

Pre-existing relationships between over and under 18s

The Yellow Card states, 'Do not overstep the boundaries between yourself and young people by engaging in friendships or sexual relationships'. This is an important factor to prevent any breaches of the position of trust, to make sure that any volunteer acts appropriately towards the young people, and to prevent grooming and child abuse occurring. However, in line with S.24 sexual offences, there are particular circumstances where a pre-existing relationship will be accepted.

The circumstances are as follows:

- An 18-year-old has **recently** become an adult volunteer or Network member
- They are in a relationship with a young person who is in Scouts and is **aged over 16, the start of which pre-dates the individual taking on the role as leader**
- The relationship is **consensual**, and
- The adult must **inform** their line-manager of the pre-existing relationship prior to taking on their appointment. In these circumstances, the District Commissioner must satisfy themselves that the above conditions are in place. A meeting must be held with the young person (the under 18) and their parent/carer to make sure that there is a full understanding of the situation and any restrictions that will need to be put in place. An agreement will be undertaken and strictly adhered to, that the adult does not volunteer in the Group or Unit, or at any event that the under 18 year old that they are in a relationship with, attends.

This exception to the Yellow Card can only be used in the specific circumstances stated and strict adherence of this must be monitored to avoid abuse in the guise of a pre-existing relationship. The framework for conversations regarding pre-existing relationships is as follows:

Pre-existing relationship conversation framework

The framework is designed to support initial conversations with all parties involved where a discussion around a pre-existing relationship is required.

A conversation is required with the young person and their parent/carer, as well as a separate conversation with the individual who wishes to become an adult volunteer or Network member. Plan an appropriate place for the conversation take place; this should be a neutral and comfortable space, where you will be able to talk without being interrupted. The conversation should involve the District Commissioner (or their nominated representative) and a record of all conversations should be logged and recorded in line with GDPR. Before the meeting, you may wish to refer to The Scouts' Safeguarding policy. This will ensure that you feel prepared and confident, and understand the requirements of the pre-existing relationship exemption.

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that this assessment process remains inclusive for any individual who has a disability or additional needs.

If you have concerns regarding any relationship disclosed, make contact with the Safeguarding team immediately.

If any volunteer or staff member has a concern in regard to any of these areas, they should contact the Safeguarding team for advice and guidance.

Telephone the team: 0208 433 7164

Email the team: safeguarding@scouts.org.uk

Emergency out-of-hours: 07977539630

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