



Edinburgh, Leith & District Battalion

Company Support Scheme Development Officer's Handbook

adapted from 'Company Support Scheme: Battalion Coordinator's Handbook: December 2006'

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The Company Support Scheme

What is it?

The Company Support Scheme is a way of offering support, advice and information to companies. It underpins the first and most important aim in the BB Development Plan, which is to achieve a better focus on the needs of companies, and to respond quickly and effectively to those needs.

How will it work?

The scheme is based on Edinburgh, Leith and District Battalion appointing a number of Company Support Officers (referred to in this document as CSO's). These people would be experienced BB leaders, who are not too tied up with week-to-week commitment in companies and are able to give some time to this role.

The role of the CSO's will be to visit companies in the Battalion to show support and interest and to identify whether or not the company has any specific needs that the CSO's can help with. Specifically, their role will be to:

- **Listen!**
- Give advice on programme and activities
- Give practical help on financial matters (fundraising etc)
- Give assistance on any aspect of running the company
- Provide a link to other companies, the Battalion and staff at Scottish / UK HQ

How is it managed?

The Company Support Scheme, when up and running, will not only provide support and encouragement to Captains and company staff, but will help inform the Battalion and Scottish / UK Headquarters what it is that companies really need from them, and how best to deliver that help.

The CSO's first point of contact will be the Development Officer for the scheme (more about this role on page 8). The CSO's and the Development Officer will meet together twice in a session to discuss the progress of the scheme, to compare notes and to look at ways to improve the coverage and effectiveness of the scheme within the Battalion.

Both the CSO's and the Development Officer should develop close links with Scottish / UK Headquarters staff.

Company Support Officers

How to Select

The most critical success factor for the Company Support Scheme is the credibility of the Company Support Officers. They need to be men and women who are sensitive, acceptable to company staff, have good interpersonal skills and a depth of BB and youth work knowledge. Added to this they should be able to take a long-term view and support companies to develop best practice.

Here is a list of the qualities that we are looking for in a CSO:

- Able to listen and communicate well
- A good knowledge of the BB, its policies and practices
- Up to date with current developments; someone who takes an active interest in the Brigade at battalion and national levels
- A commitment to young people's participation

It is important that CSO's are not people who are already over-burdened with company work, and the people approached should be told exactly what the commitment will involve.

The Development Officer, in consultation with the Battalion Office Bearers should approach people who fit the criteria above, explain the commitment and invite them to become CSO's. The number of CSO's needed in the Battalion will depend on the number of companies in the Battalion. We should aim for one CSO for every 4 to 6 companies.

What they will do

The commitment of the CSO's will involve:

- Visiting between 4 and 6 companies per session
- Following up on any queries or help needed as identified at the visits
- Attending two meetings a session with the Development Officer
- Attending an initial briefing session at Battalion Headquarters

Any record keeping and bureaucracy will be kept to a minimum, but CSO's will become "front-line" people for communications with HQ. CSO's will be included in communications on all developments, news, consultations etc so that they can give information that is up to date and accurate.

CSO's will be given a complete set of all BB resources and programme materials, free of charge, and as they are launched. They will also be given a check- list which will help them to cover the relevant aspects of the company visits, and which will reflect the information given at the Battalion briefing session.

Communications with Battalion Headquarters

Battalion briefing session

All CSO's, will be invited to a Battalion briefing session, which will involve:

- Training and information on the role of a CSO
- A focus on the wider aims of the scheme — to support companies and to help them develop and grow
- An update on BB developments
- Supplying all CSO's with a set of resource materials

Battalion meetings

When CSO's are performing their role in the Battalion, there will be a couple of meetings per session with the other CSO's and the Development Officer. The agenda of these meetings should include:

- A brief report from each CSO on the meetings with companies, highlighting particular needs, questions or issues.
- A discussion on the effectiveness of the scheme and to note examples of good progress
- Problem-solving sessions on issues where the CSO would like the help of the group
- A chance to suggest improvements or amendments to the scheme and the way it is operated

Feedback to Scottish / UK Headquarters

It is the role of the Development Officer to feedback any important points of these Battalion meetings to Scottish / UK HQ.

As there is a need to keep things simple, this feedback can be formal or informal as appropriate. Scottish / UK HQ will not require minutes of meetings, but an email or phone call to pass on relevant information would be acceptable.

Briefing and support for Company Support Officers

CSO's will be invited to a briefing session at Battalion Headquarters, where the role will be fully explained. CSO's will be able to have their questions answered and will be able to voice any concerns and determine their own support needs.

CSO's in the Battalion will be encouraged to develop communications with each other as well as attending the twice a session Battalion meetings.

Where there are difficulties or barriers presented to the work of a CSO, there should initially be support from the Development Officer, who in turn, can seek support from Scottish / UK HQ staff.

The role of a CSO is critical to the development of The Boys Brigade, and in some cases may make the difference between a company closing or growing. Therefore, it is important that CSO's feel supported in their work, and do not feel that the task is too much or that their achievements go unrecognized. It is the role of the Development Officer and Scottish / UK HQ staff to provide ongoing support to CSO's.

The Role of the Development Officer

Hopefully, the role of the Development Officer has been made clear in the previous sections of this handbook. The following points summarize the main responsibilities:

- To meet with the relevant member of HQ staff before setting up a scheme within the Battalion
- In consultation with Battalion Office Bearers, to select people from within the Battalion to be invited to take up the role of CSO. Selection to be made against the criteria on page 4
- To attend a Battalion briefing session for CSO's
- To hold two meetings a session with CSO's to discuss the progress of the scheme and to highlight any improvements that can be made
- To feed back relevant information about the needs of companies to Scottish / UK HQ
- To support the CSO's in their role