



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

**North West England**

## Starting the Comfort Bag Scheme for your local hospital

### Introduction

After the initial success of the scheme in Greater Manchester West County, our members have taken part in this heart-warming initiative to provide handmade bags containing small toiletries and care items, to people in their times of need.

Since launching the scheme in Girlguiding North West England last year, we've supported thousands of people in their times of need by delivering over 15,000 bags to hospitals, hospices, Womens' Refuges and homeless shelters across the region.

We've also supported some of the victims of the Manchester Arena Attacks as well as victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Since initial launch of the Girlguiding North West England Comfort Bag Scheme, Greater Manchester West has been gifted their own bench, by the SWAN nurses. That's not all; the county has also been honoured with a Queen's Award for Voluntary service - the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK - for their dedication to the Comfort Bag Scheme. In Girlguiding Greater Manchester West alone, our members have donated almost 7,000 Comfort Bags - an amazing achievement!

If you want to help us to take the scheme even further and reach even more people in need, here's what you need to do next.

- Let your county commissioner know you are interested in donating comfort bags in your area and she will let you know who your local coordinator is. You can use this editable poster to create your own document detailing your specific scheme.
- After you have spoken to your county commissioner, you should speak to your local coordinator, who will be the main point of contact for the scheme.
- The end of life team would normally be the team at the hospital in charge of the scheme; they could be called the bereavement team, palliative care team or Macmillan team. If in doubt, please contact [northwesthq@girlguidingnwe.org.uk](mailto:northwesthq@girlguidingnwe.org.uk) and we will be able to help you to contact the correct team.

### Collecting the items

You can use the document to spread the word about your scheme and encourage other members to donate items.

You will need a large space where you can collect and pack items before distributing them to the hospital. Some counties have used meeting places, residential centres, and volunteers' homes as a space to store the items.

We would advise that you work closely with your contact at the hospital to devise a plan for collecting and delivering the bags to the hospital. In some cases, the hospital teams have offered to arrange a collection service for the filled bags.

Please keep a note of how many bags your area/county donates, especially when you reach milestones like 100, 250, 500, 750 and 1000. If your county has been split into small areas, please let your county commissioner know the numbers from your area.



Your county might like to produce a certificate for those who have taken part. Girlguiding North West England can assist you with designing this.

**Items to include in the Comfort Bags (please make sure these are small travel-sized items):**

- Shampoo and conditioner (or two in one)
- Toothbrush and paste
- Hand soap
- Shower gel or lotion
- Hand cream
- Small packet of tissues
- Comb
- Small notepad and pen or pencil
- A small Girlguiding card inside the Comfort Bag, so that the recipient knows where it has come from. You can ask each girl to write the card with the following message “Packed especially for you by a Rainbow/Brownie/Guide/Ranger from \*insert unit name\*”. Recipients have told us that they appreciate some hand-drawings. You can even include some encouraging words.

**Useful additional items that can be included:**

- Deodorant
- Small packets of hand or face wipes
- Cotton buds
- Nail files etc
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Mouthwash
- Eye masks
- Ear plugs

**Important Notes for Comfort Bag Coordinators:**

It is important to check the individual items and the contents of any bags donated, prior to distributing these to the hospital. Sometimes there will be items from hotels that have wording such as “wash away your cares” or “smile, it’s a beautiful day”, which might not be appropriate, especially if the bag is given to someone who is very unwell.

Large items that you do not think are suitable to take in can be put out at local meetings for members to take for a donation; that money can then be used to purchase items you are short of.

**Other suggestions**

- Any full-sized items donated can be passed on to the wards for general use.
  - Any money donated can be used to purchase items you are short of for the bags.
  - Any items received specifically for children can be distributed on the children’s ward; your contact at the hospital will be able to distribute these.
  - Any items deemed unsuitable can be sold, and any profits made can be used to purchase items that you are short of for the bags.
- 