



## **SCOUTING IRELAND NATIONAL AWARDS**

### **Introduction**

Scouting Ireland has a national awards system for recognising length of service, meritorious service above the norm, and special acts of heroism and bravery, courage, endurance and devotion to Scouting under difficulties. Being a national system affords it status and allows all applications to be judged objectively according to national criteria. Except in the case of recognition of length of adult service, awards are not made automatically, and proper, detailed justification must be made in every case.

### **The Awards Project Team**

Scouting Ireland's Board of Directors appoints the Team Lead and Members of the Awards Project Team. Members of the Project Team are drawn from individuals with a wide range of experience of the Association. The Project Team has to consider each case against the award criteria in order to ensure that standards for each award are properly maintained nationally. While the Team endeavours to achieve an equitable balance in applying the criteria, it will be readily understood that it relies heavily on full, fair and accurate information provided in the application form. It is on the basis of what is written in the application form that the Team considers which level of award is appropriate. Applicants often forget that, while they know the nominee, it would be unusual for any Project Team member to have firsthand knowledge of the nominee and of that individual's contribution and service, hence the need for a full and proper citation. The success of, and esteem for the awards system depends on nominations being put forward in a timely and proper manner from Groups / Counties / Provinces with satisfactory and convincing citations.

### **Training Requirements**

Scouters have a responsibility to complete obligatory training appropriate to their current appointments. In circumstances where the maximum period allowed for completion of this obligatory training has elapsed without the appropriate Wood Badge having been gained, it is generally considered inappropriate to grant any award. It is difficult to justify a claim of meritorious service where the nominee has not fulfilled the training obligation entered into when accepting the appointment. The Awards Project Team is always prepared to consider exceptional cases where appropriate training has not been completed for good reason, but full details of the extenuating circumstances must be provided.

### **The Role of the Group / County Secretary**

It is the responsibility of Groups and Counties to maintain proper records to permit effective consideration and review of awards for all members and associate members.



## THE AWARDS

### SERVICE AWARDS

Service awards are not related to awards for MERITORIOUS AWARDS and may be awarded to anyone fulfilling the criteria.

Group and County Secretaries are responsible for keeping service records of all their members, Associate Members and others. Regular and frequent reviews of records should be carried out to ensure that there is no delay in applying for these awards, where appropriate.

Service Awards are awarded to adult Members and Associate Members of the Association after completion of 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 60 and 70 years service.

Nomination for Service Awards should be made by email to awards@scouts.

It is up to Groups, Counties and / or Provinces to recognise other periods of service in whatever way they consider appropriate. If a gift is to be offered it should be purchased out of funds solicited for the purpose.

Any service given, whilst holding an adult appointment whilst a member of Scouting Ireland, counts towards the service awards. This includes service such as Chairman, Secretary Treasurer, Group Council Member etc. It should be noted that occasional helpers do not accrue service unless an appointment is held concurrently.

### MERITORIOUS AWARD

#### *Chief Scout's Commendation of Merit*

The Chief Scout's Commendation of Merit is given in respect of not less than 2 years meritorious service, which stands out. It should be regarded as the Chief Scout's recognition of the very real contribution made to the Association by the individual concerned. In exceptional circumstances, it may be awarded to a youth members where there is no provision for recognition under the Association's ONE Programme.

#### *Bronze Merit Award*

The Bronze Merit Award is awarded for service of an exceptional character. It implies keen, conscientious, imaginative and dedicated service over [a sustained period] or [a period of not less than 7 years].

#### *Silver Merit Award*

The Silver Merit Award is awarded for exceptional and notable service to Scouting over [a sustained period] or [a period of not less than 15 years].



### ***Gold Merit Award***

The Gold Merit Award is awarded for leadership of the most inspiring kind in Scouting over [a sustained period] or [a period of not less than 25 years]. The Gold Merit Award is not normally awarded until after at least another Merit Award has been gained and a further five years service has been completed. Thus, it is seldom awarded for less than 25 years service, which should be especially distinguished and appreciably better than outstanding.

