



Starting a Muslim Scout Group FAQs

This document is for those who wish to know more about starting a Muslim Scout Group.

Q. Why Muslim Scouts?

A. As officially part of The UK Scout Association you have 100 years of youth activity experience available to you - why reinvent the wheel when you can use what is already there?

Provide for your youth the activities they would not normally be able to have access to in an environment that is comfortable for parents.

Working as an official Scout Group provides opportunities to promote Islam verbally to non-Muslims and via your actions.

Q. Isn't Scouting based on Christian traditions?

A. Historically Scouting in the UK has been centred on the Christian religion. Part of The Scout Association's core strategy involves a push for diversity i.e. encouraging minority groups to join the UK Scout Association with a flexible approach to religion. A general moral and ethical code is still core to Scouting - which if anything is beneficial.

Q. Will Scouting conflict with Islam?

A. Did you know that to be a member of The Scout Association you are required to believe in a God? The strong ethical and moral code of the Scouts is very much compatible with Islam. The UK Scout Association has been working with the Muslim Scout Fellowship for a number of years now. From this relationship the UK Scout Association has made policy changes to cater for and to nurture Muslim Scouting in the UK.

Q. Can I convert my current youth group into a Muslim Scout Group?

A. Yes you can. The immediate benefit to you is a formal and recognised structure with activities given to you on a plate. You will gain support locally as well as nationally, not to mention the opportunity work with non-Muslims so as to give dawah. You need to be able to convince your team, parents as well as the youth in your care of the benefits.

Q. What are the core requirements to start a Muslim Scout Group?

A. Sincerity, determination, dedication, willingness to learn and a good team (as well as Allah's blessing of course).

Q. How many Scouts are there?

A. The World Scout Bureau in Geneva reports that there are 28 million members in 218 countries and Territories. The only countries that do not have Scouting are Andora, China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Myanmar. The World Scout Bureau is trying to restart Scouting in Afghanistan. There are 9 million Muslim Scouts; in the UK there are approximately 20 Muslim Scout Groups (figures correct as of 2008).

Q. What kind of help can I expect?

A. As part of a national organisation you will have many resources available to you to use - the support of the UK Scout Association, other regular Scout Groups in your area and the Muslim Scout Fellowship.

Q. Who dictates what we do in our Scout Group?

A. You have full control over the program content of your Scout Group.

Q. Will this be a real Scout Group or is it just a Muslim youth movement with a Scout spin on it?

A. You will be a regular Scout Group which will be a part of the UK Scout Association.

Q. What strings are attached by being a part of the UK Scout Association?

A. As a formal Scout Group you will have to follow the rules and regulations of the UK Scout Association. These rules will be mostly to do with safety of the children with regard to adventurous activities and outings. Generally everything is flexible except for Health and Safety.

Advantages of this is that all the formal policies and rules necessary for a formal youth group are already done for you and if followed you will also be insured.

All rules and regulations are covered in the Policies Organisation and Rules Publication produced by the U.K Scout Association. You can view this here <http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/por/2006/index.htm>

Q. Who are my reference points in setting up a new Scout Group?

A. You have two main sources of references, the Muslim Scout Fellowship and The Scout Association.

The Muslim Scout Fellowship

C/C Bristol Muslim Cultural Society
404 Stapleton Road
Easton
Bristol
BS5 6NQ
Tel: 0845 388 2065 (local rate) during office hours
Mobile: 07779 349 566
Email: info@ukmsf.org
Web site: www.ukmsf.org

The Scout Association

Gilwell Park
Bury Road
Chingford
London
E4 7QW
Tel: 0208 433 7134
Email: daisy.charlton@scout.org.uk
Web site: www.scouts.org.uk

Q. What about the Uniform?

A. Uniform is a requirement for Scouts. You get to choose the colour(s) of your scarf (neckerchief) that will represent your Group. Adult Scout Leaders have uniforms too...go on, you know you want to. (The Muslim Scout Fellowship encourages the general Islamic principles of clothing for both male and females).

Q. What will I call my Scout Group?

A. You will be issued with a number (usually representing the number of Scout Groups in your area) followed by the name of your area that is referred to as District. You can also give your Group a formal nickname e.g. 68th Croydon (Al-Abtaal) Muslim Scout Group or 7th Goodmayes (Al Noor) Scout Group.

Q. Who can I speak to directly and on a regular basis to help me through this?

A. The Muslim Scout Fellowship has a “buddy” system where you will be provided a contact that is an existing Muslim Scout Leader and would have likely gone through the same process you are going through now. Your buddy is responsible to help you set up your Group and should have enough experience to answer your questions.

The UK Scout Association has “Field Development Officers” (FDOs) who are responsible to assist you start your Scout Group. They will be your initial contact with the UK Scout Association. Once you are on your feet you will be liaising with The Scout Association directly (your regional area is called a District).

You can also use the UK Scout Association Information Centre dedicated to support all Scout Groups in the UK.

Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park
Bury Road
Chingford
London
E4 7QW

Tel: 0845 300 1818 (local rate) Direct: 0208 433 7100

The Information Centre is open 08.00 - 20.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 - 12.00 Saturday.

