

Recruitment

There are many ways to recruit for girls and volunteers. Some below are the most successful I found.

Adverts

There is no need to pay for paid adverts, in my experience paid adverts have no more success than free adverts. Places to advertise are on social media, volunteer agencies, in the community and within community groups.

Facebook marketplace and buy&sell groups are brilliant places for free advertising. You need a brief, to the point title (such as "Volunteer Opportunities Available"), you need to state the location (if you're looking for more than one location, it's worth putting more than one advert into the group, as people often search by location). Write the description of the role - make it brief and honest, such as "Volunteer over the age of 18 to help with our 5-7 year old Rainbows in Leigh Park. You'll need to be full of fun, patient and able to think on your feet. Rainbows are all about exploring their world through play and activities, and can be very noisy! You will need to be able to commit to one hour per week, late afternoon." Remember to add contact details, and a fun photo will attract people to the advert who are scrolling through. See the Social Media page for more information.

Volunteer Agencies are where we get the majority of our brand-new-to-Guiding volunteers from. We have Portsmouth Together, Gosport Volunteer Agency and Community First (covering Havant and Fareham), who have adverts on their websites with our available roles. These need updating every few months to keep them current, log in details are in the googledrive. When somebody applies for a role, the agency will send an email to the registered email address with their contact details and the role they were interested in. You then need to send an email back to the applicant, and copy in the volunteer agency so they know you've made contact. I usually write something like "Thank you so much for applying to volunteer with our (age group and section name). We have lots of different opportunities available, so the next step is for you to register here - <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/register-your-interest/> This will send your contact details through to our lead volunteer for the area, who will make contact with you. Any questions at any time, please do let me know. Thanks again, Caroline"

I then add their name to the New Volunteers spreadsheet on the googledrive, and try and keep it vaguely up to date with where people end up volunteering, and if they are definitely not volunteering, moving them to the second sheet of the spreadsheet. Community Groups are a great way to advertise both our girl and adult vacancies. Existing youth groups will happily share information with their parents (as long as you are not meeting on a competing day). Community groups are also a great way to get the word out about what we do, and they will then encourage their members to volunteer with us. Speaking at community groups has been a great way to get resources, as they can often provide actual things rather than money. Lots of community groups are also to get people back into work or to build confidence, and so are more than happy to advertise our opportunities to their members.

Advertising in the community is a great slow burner - putting posters and leaflets in libraries, school notice boards, community centres, places where units meet etc. Ensure there is a contact number on each poster. This makes us more visible, which was what a lot of people have said Girlguiding needs to be.

Many free publications will also run adverts and short articles to advertise what we do and who we're looking for. AboutMyArea and PO6/7/9/10 will happily publish if you write and provide a photo.

Events

Attending events is a great way to showcase the activities we do in Girlguiding, and to attract an audience who might otherwise have not have looked at joining us. Events can be anything from a recruitment stall in a college or library, an activity stall at a community fair or school event, or even running a powerpoint of photos on a businesses internal TV system. The aim of events is to let people know what we do in Girlguiding, and that we're here making a difference. It's to stereotype the old-fashioned view people may have of us, and to show we make an impact on our local communities.

Once you have a booking in place, they don't take long to set up and apart from time they are very little effort. You need to be happy talking to people about all sections and volunteering opportunities, you need some literature with a contact number on, and an attractive stall - a modern, clean Girlguiding tablecloth, with relevant and tidy postcards or information. A freebie always attracts people, whether it's a Girlguiding wristband, stickers or a pack of lollies.

Activities wise, Pinterest is full of ideas, just search for 'Stall Activities' from the main pinterest page. If a volunteer is prepared to take on the role of 'events volunteer', then a kit of the tablecloth, literature, stickers, boiled sweets, a bag of story telling stones, some spaghetti and marshmallows, ingredients to make something all stored in a small box would be really handy. That way they can turn up to events with everything they need, and adjust their activities depending on the audience. Showing our current themes and campaigns shows we're modern and relevant, for example taking STEM activities, or attending a feminist talk.

