

UK Adviser (Explorer Scouts)

Group Scout Leader Survey 2008 Summary of Results and Conclusions

Background

The UK Adviser (Explorer Scouts) and his team invited Group Scout Leaders to complete a survey in order to gain some insight into the health of links between Scout Groups and Explorer Scout Units in Districts across the UK. The survey was advertised via Scouts.org.uk and in Scouting Plus, as well as being distributed at various Group Scout Leader Workshops around the UK.

Respondents

1009 respondents completed the survey. We asked them to declare whether or not their Group provided support or had links with an Explorer Scout Unit, whether or not there was a formal Partnership Agreement:

- 53% of respondents (N=576) answered yes to this question
- 47% of respondents (N=433) stated that they had no direct relationship with an Explorer Scout Unit.

Analysis of answers from each of these Groups, with comparisons between them, is provided below.

Partnership Agreements

Of the 576 respondents who are actively partnered with an Explorer Scout Unit, only 47% have a written Partnership Agreement (PA). When asked about the content of the PA, there were no surprises – perhaps because most would be likely to use the basic “template” PA provided by UKHQ, with local modifications.

Notably, of those who had a written PA:

- only half of respondents said that a review date had been written into their PA
- very few had reviewed their PA with the District Explorer Scout Commissioner (DESC) or other District Explorer Scout representative in the past 12 months
- most (71%) said that having a PA is useful
- 93% of this group of respondents said that the relationship between their Group and the Explorer Scout Unit (ESU) is a good one.

Of those who were partnered with an ESU but where no PA exists:

- a third had had a PA in the past and no longer have one
- Around half said the reason for not having a PA was that things seem to work well without one
- almost 20% of this group had never even heard of a PA

Of those who had no partnership, formal or informal, with an ESU (N=433):

- >90% had never been partnered with an ESU
- 87% had no arrangement to link with an ESU for recruitment purposes (see below).

UK Adviser's comments:

- *Those who have a PA clearly find it valuable, but it is not essential to smooth relations between Groups and Explorer Scout Units.*
- *In most cases, once written the PA is rarely (if ever) reviewed and this confirms anecdotal evidence.*
- *Those Groups who do not support, or do not have any form of partnership with, an ESU are unlikely to have developed any working link for recruitment purposes.*

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Links between Groups and District Explorer Scout provision

The responses to this part of the survey yielded perhaps the most interesting responses, and certainly appear to reveal issues which may form the subject of future development work by the UK Programme Team.

71% of all respondents stated that there is active Explorer Scout provision in their District, and 50-60% stated there was an appointed DESC. There was no difference here between those Groups with a “partnered” or supported ESU, and those without.

Responses to key questions, with comparison between the two groups of respondents, is summarised in the following table:

Question	Group partnered with/supports an ESU (N=576)	Group has no partnered ESU (N=433)
Is there an active link between Scouts in your Group and one or more ESU? (a=yes)	60%	31%
Do most Scouts in your Group regularly move on to Explorer Scouts? (a=yes)*	63%	24%
Do you have regular contact with the Explorer Scout Section in your District? (a=yes)	62%	38%
Do you have Young Leaders in your Group? (a=yes)**	69%	54%
Are all Young Leaders in your Group registered with the YLU? (a=yes)	83%	86%
Have all Young Leaders completed Module A within the first three months? (a=yes)	60%	54%
Do you think the Young Leaders in your Group receive adequate support from the District Explorer Scout team? (a=yes)	60%	47%

*The most likely reasons given for why Scouts don't move on are (most common first):

1. Scouts prefer to stay as Young Leaders
2. Geographical reasons
3. Links between Troop and ESU not good
4. Scouts don't know about Explorer Scouts
5. Scout Leaders not keen to lose older Scouts.

**Young Leaders in Groups appear to be evenly spread across the three Sections.

UK Adviser's comments:

- *This appears to suggest that when a Group is partnered with or supports an ESU, Scouts are much more likely to move in to Explorer Scouts.*
- *This is backed up by anecdotal evidence, and appears intuitive, but this provides clear evidence that one of our biggest challenges is to reach out to Groups who have no partnered ESU.*
- *The responses to the YLS questions provide no surprises, and confirm the findings of the YLS survey published in 2008.*

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Main Conclusions

The responses to this survey suggest that:

- If this is a representative cross-section, over 50% of Scout Groups are partnered with or actively support an Explorer Scout Unit. It would be interesting to see how this compares with Venture Scout Units before 2001.
- Only around half of Groups with a partnered Explorer Scout Unit have a written Partnership Agreement.
- Where they exist, Partnership Agreements are valued, but where they don't exist they are not missed.
- Once written, Partnership Agreements are seldom reviewed.
- Those Groups with a partnered Explorer Scout Unit tend to maintain good links for the purposes of transition, whether or not they have a Partnership Agreement
- Caution should be applied as these responses represent estimates from Group Scout Leaders rather than hard numbers, but they suggest that a much higher than average (60%) number of Scouts move onto Explorer Scouts from these Groups (census data suggest that at best around 30% of Scouts move on to Explorer Scouts). This is probably borne out by anecdotal experience.
- Conversely, Groups without a partnered Explorer Scout Unit are much less likely to have developed an active link with the Explorer Scout Section, and Scouts from these Groups are less likely to make the transition (much nearer the national average).
- Between 50 and 70% of Groups have Young Leaders working in their Sections, but 1 in 5 admit to not registering their Young Leaders with the Young Leaders' Unit, and only 60% complete Module A within the first 3 months as a Young Leader.
- Interestingly Young Leaders appear to be evenly spread across all three younger Sections.
- Only around half of Group Scout Leaders feel their Young Leaders receive adequate support from the District Explorer Scout team – something already identified in the Young Leaders' Scheme Survey in 2008.

Actions for the UK Adviser (Explorer Scouts)

1. Partnership Agreements – these should stay and remain a useful tool for maintaining good relations between Scout Groups and Explorer Scout Units. However, at present Rule 3.16c of POR indicates that all partnered Groups and Explorer Scout Units should have a PA. The UK Adviser (Explorer Scouts) should consider changing the wording to retain Partnership Agreements as an optional useful tool rather than a requirement.
2. The UK Adviser (Explorer Scouts) should consider development work to promote links between Explorer Scout Units and Groups who do not have a direct relationship with the Explorer Scout Section in a District, and include this in the UKPAT Work Plan.
3. The UK Programme Advisory Team Work Plan already contains development objectives for the Young Leaders' Scheme, including promoting the support provided by the ESL (YL) or DESC for Young Leaders working in the younger Sections.

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