



Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## Annual Census of Membership 2021

The purpose of this letter is to support the smooth collation of our census for 2021. The last year has been incredibly difficult for all involved in Scouting in West Lancashire due to the affects COVID-19 has had on the world around us. Whilst census comes at a time when Groups will be looking at how Scouting can return in 2021, we cannot ignore the importance of census for the safe and legal running of the movement. We also need to use data collected at the census time to help us build back and start to repair some of the damage the world changing events of 2020 have done. Your support in ensuring this is done accurately and efficiently is vital and greatly appreciated, and whilst we don't have all the information about the national process yet this letter is to help guide you with how the census will be run, and what you can do now to prepare for the rush of activity that is always around the end of January and start of February performing the actual census.

### Why do we have a census?

The census allows The Scouts, at all levels, to obtain information about the number of members that are taking part in Scouting activities, whether they are young people or adult volunteers. This information is collected as it can be used locally and nationally to provide a clear understanding of Scouting.

It helps us to:

- Develop a clear understanding of our membership, its make-up and where it happens
- Identify where we need to create or improve guidance, support and training offered
- Better understand potential barriers to accessing Scouting
- Measure our progress towards our strategy, enabling us to recognise successes
- Budgeting and planning for the upcoming year and beyond
- Negotiate appropriate insurance cover for all members of The Scout Association.
- Ensure other services are appropriately scaled such as Safeguarding

As a County, we use this opportunity to collect some additional information which supports the County to ensure we are providing membership services to all our members, monitoring retention and to seek external funding opportunities. Last year we made a great stride in improving this data, but to make use of it we need to continue to understand it. This is especially important in 2021 so we can understand what the effects of 2020 have been on Scouting not just on raw numbers but where we have been successful (and not) and learn from it, and where we can target support to be successful again.

As you know, West Lancashire Scouts does not charge a membership levy. Instead, we ask groups to support us by providing some additional information at census time which allows us to we deploy our resources as efficiently as possible.

### Who should be recorded on the census?

All young people must be recorded on the census who are members at the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021. This means that young people who join Scouting earlier in January should be recorded as they enjoy membership benefits. Care must be taken to ensure that young people transferring between sections are recorded. This is particularly important when a young person is in the process of moving from Scouts to Explorer Scouts. They must be recorded somewhere.

This year this presents an interesting challenge because some sections and some individuals have not been able to or felt comfortable enough to return to face-to-face Scouting. Because those who participate in virtual Scouting are still covered by the membership services these individuals must be counted too. As should any individuals that are expecting to return to Scouting when things return to normal in 2021. This may involve a conversation before the census deadline with parents and/or carers about their and their child's intentions in the coming months. Furthermore, you may have adults that have yet to make contact. I strongly urge you to reach out to them, and perhaps consider other roles that don't involve face-to-face Scouting until they feel comfortable. This could include executive committee roles. Many of our volunteers have decades of experience in Scouting, and whilst they may not be able to run section nights at the moment, they have a lot still to offer to Scouting and can support us into 2021.

The information found [here](#) gives further guidance on establishing who your members are at these unusual times. It includes a helpful letter which can be sent to parents.

As last year all adults, including Executive Committee Members, must be recorded on the census, even if they are going through the appointments process. Occasional Helpers do not need to be recorded on the census, as they are not members. However, careful attention should be given to determine if someone is truly an Occasional Helper – this would mean that they volunteer no more than once a month when things return to normal. If they volunteer more often than that (or you expect them to when things return), then it is more likely that they are a Skills Instructor or Section Assistant.

### **What do I need to do?**

As last year we will be providing each group with a spreadsheet to input information into, which will calculate automatically the totals that you need to enter on the HQ census website. This will hopefully reduce some of the errors we've faced previously. So, please complete the County spreadsheet first using the instructions provided within it. Because we don't know exactly what questions will be on the HQ census website yet we can't provide that until after New Year, but some core data items will be required and it makes sense to start preparing now to ensure you have the data that is required.

### **What about the option to us OSM's output to submit census?**

You may be aware that HQ and OSM have worked together to allow submission straight from OSM. This is a great tool, but we still want to collect the data as a county. We'll make this as easy as possible for you and are working on a way you can extract from OSM using their export tools and "copy and paste" that into our spreadsheets. Helpfully all the data we'll need should be in OSM anyway if you are using OSM as an effective tool for managing the membership of young people, and we're aiming to make it as simply as possible for you.