Bring a Friend

For girls - Bring a friend nights are usually very successful. They take a bit of planning, but the reward is usually worthwhile. Get the girls in small groups to plan what they would like to do for the night - if age appropriate, include activities that they can run. Make sure they're interesting activities, and feel free to add things you know have been successful in the past. If all girls get to take something home at the end, that's great too, as it means you can stick a postcard with your contact details on to it so parents know how to join up their daughters. In advance, get your girls to make the invitations - if they can give two or three out each, and get them really excited to pick who they'll give them to, it's usually well attended. Make sure you have enough adults for ratios for Rainbows, and for comfort with other sections! Ensure that you get emergency contact details for each girl - you may need a leader ready to jump on parents if they're just dropping off without coming in to see you first.

For adults - If you are looking for new regular helpers and leaders, bringing an adult friend is the best way for them to try it out without any pressure. They can come along to see a full meeting, get a taste for the age group and the types of things you do, and the types of things they would be expected to do. They will not have a Girlguiding DBS, so ensure they are not left alone with any girls at any time. Work place trials are more and more common now, so there is no reason why a one-off volunteer trial wouldn't work as well. Ensure that if they want to come back, you get them to register online so they can meet with the division commissioner and all of the correct safety procedures.

A parent/adult rota is also really handy - not only for having extra pairs of hands, but for showing people what we do, and that they may like to do it more regularly. Some units strongly encourage parents (or parent/guardian substitutes if they really don't want to do it) to sign up to one week per term/quarter/year to help out, and if they can't make meetings, to help out in another way, such as going shopping, organising an activity for their daughter to bring, fundraising, or admin tasks. We all do this voluntarily, and showing people the opportunities we have available can often make them think they can do it more often than they currently are.

Being Visible

Being visible, as an adult leader alone or with your unit, is the best way to show people what we are up to. Posting social media posts of what you've been doing really sparks interest in us. Being visible in uniform is a great way to show people we're still around, as many people aren't familiar with the not-so-new uniforms. Telling people what you've been doing and talking about your volunteer role with as many people as possible often gets helpers to sign up.

School Visits

School assemblies are a great way to let girls know about units nearby for their age group. For infants and junior schools, I gave an interactive assembly. These involved telling the children about the opportunities available to them, interspersed with games and action songs. At the beginning of each assembly I gave the boys in the audience a special mission - to think of at least two girls they knew that weren't in assembly that could join Rainbows or Brownies. This kept them interested in the parts where I talked about what they could do, and I reiterated their "challenge" throughout to keep all involved. The games included a scavenger hunt, where they had to group together with those sitting around them to find things commonly found in assemblies, such as "someone with velcro shoes, someone with a fidget spinner in their pocket, someone with blue eyes". This got them mixing up, having fun, and kept their interest. The action songs were all call and follow style, like Crazy Moose and Singing in the Rain.

After each infant and junior assembly, I ran taster sessions just for the girls, where they played more games and completed an activity, which ranged from making rain-sticks to non-Newtonian fluids to friendship badges. The activity provided was based on donations, which was why it varied at each assembly.

The secondary school assemblies were less interactive, although still involved audience participation, it was seated.

For these assemblies, I took a pop up tent along with me, and filled it with items that would give a good sense of what Girlguiding is about for the 11-16 age groups. The items were a welly (to talk about Wellies and Wristbands, and the other camps we have), a bar of chocolate (to talk about fairtrade activities and the chocolate badge), a candle (to share our Guiding light and make a difference to our communities), a newspaper (to talk about the campaigns we're involved with and getting their voices heard on what matters to them), a lego brick (to represent the friendships you build in Guiding), spaghetti (to show our STEM themed activities, and that we're creative), a compass (to represent that they get to pick the activities they do and go their own way) and a ball (to show in between all that, we still have time for games and fun).

I held up each item and got the girls to put up their hands up to say what they thought it represented - the good thing with this was everything they said I was able to say "this isn't what it represents, but we do that too", which showed the wide variety of activities we do

that covered the topics they wanted to cover.

At the end of all assemblies, I either bundled leaflets for book bag drops, or gave them out to the older girls themselves. From each assembly I did, we gained new girls.

Being at the schools also gave opportunities to hand out postcards to parents after school, and answer any questions they may have. I found being in very obvious guiding wear helped with this, as when I wore my dark blue polo shirt with the small trefoil logo, people didn't know where I was from. When I wore my white and light blue t-shirt with a bigger worded Girlguiding logo on, people were happier to accept leaflets and postcards from me.