

District Lead Volunteer's Report

I am delighted to report that Scouting in Malling has had another excellent year. In the census at January 2025, we did see a slight decrease in our overall youth membership of just over 3%, but our adult volunteer numbers increased this year by just short of 5%, leaving us overall with a very tiny dip in membership. The team have reviewed the census this year with the group lead volunteers and have no specific concerns for reasons for a slight drop. We're looking ahead to 2026 where we expect to grow again due to further expansion of Squirrels sections opening in more groups across the district.

At this stage last year, we were looking forward to many things. Scouts transformation happened in late November, and this was the official start of changing our approach to volunteering in teams, learning, welcoming adult volunteers and using new digital tools. Whilst the digital tool launch might not have gone as smoothly as headquarters may have liked, things are progressing and beginning to embed in the way we volunteer in and operate at Scouts. Part of this has been a refocus on safety and compliance and with the requirement for every full member to complete updated mandatory safety learning, the District has supported volunteers in completing this, with just a couple of weeks to go until the deadline, we're nearly there.

One of the things we were looking forward to most, and what we would say was our major achievement in the year was taking over 200 people to Kandersteg International Scout Centre, in Switzerland, for the adventure of a lifetime. We explored the country, took part in adventurous activities and made new friends. With representation of both adults and young people from right across the District, this was the standout event of the year and my thanks go to the entire team that worked tirelessly for over 18 months before the trip for all the planning and preparation that went into it to make it the success it was.

Our Programme Team began delivering events for young people from across the Malling area with events including the District coming together to celebrate St George's Day at the Friars in Aylesford, as well as events for Squirrels and a silent disco for Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. Our 14-24 team also completed the opening of a new Explorer Unit, Phoenix, to increase capacity within the 14-24 provision, and look forward to seeing how this grows in the years to come. Our Campsite Support, Management and Development Teams continue to work on maintaining and developing Comp Wood, which includes construction of a new building and refurbishment of existing facilities. We are excited to watch the new building and facilities take shape.

Young people remain at the heart of everything that we do in Malling, shaping the activities we offer which gives them opportunities to take on leadership roles. The Youth Team has been at the heart of this, holding a youth forum for Scouts and Explorers to share their thoughts, and a youth panel being instrumental to decision making as part of the trip to Kandersteg.

All Groups across the District continue to offer brilliant programmes and activities for young people and we are working with groups to identify opportunities to grow where there are signs of waiting lists. Some of our Groups are facing some challenges without a lead volunteer, and so we're continuing to work with the Groups, the county Growth and Development officers and others across the District to support and identify teams of people to work together in leadership teams. If anyone is looking for a new and exciting challenge, please do get in touch for a chat.

As we look forward to Malling's future, exciting plans are already in place for events such as Quest 9 in 2027 and many other incredible opportunities. By the time we get to next year's AGM, the wheels will be in motion to find my successor to lead Malling into its next chapter as my tenure as Lead Volunteer will end at the end of 2026.

I'd like to say thanks to my entire District Leadership Team, the wider District Teams and the Trustee Board for their support during what has been another busy year. Finally, I'd like to thank every adult volunteer, parent, young person who has been involved with Scouts. You're all fantastic. Remember, we're better off when we achieve together. Scouts really does make an impact and continues to deliver Skills for Life.

Craig Worcester
District Lead Volunteer