### **What information is required and why?**

Young people and adults join the Scout Movement and become a member via a structure of Groups, Districts and Counties. A member of a Group is automatically a member of the geographic Scout District and County. The sole purpose of the Scout County is to provide support to its members via its Districts. One of the many ways West Lancs Scouts provides support is through strategic leadership and a substantial financial commitment to the County Development Project which supports Groups when they are facing difficulties and also supports the recruitment of adults and young people as well opening new provisions. The last year has also seen the County offer a hardship fund to groups (via Districts) that have struggled financially in this especially challenging year.

As a County, we are extremely fortunate that these services are provided free of charge to our members without the need to charge a County levy. But in order to do that we need the data to support it.

Collecting the specified data via the annual census return helps us to improve the quality of support we provide to our members and communities, and assists us to in the following ways:

- Check our Compass records are up to date.
- Identify areas of the County where we are not providing Scouting locally enough, or if there are communities we aren't reaching.

- Monitor our waiting lists, to see how many children make it from waiting lists into membership and how long this takes.
- Help us gather valuable information about the average length of membership of youth and adult members. Understanding our retention rates and monitoring and acting upon trends.
- Help us monitor the impact of our Want to Join system- namely checking to see if the people who wanted to join us, who actually did and what the barriers to joining are.

As a County, this information was game-changing last year and this coming year will be even more important to help us focus our work and plan for the future using evidence. We only ask for information which we believe you should already hold.

### Group information

We are collecting the following information to help us handle joining enquiries in an effective and efficient manner.

- Section, meeting day and time
- Meeting venue, address and postcode
- Section capacity – the number of young people at which you consider the Section to be full (post COVID-19)
- Name, phone number and email address of the adult who handles joining enquiries for each Section

Whilst we appreciate that some of this information is recorded on the HQ census return, it is difficult to extract and collate this information. It shouldn't take too long to complete and having all the information together makes it a lot easier for us to update the County 'find a local group' map and the group records held by our Want to Join Coordinators. We will also use the information to ensure all group records on the national 'Find your local group' system.

### Young people

We are simply asking for:

- First and last name
- Gender
- Date of birth (dd/mm/yy)
- Postcode
- Section

### Adults

- First and last name
- Gender
- Role and Section
- Confirmation that their Compass record is up to date

### Young Leaders

- First and last name
- Gender
- Date of birth (dd/mm/yy)
- Section
- Do they attend an Explorer Scout Unit on a regular basis? If so, which one?

Young Leaders are registered for statistical purposes only on the Scout Group return form but registered as Explorer Scouts on the District return. It is important that these figures match, so Groups are asked to provide the most up to date information for Young Leaders. Having an accurate database will help us provide support to more Young Leaders, enabling them to complete their training and access a wider range of opportunities.

### Waiting lists

For young people on a waiting list, we will ask for their:

- First name and last name

- Gender
- Date of birth (dd/mm/yy)

As last year the County has an ambition to eradicate waiting lists – although this year has been unusual it will help us understand the need and demand at the start of the year.

### **Obtaining information about ethnicity, gender and disabilities**

It's really important that this information is accurate. To help you gather this information we recommend that you use the HQ form, by clicking [here](#). This information is collected anonymously. Once collated and recorded on the census record, the forms should be destroyed.

### **What about data protection?**

As a County, in line with GDPR legislation, we have a clear purpose and need for the additional information that we are requesting. We are clear that the information is requested is for membership services within the same organisation, as all members are members of West Lancashire Scouts. We are not asking for more information than necessary and access to the data is limited to the District Census Coordinators (during the census process), and then only to our development staff. All data will be stored securely and will be destroyed on completion of next year's census but no later than the 31st May 2022. This is so that comparisons can be made between years, and trends can be identified.

As last year we've explained this process to the district co-ordinators, and if you have used the [HQ membership forms](#) then parents have already given their permission to use the data through the Scouting hierarchy for the management of Scouting membership.

### **Additional Information**

If you need support, we recommend that you speak to your District Census Coordinator in the first instance. They will have access to support from our County Census Coordinator and our two County Development Officers who are supporting this process.

The HQ website contains lots of useful information about census collection. Please take a look <https://scouts.org.uk/volunteers/leading-and-managing/census/>

### **Timescales**

- 14<sup>th</sup> January – HQ census website opens.
- 17<sup>th</sup> January – West Lancs County spreadsheets released to Groups and Districts.
- 31<sup>st</sup> January – Census Date. No returns should be completed prior to this date.
- 7<sup>th</sup> February – All Groups spreadsheets to have been submitted.
- 14<sup>th</sup> February – Deadline for Districts to finalise their returns and submit them to County.

With your support, I am sure that we can have a smooth census period and that we can use the information in a way that will have huge benefits to our organisation. Thanks in advance.

Best Wishes,

Craig Dewar-Willox  
County Commissioner

Pete Willingham  
County Secretary

Andy Marsden  
County Census Coordinator