



Enabling 18 year old members to make the transition to registered Leader, Guidance for Captains

Introduction

The Boys' Brigade has a strong commitment to developing young people's potential, and for some young people, part of their personal development will include becoming a Leader in a Company – often the same Company they “grew up in”.

However, this transition is not always an easy one to make and will not be achieved overnight.

This guidance is intended to help Captains and other leaders support young people making this transition and sits alongside the resource: “Guidance for Young People becoming BB Leaders”.

What are the challenges?

Taking on a position of trust:

Once an 18 year old registers to become a leader certain responsibilities apply immediately, for example the requirement to comply with our safeguarding policies and the Code of Good Practice guidance.

However, a newly appointed Warrant Officer or Helper of any age may not have had any training in these areas. That is why it's essential that all newly appointed leaders, of any age, are given proper inductions and training arranged at the earliest opportunity.

It is even more important that a young person is properly inducted as this may be their first position of trust or responsibility and they may not have the relevant life experiences that older leaders have gained through further education, work, family etc.

Working with their peer group:

If young people are becoming Leaders in the Company where they have been a young member, it may be difficult to adapt to a new role in a familiar environment. We need to enable young people to be aware of the change in role – to clarify what precisely has changed, how that feels to them, how their peers may react, how the other Leaders treat them and how they can grow in skill, knowledge and confidence over time.

Suitability to become a Leader

It can be tempting to make young people Leaders to keep them in the Company, but in fact, they should be selected on their merits like any other Leader. Some young people will be well suited to the role, whereas others won't be. It is the young people who are not suitable but who are registered anyway who are vulnerable. Furthermore, an unsuitable appointment also makes the children in the Company vulnerable.

It can also be tempting to register young people as Leaders who are themselves needy. Some Companies, wishing to continue to provide "care" and friendship for a vulnerable 18 year old think it is a good idea to register them, but not give them any responsibility. This can result in the young person finding themselves in a situation that they cannot manage. Children will often not differentiate between adult Leaders and are likely to place trust in all of the staff members in a Company. The young person who has been made a Leader, but who has significant needs themselves, could inadvertently breach safeguarding guidance and even become the subject of a complaint or investigation. Clearly, we have done this young person no favours if this happens to them.

A fundamental question to ask yourself before inviting anyone to apply to be a BB Leader is "Does this person have the capacity and maturity to understand and implement the BB Code of Good Practice?" (The small laminated card issued to leaders). If the answer to this is "no" or "not yet" then the person should not be appointed.

Inducting an 18 year old into their role as Leader

Before an 18 year old is given a role in the company as a Leader, the Captain, or someone delegated by the Captain should set aside an hour or so for induction. The following points need to be ticked off to ensure an effective induction:

Induction Checklist

A general discussion of how the young person feels about taking on this role. This will include:

- Hopes and fears
- What responsibilities they feel ready for – and what ones they would like training and support for
- How to cope with the reactions of their peers
- Coping with challenging behavior
- Who to ask for support/advice
- Growing into the role and gaining confidence (the Captain should reassure the new leader that this will happen and remember to give praise and feedback to the new Leader in the first few months)

Safeguarding

The young person should be booked onto the first available safeguarding training, either through the BB or the Church. However, a thorough safeguarding induction is essential before the young person takes up their role. As part of this discussion you should:

- Issue and go through the BB Code of Good Practice card
- Issue the laminated card "Advice to 18/19 year olds registering as Leaders"
- Issue the BB document "Safeguarding Policy and Procedures". Ask the young person to take this away and read it, or go through the main sections
- Ensure you focus on the guidance in Section 10 of the document with regards to social networking sites. Explain that once registered as a Leader, the young person should not have children or young people who are BB members as "friends" on Facebook etc. Section 10 gives the reasons for this and you should spend time ensuring that the new Leader understands why this rule now applies.

NB: It's fine for them to keep their 18 year old peers as friends, but once they are registered as a Youth Leader they have a position of trust. If a child complained about a comment or online communication, then the BB is duty bound to inform the relevant agencies about this.

- Give an overview of basic risk assessment and/or issue the BB Safety Handbook and go through Section 3.3.

First night responsibilities:

Make sure the young person knows exactly what is expected of them on the first night in their new role, and over the next few weeks. Tell them that you (or a named delegated person) will be close at hand if they want to ask anything or seek support. Schedule in a review a few weeks after the first night. This will be another 1:1 discussion to explore what went well, what didn't go well and what they will do differently.

Finally, encourage the young person to take the opportunity to attend the relevant training courses that are on offer so they can develop their skills and confidence for their role. Make sure that you are pro-active in communicating training opportunities for all of your staff.