There are occasions when a Gold Merit Award may be awarded without a Chief Scout's Commendation of Merit or a Bronze / Silver Merit Award having been gained first. It sometimes happens that a person has not been awarded a Merit Award but has given very good service for 30 years or more without any award. The Gold Merit Award might then be appropriate, but only where, say, the last ten years service has been especially distinguished.

### ***Order of Cú Culainn***

The Order of Cú Culainn is awarded for profound and long service to Scouting. It is not normally awarded until at least a Gold Merit Award has been gained. In practice this means that it is seldom awarded for less than 30 years service although it may be awarded in a shorter period of time to a nominee for services to Scouting at a European or World level.

## **HONOUR AWARDS FOR GALLANTRY AND SCOUTING UNDER DIFFICULTIES**

### **HONOUR AWARDS FOR GALLANTRY**

These can be awarded to any member (adult or youth), for acts of bravery in the face of danger where life has been at risk. Where a number of candidates have been involved in a brave or gallant act, generally awards will be made to each individual. It may be appropriate for the applicant to distinguish between nominees who have made a major contribution to an incident and those who have been in supporting roles so that the Board may recommend awards at different levels as appropriate. The fullest details of the incident and of the way in which the nominee responded should be given in the report. Wherever possible, statements of evidence from eyewitnesses should be included. In so far as is practicable, the nominee should not be informed that an application is being made. Sometimes it is difficult to gather the necessary information without recourse to the nominee or their close relatives or friends, but in so doing no undertaking should be given that an award may be forthcoming. Applications should be made speedily and as soon after the event as possible. At the same time as making the recommendation to the Awards Project Team to recognise a brave or gallant act, Group Leaders / County Commissioners / Provincial Commissioner are urged to write to the nominee offering congratulations on his / her actions. It is not necessary to await the outcome of an award application before sending such a letter.



Group Leader / Commissioners often express concern that, for certain acts of bravery and devotion to duty under suffering, they do not know which award to apply for (Merit or Honour). If an award for gallantry is being sought, but the Project Team is unable to accept that there was risk to life, the application will not necessarily fail since the Project Team will consider whether a Meritorious Award is appropriate instead.

## **HONOUR AWARDS FOR SCOUTING UNDER DIFFICULTIES**

An Honour Award can be made to any member (adult or youth) either for acts of bravery in which there has been no risk of life, or for courage and devotion to duty under suffering.

As is the case of gallantry, awards are not made to groups, but to individuals, and it may be considered appropriate that some members of a group would receive an Honour Award and others the Chief Scout's Commendation of Merit.

As with gallantry awards, where the award is being sought for an act of bravery without risk to life, early application should be made and the Group Leader / Commissioner should acknowledge the deed by writing a congratulatory letter to the nominee. Again, nothing should be said which might raise the hopes of the nominee that he/she will receive an award.

Applications in respect of courage and devotion to duty under difficulties should be accompanied, if possible and appropriate, by independent medical evidence. Where the reasons for seeking such evidence are given, members of the medical profession are usually willing to make a supportive statement, but some refuse to do so and others will only confirm that the nominee is their patient. It is often the case when applications are made for an Honour Award for young people that their parents become involved in providing evidence. While the reasons for this are understood, it is a practice that is to be discouraged since expectations might not be fulfilled.

Where a medical condition is not immediately life threatening, time and care should be taken to submit a full and well-reasoned application together with a clear indication that the nominee has acted with courage, determination and fortitude. *[Simply because someone is suffering from a prolonged, debilitating or terminal illness does not justify an award - the requisite Scout-like qualities should be clearly displayed.]*

Sadly, it occurs occasionally that the nominee will be suffering from a terminal illness with a limited life expectancy. The Project Team has a procedure for dealing with such cases extremely quickly – in days rather than weeks – but the need for expeditious processing must be made clear when the application is submitted. If contemplating making such an application, it is as well to contact the Awards Co-ordinator in advance for advice and to give prior warning of the submission. In such circumstances, applications by email can be accepted.

