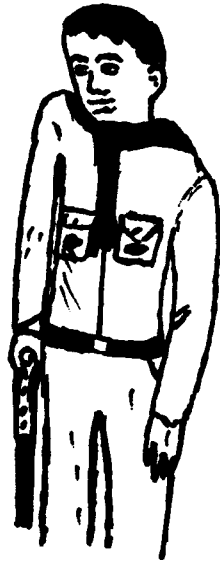


EXTEND YOUR SCOUTING



Scouting for the Disabled



South African Scout Association

EXTEND YOUR SCOUTING

Scouting for the Disabled

A MESSAGE

“Those who have decided to work in the disabled section of the Scout Movement have the power of opening the gate to wonderful things to boys who have been called upon to endure the suffering of this world before their time. You can teach them that, far from being liabilities, they can be real assets among normal men, and they can all become useful members of the community. You can teach them to banish those dull days of pain, to create light in their darkness and sound in their long hours of silence, and above all to realise themselves full members of the great Brotherhood of Scouts.

The work will need much patience and there will be many difficult problems to overcome, but to bring happiness and the prospects of a normal life to just one of these youngsters will make all the energy you put into the work more than worthwhile.”

This message was written by the late Lord Somers – Chief Scout of the United Kingdom, 1941-1944.

© South African Scout Association
Internet edition 2003

Acknowledgment: Certain extracts in this issue were taken from “Handicapped Scouting”, a UK publication.

EXTEND YOUR SCOUTING

There are many Scout Groups where there are one or two members who have a physical disability or are slow learners. Even so, there are many Groups who have never extended their Scouting to include the disabled.

To encourage an awareness of the disabled in the Cub and Scout programme, here are some guidelines which should help in programme planning and in making the disabled Cub or Scout feel accepted in the Pack or Troop. They need to be involved in the fun and training. They want to be Scouts and many Groups have the means at hand to enable them to join the Movement.

Leaders are not concerned with the medical aspects of the various categories of disability likely to be met in Scout Groups, but it is desirable that they should be aware of the various handicapping effects of a particular disability so that, where necessary, the training or activity may be safely adjusted.

This is what is meant by extending Scouting to the disabled.

CEREBRAL PALSY: Do not be misled by their looks. Many are not mentally deficient and their intelligence may be the same as able children, and some of these who are facially deformed may be the most intelligent. So if they grimace when they speak to you, do not treat them as if they were different or less intelligent. Some may often be unable to express themselves coherently and others may be ataxic¹, or even both. When helping a Cub or Scout who has cerebral palsy to use his or her arms or legs, etc, never move fast, for if you pull or push a limb it will go into a spasm and your efforts will have been in vain. On the other hand, if any muscles are moved slowly, the limbs will do what is required.

How will this sort of Cub or Scout fit in with your programme? He or she may have to wear leg callipers or be in a wheelchair, but could possibly sit on the floor for some games for instance, in common with the rest of the Pack or Troop. Think how you yourself would be able to cope with a particular situation if you had the same disability, and then give the opportunity to take part. It is largely a matter of ingenuity and common sense.

SPINA BIFIDA: A who has this disability may have varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs and with varying degrees of incontinence. Those more seriously disabled may have complete paralysis of the lower limbs and the legs possibly in callipers. However, many have no such serious disability and will have varying amounts of control. This sort of Cub or Scout will fit in with your programme with a little adjustment in rather a similar manner as those with cerebral palsy.

DEFORMED OR ABSENT LIMBS: Because of a congenital disease or as a result of an accident, a Scout may have no natural arms or legs or only parts of limbs. He or she may have been fitted with artificial limbs operated by electronic or mechanical devices and if you were to touch their shoulder you might wonder just how he or she must have persevered to master the manipulation of the limbs. Of course, the usefulness of the artificial limbs is what really matters. Despite such a disability, he or she is a child just the same.

A Scout with two artificial arms and hands, when asked what sport he liked playing, said football. He would be quite adept at this and in his Scouting.

BLINDNESS: Most blind children are educated in special boarding schools, but in the holidays there is surely a place for them (and for other Scouts with a disability who are normally at boarding schools) with their local Scout Group. You will find them keen and really active and adventurous, so extend a welcome to them. Training methods are generally facilitated by tactile aids,

DEAFNESS: Children with no hearing or whose hearing is so reduced that they have not been able to acquire speech or language in the ordinary way, are mostly taught orally in special schools for the deaf. When speaking, face them and speak clearly and at a moderate speed. It may be necessary for you to repeat what you have said, especially if you are not used to each other, but have patience. Their faces will reflect whether they understand, supplementing their voice, which may not be clear and may sound a little strange.

Remember that the disability of deafness is a communication difficulty and children will have a smaller vocabulary than those with unimpaired hearing. They should not be referred to as deaf and dumb.

¹ Ataxic – having reduced control over body movements

MENTALLY DISABLED: The fact that a child has learning difficulties does not necessarily debar them from advantageously joining an ordinary Pack or Troop. The real difficulty lies in settling how severe the disability can be without affecting the Pack or Troop. If the presence of the mentally disabled child is disruptive to the operation of the Pack or Troop, it may be better for both the mentally disabled child and the Group as a whole that he or she should not join a Pack or Troop of able Cubs or Scouts.

It is not possible to lay down any hard and fast rules with regard to the type of child to be admitted into a Pack or Troop of able Cubs or Scouts. Each case must of course be decided on its own merits, but the following general outline may safely be adhered to.

