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**County update June 2020**

Linda and I are writing to you again to let you know what Guiding in Cheshire Border looks like now lockdown has been in place for almost 3 months.

For some people, lockdown will have meant taking a break from volunteering. Every aspect of our lives has changed during the COVID 19 pandemic and it is quite right that we have prioritised ourselves and our families.

For others, keeping up their volunteering commitments with Girlguiding has helped them get through this period and that’s wonderful to hear.

Some people have found more time for volunteering and have been learning new skills to deliver guiding to their units.

**Whatever your situation, please know that we don’t want you to feel under any pressure to carry on as normal – because the truth is: nothing is normal right now.**

To explore what Girlguiding looks like in our county right now, Linda and I took a survey and held a virtual meeting with leaders.

**What did we find?**

It was encouraging to hear stories of how girls were still receiving badges, transitioning between sections and even that the recruitment of adult volunteers had been happening!

There were 91 responses from people with regard to the survey;

66 (73%) said that volunteers were still able to volunteer for Girlguiding

25 (27%) had not been able to.

The breakdown of sections of those respondents is as follows:

1. Brownies, 27 Guides, 25 Rainbows and 7 Rangers

The majority of units that responded had helped with supporting the NHS and key workers in some, either by doing comfort bags for the hospitals or making face masks and scrubs. The younger groups had made pictures for elderly people in their area and a lot of units were involved in VE day celebrations.

You can see the results of the survey in more detail by visiting the County Website (under News).

**In summary;**

1. **Leaders have been keeping in touch and/or sharing activities with parents in a variety of ways;**
* Email
* WhatsApp
* Facebook
* Leader makes a video of a UMA for girls to follow at home when they can
* Posting out activities
1. **Leaders holding virtual meetings are keen to share ideas;**

**Tips on holding meetings**

* Start small
* Have a bell to control chatty girls
* Give notice if girls will be expected to have anything ready for the meeting
* Practice – join another meeting first to see how it works
* Watch Girlguiding webinars - Look on GO under *Learning Opportunities* to see a list
* Keep to a similar format to a unit meeting i.e. song, promise, activity, Taps.

**Meeting ideas**

* Pictionary
* Teddy Bear’s picnic
* Campfire
* UMA’s and Skillsbuilders
* Bingo
* Charades
* Scattergories
* Fancy dress
* Quizzes
* Sleepovers/Campouts

**But there can be barriers to virtual meetings;**

* Lack of time
* Lack of technology
* Can be onerous on parents as an adult must be in the room with anyone under 14 years old
* Virtual meetings are new and different to a face to face meeting – can be tiring
* Can be difficult to hear people and manage the chatter of girls

There are Girlguiding resources available to help you on the County Website (under Resources). Districts and Divisions also have various social media groups which can be great sources of ideas.

**Guiding for adults is also carrying on as best it can.**

We held a very successful **Mentor Update** evening in April and our next one is planned for **Monday 29 June 7-9pm** For details of how to join the Zoom meeting contact Helen communications@girlguidingcheshireborder.org.uk

Julia McCoy, our LQ coordinator reports that 5 people have completed their LQ during lockdown. Julia is very happy to accept mentor feedback by email so books can be signed off leadership@girlguidingcheshireborder.org.uk

Our Section advisers are planning to hold some virtual Air and Share meetings too. Many leaders that we’ve spoken to are keen to see how others are guiding during lockdown.

Our GO coordinators and division commissioners are working to ensure GO is kept up to date. To help with that, please check that your contact details and emergency contacts are up to date on GO.

And, of course, there is always **Safe Space**! Don’t forget, Level 1 and 2 are now e-learning and could both be completed in 30-45 minutes. 315 people still need Level 1 and 270 need Level 2 ☺

**What’s next?**

As a country we are unsure about the progression of COVID 19 but we do know the restrictions that we have in place are likely to continue for some time.

There is every reason to think face to face meetings may not start until Jan 2021 and we’d encourage all unit teams to think about how they could deliver guiding without face to face meetings if they are not already doing so.

Please let your commissioner know if you feel unable to volunteer at this time or feel you may not be able to return to your unit. From the survey we could see that 25% of people who responded had been unable to deliver guiding during lockdown. That represents 233 of our volunteers.

Having a clear picture of which areas of our county need more help and support will help us plan how to support you better.

**Financial support**

The County Exec are actively looking at how to support units who may be struggling financially now and how we can support all units next year when the annual subscription fee is due. As you will have seen from the survey results, the management of subscriptions is very varied. Be assured, help is available. Do speak to your commissioner if your unit is struggling financially.

**Please remember, Linda and I think you are all amazing!**

**The challenges we are facing are unique and will only be overcome by working together.**

**Let’s continue to help and support each other to Do our Best x**

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