## Checklist when making an Application for an Honour Award

It is recommended that the checklist is worked through and the necessary information assembled before commencing the application.

1. Is the supporting evidence complete, especially in respect of medical evidence where appropriate?

2. In medical cases:

- When did the condition first arise?
- Was it a congenital condition which the nominee had grown up with before joining Scouting? How does that affect the situation?
- If everyone in the same Section (e.g. Scout Troop) had the same disability, would the nominee still merit special commendation? Is there an emotive element present because of the disability?
- What is the prognosis? Is the condition life threatening?
- How long has the condition lasted? How much pain and suffering (e.g. surgery, treatment, medication, etc.) has been involved? What effect has it had on the nominee as regards their commitment to Scouting?
- Is the time appropriate for an Award? How long has the nominee been in Scouting? Would it be better to wait until there is more experience of how he/she copes with the disability, grows older and has increased responsibilities, etc.?

3. Where the nominee has been involved in rescue or preventative action, etc.

- Has there been a cool appraisal of the situation or does it appear to be emotive?
- Did Scout training e.g. first aid, dealing with emergencies, leadership skills, etc. influence the nominee's action?
- Was the action taken more or less than one would have expected having regard to the age and experience of the nominee and Scout training received?
- How much personal risk was involved?
- Did the nominee suffer any ongoing ill effects (e.g. injury, trauma, etc.)?
- Was the nominee acting entirely in the course of professional duty (e.g., as a member of one of the emergency services who might reasonably be expected to make their own form of recognition?). Is the fact that he / she is involved in Scouting relevant in any way at all?



4. In making a recommendation, Group Leader / Commissioners should compare, so far as they are able, the application against the background of similar awards previously granted in their Group / County.

5. Other points to be taken into consideration in rescue or preventative action cases:

- Has a congratulatory letter been sent? The earlier some recognition is given to the nominee the better, especially as there is always the possibility that an application for a national award (which inevitably takes time to compile and process) may not be successful.
- How long has it been after the incident before an application is submitted recommending an award? It is sometimes the case that so many months elapse that all benefit and impact of making the award is lost.
- How was attention drawn to the incident/situation? Was it from the Group, a parent or a member of the public, Press, etc.?

### **Posthumous Awards**

Posthumous Awards are not normally given except in the case of awards for gallantry, where the individual concerned dies as a result of the incident

## **MAKING AN APPLICATION**

### **Service Awards**

Applications for Service Awards should be made by email to [awards@scouts.ie](mailto:awards@scouts.ie)

The application should simply state the name of the nominee, the length of service and a statement from the nominator to the effect that the nominee-

- (a) Is a member, in good standing, of Scouting Ireland
- (b) Has been Garda / Access NI within the past three years.
- (c) Has attended SI Safeguard training within the past three years

### **Merit Awards**

Applications for Merit Awards and Honour Awards should be made via the Association's database ([my.scouts.ie](http://my.scouts.ie)).

*Manage Group > Search for Name > View name > See All Awards > +Nominate Member for an Award > Select Type of Award*

It is recommended that the nominee type up the citation in Word, save it and paste it into the appropriate text box. Since the text box has a maximum number of letters, it is recommended that a copy of the citation (suitably labelled) is also emailed to [awards@scouts.ie](mailto:awards@scouts.ie).



It is important to remember that it is on the basis of the information provided that the Project Team will assess the level of award appropriate to the nominee. While those compiling the citation and recommendation may know the nominee well, it would be unwise to assume that the Project Team has any knowledge of the nominee. Consequently, the citation should contain appropriate examples or evidence of meritorious service to allow the Team to form a proper and informed opinion.

