CONTACT PERSON**

### **A SAFE ADULT**

- is in contact, if necessary, with the district office in matters concerning the Safely Together guideline and in situations requiring child welfare
- ensures that the district office is notified of any situation requiring a child welfare notification, even if the local group makes the notification itself

## **DETERMINING A VOLUNTEER'S CRIMINAL BACKGROUND**

### **SAFE ADULT**

- carries out a volunteer's criminal background check in accordance with the guidelines given, when the conditions are met (see the Safely Together guideline)
- marks the entry of the personal data in Kuksa (date of review) concerning the criminal background check (in Kuksa, the section on Volunteer's criminal background check)

## **SAFE ADULT SUPPORT**

- Local group leader and board
- District office
- Safely Together guidelines and pocket version
- [www.partio.fi/turvallisesti-yhdessa](http://www.partio.fi/turvallisesti-yhdessa)
- Mukavasti yhdessä guideline to preventing and tackling bullying. [partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa](http://partio.fi/mukavasti-yhdessa)

## **SAFE ADULT TRAINING**

- Safely Together online training
- We also warmly recommend basic Scout leader training.







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