

The role of Battalions as we return to face-to-face activities

As we emerge from the lockdown restrictions, there is an important role for everyone in the Brigade to play. It is therefore essential that local area groupings and key volunteers are encouraged to play their part as we restart face-to-face activities.

There are of course differences across the Regions and between Battalions. These include size, the geographical reach and associated challenges, the capacity of leaders to extend support beyond their own setting and the financial resources available.

It is hoped that by setting out the following recommendations that Battalions can play a significant role as they deliver crucial local support at this critical time. It is hoped that the time, expertise and energy normally invested into the Battalion's programme can be re-directed in the period September to December 2020 – during which it is expected that there will be very limited opportunity for inter-Company or inter-Battalion face-to-face activity.

It is recommended that Battalions:

- Keep up-to-date with COVID-19 related guidance provided by Brigade/Regional Headquarters, the UK/RoI Governments and devolved administrations, church denominations and regional youth services. When combined, this guidance provides the backdrop for BB activities recommencing.
- Ask and assess what is needed on the ground within its boundary and, where possible, extend support, guidance and signposting. This will require direct contact with Captains and the Leaders-in-Charge of Sections. It may also necessitate contact with the churches that we partner with.
- Maintain regular communication with all Companies/Sections. This will provide guidance, support and encouragement. Opportunities should be sought to share good practice and the lessons that have been learnt by those who have re-started earlier than others.
- Deliver online sessions that provide spiritual support and fellowship, training opportunities, award-specific guidance, longer-term planning input, etc. It may be appropriate to involve Regional Staff in some of these sessions.
- Consider setting up mentoring/buddy schemes to support vulnerable Companies more intensively. Such needs may be highlighted by a lack of leaders, low number of members or a failure to respond to communications.
- Raise the profile of The Boys' Brigade locally in order to support the recruitment of new members whilst also encouraging the return of members that have had a break from the Companies during the lockdown period.
- Review the financial resources at its disposal and how they can be used during the re-start period. This might include waiving Battalion fees for the 2020/21 session, paying or subsidising Brigade capitation in the same period, etc.
- Take time to review the ongoing effectiveness of itself by completing the health check that has been prepared by the relevant Regional Headquarters. In particular, reflect on how you add value to the experience of children and young people in your area

Check out a range of online resources to support the return to face-to-face activities at:

www.boys-brigade.org.uk/ourframework/