Generally speaking, the following persons can nominate:

- Group Leaders: for members of their Group
- County Commissioners: for County personnel and Group Leaders (via email to [awards@scouts.ie](mailto:awards@scouts.ie))
- Provincial Commissioners: for Provincial personnel and County Commissioners (via email to [awards@scouts.ie](mailto:awards@scouts.ie))

The Project Team, at their sole discretion may accept applications from persons other than the above, where appropriate.

### **The Citation**

Awards for meritorious service are made to those who render to the Association outstanding, specially distinguished or exceptional service. Length of service, while one of the criteria for a meritorious service award, is separately recognised. Meritorious Service Awards are made to those whose contribution to Scouting stands out and the citation should seek to explain and evidence how this is so. What makes the service meritorious is the way in which the duties have been performed. This may mean that, in addition to running a good Section programme, the nominee has, perhaps, given regular meritorious service raising funds for the Group, in the maintenance of a Scout Den or campsite, in the organisation of County or Provincial events, serving on a campsite service team, editing a website, helping with adult training in the County or Province, and so forth. All this should be recorded in the citation. However, the successful organisation of a single large event, while praiseworthy, is not normally sufficient on its own to justify an award for meritorious service, since it is sustained meritorious service over a period, which is recognised by meritorious service awards.

Where possible, it is helpful to quantify in the citation the benefit derived as a result of the meritorious service given. For example, someone running a good, lively programme will almost certainly show an increase in membership or sustained full membership of their Section. For someone battling against the odds in an area of disadvantage, the fact that they have continued to run the Section over a significant period, maintaining numbers and providing a new dimension to the lives of young people, possibly in the face of local community indifference, is noteworthy.



Although awards for meritorious service relate to service rendered to Scouting, service with other organisations and associations (such as the Girl Guides, St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross, Order of Malta or Civil Defence) may be taken into account where this has been in connection with Scouting (for example, as a Skills Instructor or Examiner) and should be included in the citation.

If the individual has given service to the community as well as to Scouting, this should be noted in the application (e.g. St. Vincent de Paul, Eucharistic Minister, Credit Union Director).

While it is appropriate to indicate within the citation whether, in the applicant's opinion, the service has been good, outstanding, specially distinguished or exceptional, it is not normally appropriate to include in the citation any indication of the level of award, which is being sought.

### **Examples of Citations**

The following citation is reproduced from a recent application. It is an example of one which tells the Project Team little, if anything, about the quality of service rendered by the nominee, although it repeats service information given elsewhere in the application.

*"This village Scout Group was formed in 1967, when Liam joined as a Scout. Five years later he was appointed Assistant Scout Master. In 1974 he was appointed Scout Master, progressing to Unit Leader (CBSI) in 1979, and he continued in this position until he retired at age 65 years, when he became the Unit Chairman.*

*During his time as Group Leader the Group progressed in all Sections and was able to acquire its own Scout Hall on the outskirts of the village.*

*His Group has always supported County events and has played a major part in village life.*

*Liam has now completed fifty years in Scouting and was instrumental in organising the Group Reunion of former members earlier this year.*

*This dedicated Leader has given a lifetime of devoted service both to Scouting and the community, as this application records, and a Gold Merit Award is well justified."*

The following is offered as a more appropriate citation for the same individual:

*"Liam has held a number of appointments in his village Group for over fifty-five years. Since the award of the Silver Merit Award in 1995, Liam has continued to give devoted service to the Group and County.*





*He managed the Group team well and was a regular visitor to the Group's Sections, supporting the Scouters particularly by standing in for them when illness, holidays and business commitments have threatened meetings.*

*In the 1990's he was the leading light in raising £63,000 to enable the Group to build its own Scout Hall, and thanks to his dedication, the property is well maintained. For the past eight years Liam has organised and run a Christmas Bazaar efficiently, the profits from which have been used to maintain and upgrade Group equipment.*

