



Flexible

*Flexible volunteering is key to the success of 1st Hainault
So when she heard about the launch of Scout Active*

It's a Saturday morning in February and, in between mugs of hot tea, a team of adults is cleaning, sawing and painting at the 1st Hainault's meeting place.

They are all Members of the new Scout Active Support Unit and are taking part in a Work Weekend at our headquarters.

Our Group was formed in May 2009 as a result of a successful merger of two local Groups. The Group Scout Leader, Lee Clark, had a strong vision that would ensure the future growth of Scouting for young people in Hainault. Part of this looked at the Group's methods of recruitment and retention, including adopting a flexible approach to adult volunteering.

An easy way to volunteer

We saw the Scout Active Support Unit as an opportunity for a number of people who wanted to give their time to the Group on a flexible basis. This meant that they wouldn't have to make the full-time commitment

**Eileen Pooley,
Group Scout
Active Support
Manager,
helping more
adults take
an active part
in the life of
the Group**



of being a leader or sitting on the Group Executive Committee. The Group Scout Leader wanted to ensure that those whose circumstances changed could stay with the Group in some way. The Unit provides these adults with a chance to get involved in a way that best suits them.

The Group has a very ambitious Group Development Plan. Once the Group Scout Leader and I had sat down to discuss its aims and objectives, it became clear that in order for it to be achieved, we would need more adults in the form of a Scout Active Support Unit. The first two years of the development plan focus on putting in place the infrastructure, skills and finances to allow the section leaders to continue to run a balanced and adventurous programme.

A fair deal for parents

The Group Scout Active Support Unit is still in its early stages but so far a number of parents have joined or expressed an interest in joining. The Group is aware



friends

Scout Group, says Group Active Support Manager, Eileen Pooley. Support, she jumped at the chance of forming a Unit

that some parents in our area find it difficult to pay their children's subscriptions. We therefore decided to waive the subscription if they gave their time instead – as part of the Scout Active Support Unit. If we didn't have this structure in place, we would not only lose the young people, but wouldn't have the adults either. Our Unit supports the Group as four key teams:

- 1) Social and Fundraising
- 2) Building and Grounds
- 3) PR and Communications
- 4) Skills.

The Unit is also flexible in other ways. Margaret, our Colony Assistant, injured her shoulder and wasn't able to give a regular commitment any more. We didn't want to lose her, so she is now part of the Social and Fundraising Team within the Unit.

Growing interest

Interest in this type of volunteering was apparent earlier in 2009 when the Group held a fun day

'So far a number of parents have joined or expressed an interest in joining'

and used the basic idea of The Big Adventure (see page 24) to give parents the opportunity to experience a taste of Scouting.

One parent is now planning to do the climbing instructor course and another, Ian, has just completed his Air Rifle Range Officer Diploma. Ian had no previous experience in Scouting, but felt he was missing out on being able to share his skills and interests. He didn't want to commit as a leader but has taken a lead role in the Scout Active Support Unit and is now planning a weekend air rifle camp early next year.

The Group plans to hold a Month of Action as a recruitment tool to promote the flexible way adults can get involved. For us, the Group Scout Active Support Unit is key to the long-term growth and development of the 1st Hainault.

more info

To find out more about Scout Active Support, visit www.scouts.org.uk/activesupport