

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland – Succession Planning Policy

The policy

This policy is for all Companies so that they are not faced with succession planning issues in future years. To address the issues of forward planning, age and capability issues the Girls' Brigade in Scotland (GBS) Executive has agreed the following:

- No leader to be commissioned after their 60th birthday but they may undertake training and take on the role of a Trainee Leader by completing Induction level training.
- Captains/Leaders-in-Charge will step down from their role in the GBS session in the year which they have their 65th birthday but may continue as leaders in the company until the age of 70, see below. Alternatively, some may choose to step down from leadership entirely and could be awarded the role of Honorary Captain. (This may be a role they could hold jointly with another former Captain/Leader-in-Charge.)
- In the year of their 70th birthday **ALL** leaders will retire from full time active service within their company.

Other information you need to know

This section provides answers to some of the questions asked by Commissioners and is designed to assist the understanding of leaders and what it means for them.

- **So, I have to leave Girls' Brigade when I'm 70?**
No, there will still be a place for leaders to take on Divisional roles, attend Division meetings and, if they choose, to help support their company from a non-uniformed perspective. Some Divisions also have groups which offer fellowship and social activities to those no longer active in companies.
- **I'm fit and active so why does this apply to me?**
It is good that you are in this position but, sadly, that does not apply to all leaders and GBS does not have the time or resources to review the situation on an individual basis. This was discussed in-depth with Commissioners who agreed that they would prefer a policy approach as they accepted that it would not be right for them or the Executive to undertake individual reviews even if it were viable.
- **Why can't I stay as Captain until I'm 70?**
After careful consideration it was agreed that Captains would step down in the GBS session in which they become 65 so that they would be able to spend time to support and mentor a new Captain while remaining a leader, if they so choose. It is hoped that this policy will enable a transition period between Captains.

- **My Church appointed me as a leader in Girls' Brigade so how can the Executive do this to me without consulting Chaplains?**

Churches appoint and recommend leaders to be trained and commissioned within GBS. All leaders are subject to the policies, procedures and regulations of GBS and this is simply a policy designed to keep the organisation moving forward for the reasons previously noted. GBS is not withdrawing the commission of any leader with the implementation of this policy as they are still members of the organisation unless they choose to leave. A number of Chaplains approached GBS to ask the organisation to deal with age or capability related situations and as such it was decided that a policy was the best approach to deal with this.

- **Girlguiding UK had a similar policy in place but they have changed it, so why are we doing this?**

GBS cannot comment definitively on the policy laid down by other organisations as each organisation has very different needs but it is likely that the policy laid down by Girlguiding UK has achieved the desired outcomes for them. Currently, Girlguiding UK has lengthy waiting lists for girls but are struggling to find adult leaders so this may have contributed to a change in policy for them. However, GBS is not Girlguiding UK and, as a membership organisation, is allowed to set its own policies.

- **Is this discrimination?**

The Executive has taken extensive legal advice on this issue and has been advised that it is not discrimination as the organisation is ensuring that safeguarding obligations and duty of care requirements are being met in respect of girls and adult leaders. This decision also ensures that there is a progression path for younger leaders to take on the role of Captain or Commissioner with a view to securing long term viability of the organisation. The fact that those affected are not being asked to leave the organisation but will remain as members, for as long as they so choose, does not discriminate against any individual.

- **Membership is already declining. Will this not make it worse?**

The Executive is taking action now to try and stop the worrying trend of companies closing when leaders become unable to run the company. All too often there has been no attempt at succession planning and there is no-one willing or able to take on the role. Companies should adopt this policy as a matter of course to avoid such issues. The Executive has been particularly saddened to see so many companies close in the past as it is the girls who miss out on a GBS experience and the legacy of all the hard work done by leaders over many years is lost.

If you have any further questions in respect of this please contact Caroline Goodfellow on caroline.goodfellow@girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk

March 2022