*On retiring as Group Leader two years ago, he became Group Chairman and, in this capacity has continued his outstanding support of the Group, including recruiting some young blood onto the Group Council.*

*Liam's work for cordial relations with the local Girl Guides was recognised in 2004 when he was awarded the Guide Thanks Badge.*

*The County has long recognised his reliability and soundness of judgement: he has acted as Parade Marshal for the Founder's Day Parade for the last twenty-three years. Since 1989 he has officiated as Campcraft Team Lead in the annual Regional / County Shield competition. In 1996, he inaugurated the annual Regional / County Carol Service of which he has been the organiser ever since.*

*Liam's most exceptional service to Scouting over almost half a century is worthy of special recognition."*

NB. It is not enough for the citation to be a mere narrative. It must contain qualitative judgements.

### **Points to Note**

- Applications may be submitted at any time during the year, but there is a firm cut-off date of 31<sup>st</sup> December (for Founder's Day or St. Patrick's Day), 31<sup>st</sup> March (for Summer Camps presentations etc.) and 31<sup>st</sup> August (for new Scout Year events).
- Very occasionally, it may be appropriate for what would otherwise be a Founder's Day / St. Patrick's Day award to be made at a different time of year and a request, outlining the special circumstances, may be put forward. Of particular importance in this category are cases where it is discovered that someone has been diagnosed as having a terminal illness and consideration for an award needs to be expedited. These cases are always given urgent and sympathetic consideration, and it is advised that the Awards Project Team should be contacted to alert the Team Lead that such an application is on its way. In such circumstances, applications by email ([awards@scouts.ie](mailto:awards@scouts.ie)) can be accepted.
- Awards relate to adult service with Scouting Ireland (or its legacy Associations). Unfortunately, it is often the case that those who move frequently, giving consistently high



quality service wherever they go, are overlooked for awards for meritorious service. When it is known that service to the Association has been rendered elsewhere, whether in another Group, County or Province, and the present quality of service suggests that an award might be appropriate, supporting evidence from an appropriate Scouter / Commissioner in the other Group, County or Province should be obtained and forwarded to the Awards Co-ordinator at National Office.

- The Association's awards are mainly intended to recognise adult service rendered within Scouting Ireland (or its legacy associations). However, the citation may also include reference to Scouting in another WOSM / WAGGGS recognised Scout or Guide Association.
- Awards should not be made on the basis of 'retirement gifts'. No age limit is set for the receipt of awards and the quality of service is the overriding consideration.
- It is important to note that, with the exception of the Order of Cú Culainn, awards have a recommended requirement of a minimum length of service. Another award will not be considered until a further period of service of the same or greater quality has been rendered. While some flexibility is exercised, this is only done where an exceptional case is made by the nominating Group Leader / Commissioner.
- At no time should nominees be informed that an application for an award has been made on their behalf.
- Where a required 'signatory' to the application form is also the nominee, an alternative signatory must be sought. The most likely example is where a Group Leader or County / Provincial Commissioner is nominated, in which case an application (by email to the Awards Project Team) from the Group / County / Provincial Secretary would be an acceptable as an appropriate alternative.
- It is sometimes the case that spouses / partners involved in Scouting are nominated for consideration for meritorious service awards simultaneously. However appropriate it may seem for the applications to be dealt with together, it is important that each application stands on its own merit. Where this is the case, it should be understood that it is possible that one award may be accepted while the other may be made at a different level or even rejected. Nominating Group Leaders / Commissioners should therefore consider these 'double applications' very carefully.
- Where the nominee is the spouse / partner of a nominating Group Leader / Commissioner, or a family member, it is preferable that an appropriate third party, such as the Group / County / Provincial Chairman or Secretary, should make the application (via email to the Awards Team at National Office).