Email: info.centre@scout.org.uk

Q. How is the UK Scout Association structured?

A. Your Scout Group is part of a District. The District has its own management to assist all Scout Groups in the District (advice and centrally organised activities for those Groups who do not hold expertise or experience). Your District is part of a County which will include other Districts surrounding you. The County is responsible to support all the Districts in its’ area. All Districts will report to the County. All Counties then report to National HQ based at Gillwell Park. HQ is responsible for supporting all the Counties. The Muslim Scout Fellowship has a direct channel into the National HQ.

Q. What age groups of children do I deal with?

A. Scouts range from 6 – 25 years of age and split into different sections. Beware that each section has its own requirements. By and large Muslim Scout Groups have a combination of Beaver, Cub and Scout Groups. If you can run these sections separately it is probably best to do so.

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| Beavers | 6 – 8 years |
| Cubs | 8 – 10½ years |
| Scouts | 10½ – 14 years |
| Explorers | 14 - 18 years |
| Network | 18 - 25 years |

Q. Where can I hold my regular meetings?

A. You will need a hall or similar. If you cannot use your local mosque or community centre, let your assigned Field Development Officer know. It may be possible to share an existing Scout hut. You will gradually start to own equipment so it may be best to have a place where you can store these.

Q. I want to kick off the process of starting a Muslim Scout Group...what now?

A. You need a reliable team. Leaders who deal with the Scouts directly (Uniformed) and adult support who will do the admin bits (Chair, Treasurer and Secretary). Also a number of parent helpers will also help you. All adults will undergo a Criminal Record Check (CRB police check). This is free and the forms are provided by The Scout Association. You will also need a venue to hold your regular activities.

Q. If someone has completed a criminal records disclosure from another agency, do they need a new one for the Scouts?

A. Yes. The reasons for this are as follows:

The Criminal Records disclosure is similar to a MOT test on your car. It is as accurate on the day of issue. A time period will have passed since the applicant received their previous disclosure so The Scout Association needs to ensure that the check is up to date.

The Scout Association requires that an Enhanced Disclosure be undertaken. Other organisations may not have required this level of check.

The disclosure is not itself proof of identity. If a person is trying to join for inappropriate motives, they may have gained the check by a similar manner. Undertaking the process helps to ensure that several items of identity are checked.

The criminal records disclosure application form is also used so that the Records Department can undertake their own internal checks.

A criminal records check helps to reassure the parents that we have taken the safety of their children very seriously and do all within our power to keep them safe.

Q. What about Insurance?

A. As long as you follow the Policies Organisation and Rules (POR) you will be insured. See <http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/por/2006/index.htm>

Q. I don't know anything about Scouting.

A. Don't let this be an inhibiting factor – you are not expected to know anything. If you have a desire to work for the sake of Allah with your community you will find this an easy hurdle to jump. Scouting is very simple; it has an ethos that is compatible with Islam (see below) and lots of activities that support the ethos. The UK Scout Association has a training program that all Scout Leaders are expected to go through. The Muslim Scout Fellowship organises a few residential training courses throughout the year to help you get to grips with Scouting.

The three principles that underpin Scouting are:

1. Duty to Allah (God)
2. Duty to Others
3. Duty to Self

Q. I can't pitch a tent or tie any knots...

A. There is more to Scouting than camping and knots. However, children are drawn to the adventure of camping and other adventurous activities. The UK Scout Association and the Muslim Scout Fellowship run skills session on training courses. You also can visit local Groups on camp. There are many fact sheets on the UK Scout Association website. You will have ample opportunity to learn...if you want to.

For an example see the following link. This link teaches you the basic principles about the axe. It also guides you on how to use an axe. Further more there is a section on how to teach others about the axe. <http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/facts/pdfs/fs315070.pdf>

Q. Is it hard work and time consuming?

A. Any work you do in the path of Allah will not generally be straightforward and easy. You can expect to be busy. You may only run 1½ hours of activity per week; however you will need to plan your activities, co-ordinate with your fellow Scout Leaders and do some basic administration. You are in a position of responsibility where you are the reference point and role model which cannot be taken lightly. Nevertheless, you will soon see the smiles on the children's faces and hear positive things from parents.

You will also find that you can participate and enjoy the activities you have planned; no reason why you cannot have a go at archery with your Scouts is there?

Q. How often will I be in contact with The Scout Association once I set up?

A. There are about 3 or 4 meetings a year for Section Leaders and the Group Scout Leader to pass on information and or to help make decisions for the District as a whole. There are also activities every year that the District will run that will involve other Scout Groups in your area. It is always a good idea to get involved work with other Scout Leaders and Groups in the District.

Q. What about start up funds/grants from The UK Scout Association?

A. A Scout Group may apply for a start-up grant of £100 from The Scout Association per section. Speak to your local Field Development Officer concerning this. This may not seem much, but this will help you get basic resources that will get you going.

Q. How much money do we need and what are the cost models?

A. A Scout Group may need approximately £1000.00 to get started, but you can apply for funding and do some fundraising. Scout Leader training may be provided free of charge from your County or District. The charging model is parents pay for their child (ren); the amount would vary as it is based on if the Scout Group has to pay for renting a place or be in possession of owning premises. On average, Scout Groups charge parent's approximately £10.00 per month per child (possibility of having discounts for families). Camps and activities are charged on a break-even basis and you would generally fund raise for equipment and extra resources. Initially you can share equipment with other Scout Groups. For families that cannot afford camping fees, there are funds available from The Scout Association HQ. No one should be excluded from scouting based on their ability to pay.