The would-be Cub/Scout should be physically fit enough to get about with the other Cubs or Scouts. He or she should be clean in his habits and able to feed himself or herself.

The mentally disabled Scout should be able to attend to their personal needs, and to obey all simple instructions and understand enough to be able to enter into Cub/ Scout games and simple ceremonies.

He or she ought to be able to wash and dress moderately well. I say 'moderately well' because you cannot guarantee that any child of eight will wash properly of their own accord!

So much for the points to be considered before admitting the disabled child into the Pack or Troop. Once the decision has been made, the Scouter must then consider the best method of approach.

Here the line of action will depend very much upon the nature of the mental disability or learning difficulty. Until the Scouter has found out what this is, it is not easy to give the appropriate help. It is essential to give the backward Cub or Scout the most careful patient and unobtrusive enquiry and thought. The method to adopt will naturally differ somewhat according to the individual case, but the following general notes may be taken as a rough guide.

There are a number of children with slight learning difficulties who can be helped greatly by encouragement. As a rule in conversation, care should be taken to treat such a child as normal; don't simplify or repeat instructions to them alone. As far as possible make no obvious difference in your treatment

of them. Give them confidence by treating them as normal, but be at hand to prompt them quietly from time to time.

Help them to concentrate through handcrafts and little exercises. Help them to have faith in themselves by showing them that they can do things on their own. Develop the constructive instinct in them as much as possible. Don't keep them separate from others more than is absolutely necessary.

Encourage them specially to keep on pegging away at their Scout advancement and give them extra opportunities of learning and practice. It is on the practical side of the training that the best work will be done with any Cubs/Scouts with learning difficulties, but avoid the danger of concentrating on the physical side to the exclusion of the mental side.

GUIDELINES ON DEALING WITH A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

Remember that every case is different and should be treated individually.

About 16 in every hundred children are disabled in some way. Most of these children could be Cubs or Scouts, and many are, but there are others who would join if they knew it was possible. It is up to the individual leaders, as well as the Division, to find these 'lost' children and bring them into Scouting.

There are two divisions when analysing disabilities – visible and invisible.

In all cases the physical age and not the mental age must be strictly adhered to, except in the case of mental disability. This applies especially to Cub Packs. Refer to experts for advice and guidance on the child's progress but the child concerned should not feel they are being 'fussed over'. In all cases the child with a disability should be treated as near as possible to the same way as the rest of the Pack or Troop. He or she wants to be the same as Johnny-next-door; he or she will know their own limitations and will tell you.

PREPARATION OF YOUR PACK OR TROOP TO RECEIVE A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

If the child is in a wheelchair, tell the Pack or Troop that they may have to push the wheelchair. Invite an expert along the week before to teach the Cubs or Scouts how to handle a wheelchair.

If the child has a speech impediment, ask them not to laugh at this, as this will cause the impediment to become more prominent. Tell them to wait until the child has said what he or she wants to say and, in time, when they have gained confidence, he or she will speak much better.

In the case of a deaf child, inform the members of the Group to speak to them only when he or she can see their faces, otherwise this can be very frustrating and may even lead him or her to think that people are making fun of his or her deafness.

PROGRAMMES

The child should fit into the programmes and not the programmes fitted around the child.

A disabled Cub or Scout can take part in at least 90% of the programmes and games. In physical games, they could be a scorer, linesman or judge. They may even be able to run the game for you.

When it comes to the practical test, the words ‘know how to do’ are very important. The Cub or Scout should be given books, pamphlets, cards etc, to can study during the intervals between meetings. They may well have more time to do this than the other members, and will want to be well ahead of them in the things they can learn to do.

From time to time advice will be required on standards to be attained by individual Cubs or Scouts. The District Commissioner, in consultation with experts on the disability, will advise such alterations to the tests as may be considered necessary.

DISTRICT, AREA AND NATIONAL EVENTS

Where possible, the disabled Cub or Scout should take their rightful place in all events and there should not be any distinctions or advantages given which would single them out as something special or different.

SCOUTING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS BED-RIDDEN AT HOME OR IN HOSPITAL

If a Cub or Scout cannot come to the weekly meetings, Scouting must be taken to him. They can be ‘adopted’ by a Six or Patrol and visited regularly.

From time to time the parents or hospital authority will possibly let the whole Pack or Troop meet at the bedside for a special occasion, an investiture, presentation of badges, etc. The most important aspect of this side of Scouting is regularity and reliability. Do not let them down – this may be their only contact with boys and girls of his own age from the outside world.

PACK HOLIDAYS AND CAMPS

If possible, the disabled Cub or Scout should take part in the Pack Holidays and Troop camps arranged by the Group, but special care must be taken to ensure that all medical and dietary regulations are strictly adhered to; their life could be endangered without this.

ADAPTATION OF UNIFORM

In some cases the standard uniform will not be suitable and some adjustments will have to be made. These should be as unobtrusive as possible so that the Cub or Scout concerned does not feel out of place. It may be impossible for a bed-ridden Cub or Scout to wear a shirt in the normal manner, so the shirt should be cut up the middle of the back and put on from the front. The sides are then tucked under them.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Keep your sense of humour – you will need it. Remember that B-P said “if it isn’t fun it isn’t Scouting.”

Avoid pity and sentimentality.

Provide them with as many standard Scouting contacts as possible. If the Cub or Scout cannot come to Scouting, then take Scouting to them.

Concentrate on the Cub or Scout and on the things they can do – not on his disability and the things they cannot do.