- All adult members should be considered for awards, no matter what position they hold. The criteria for awards are the same for all, except that Scouters are expected to have completed the obligatory training appropriate to their current appointment.
- It is a requirement that a nominee has been Garda / Access NI vetted before an award application for meritorious service can be considered. (Within the past three years).
- It is a requirement that a nominee has undergone appropriate Safeguarding training before an award application for meritorious service can be considered. (Within the past three years).
- Individuals whose service is rendered at Group level are equally eligible for meritorious service awards as are those who are active in Counties or Provinces. Meritorious Service Awards recognise the quality of service provided to Scouting, not the appointment in which that service is being rendered.
- There is no maximum number of applications that can be submitted from each Group / County / Province to the Project Team.
- The awards for meritorious service are not a ladder. It may be appropriate for a nominee to be recommended directly for a Gold Award or even the Order of Cú Culainn given the appropriate length and quality of service, particularly if the candidate has been previously overlooked. It is helpful if the apparent neglect or oversight is explained in the citation.

### **Despatch of Awards**

Service Awards, when approved, will normally be sent to the nominating Group Leader

Merit and Honour Awards, when approved, will normally be sent to the appropriate County or Provincial Commissioner.

### **Presentation of Awards and Certificates**

The occasion of a presentation is an important one - to the Association and recipients of Awards and Certificates, as well as to their immediate relatives and colleagues in Scouting. Appropriate arrangements are essential to ensure that the occasion is dignified and memorable.

### **Responsibility for Presentations**

Generally speaking, the County Commissioner should present the various Awards. In the case of a recipient being a County Commissioner, they should make arrangements for the presentation to be done by an alternative appropriate person (e.g. Provincial Commissioner). Depending on the circumstances giving rise to the Award, the responsible Commissioner should ensure that the presentation is made in a dignified, meaningful and sensitive way, involving where possible the recipient's immediate family and, if appropriate,



Scouting colleagues and friends. Awards should be presented within two months of receipt. Long delays between the granting of the award and presentation are unacceptable.

### **Physical Arrangements**

The place of the presentation should be a suitable one with a gathering of sufficient importance to give emphasis to the special occasion. Some thought should be given to the space required for the actual presentation. The area should be clear of furniture except for a table in the background on which to place the Awards and Certificates in readiness for presentation. Easy and uncluttered, approach and departure routes for recipients should be assured. Care should be taken to ensure communication of the information concerning the arrangements for presentation to all that will be concerned, including recipients. The Group Secretary / County Secretary / Public Relations Officer should make suitable publicity arrangements in conjunction with the local press. Appropriate arrangements for press photographers should be made, ensuring that they are able to get the photographs they need without impinging on or disrupting in any way the presentations.

### **Check Routine**

The person responsible for the arrangements should make the following checks: -

- The Award is available together with the Certificate, correctly worded.
- If more than one Award and Certificate is to be presented, check that these are available on a handy table in the order in which the presentations will be made. It is usual to make presentations in ascending order, that is, lowest award first, highest award last. Certificates should be free from postal coverings. It is helpful to recipients to ensure that a suitable envelope or covering is made available so that certificates arrive home clean, dry and uncreased.

### **Briefing**

The organiser should brief all who will be concerned with the presentation on positioning, order of approach, method of approach and departure, and arrangements for photographs, e.g. whether Press and/or family photographs may be taken during the presentation or may be specifically posed before or after the presentation.

### **Procedure**

The procedure for the presentation will vary according to the circumstances, but the following headings list the general items to be arranged: -

- Introduction of the person making the presentation, where necessary.
- Brief statement of the recipient's services, perhaps to include the wording on the certificate.



- Presentation - the award and certificate to be handed to the person making the presentation, who conveys his congratulations to the recipient.
- If there is more than one recipient, due importance will be given to each separate presentation.
- Thanks to the person making the presentation.
- The organiser will have made arrangements for recipients to collect wrappings or boxes, or any ancillary items not presented, at some convenient time following the presentation.