

TEAM PLAYERS

Graham Haddock, National Commissioner for Explorer Scouts, explains the purpose of Partnership Agreements and outlines five steps to making sure your Explorer Scouts are part of a successful Scouting squad



PARTNERSHIP ISSUES

Let's look at some of the issues of Partnership Agreements. I have already said that Explorer Scouting is a District provision. That means that the District has the responsibility to make sure that it happens and that Explorers get full access to a Balanced Programme across the District. Having accepted this fact, the reality is that Explorer Scouting will happen in Explorer Scout Units, but the District is not going to run every Explorer Scout Unit in its patch. That would be mad and frankly impractical. Nevertheless, the District has a very important function in ensuring both the quality and quantity of Explorer Scouting offered.

So where will these Explorer Scout Units be found? Well, in addition to District Units, Explorer Scout Units can be established in partnership with a Group or number of Groups, with Scout activity centres, with Gang Shows or with other specialist Scouting organisations. The District Unit, run by the District, clearly does not need to have a Partnership Agreement with itself, although some would see merit in such an agreement and I would not totally dismiss its potential benefits for both parties. The other Units, partnered with Groups or specialist bodies, do need a Partnership Agreement.

Each Partnership Agreement will have three equally important 'inputs' – the District, the Group or other partner, and the Explorer Scout Unit itself. In

order to keep things simple, I will use the example of a Unit partnered with a Scout Group in the rest of this article.

THE AGREEMENT

The Agreement is designed to ensure that the District, the Unit and the Group establish and maintain effective working relationships. The game here is to provide effective and enjoyable Explorer Scouting for Explorer Scouts in the area, and all three parties to the Agreement should keep the dictionary definition mentioned above in mind – they are all playing on the same side in this game. The Partnership Agreement is not a tool to allow one or other signatory to try to pull a fast one or to allow any of the three signatories to bully the others. The Agreement has to be negotiated sensibly between the parties involved, or there is a serious risk that the game will be lost!

The Agreement itself should cover five main broad areas of interest:

- an introduction
- liaisons between the Unit and the partner
- links between the Troop or Troops and the Unit

- equipment, facilities and resources
- review.

Let's look at each in turn.

The introduction

The introduction section of the Agreement should record which parties are signatories. This will usually be the District, the Unit and the Group. It should also define who is eligible to become a member of the Explorer Scout Unit. In the majority of cases, all Explorer Scout Units will be open to any member of The Scout Association within the Explorer Scout age range.

Liaisons

This part of the agreement attempts to define the relationship between the Unit and the Group. It will indicate that the Explorer Scout Leader (and perhaps some of the Explorer Scouts themselves) has the right of attendance at certain meetings of the Group, for example the Group Executive Committee, meetings of the Group's leadership team and the Group AGM. In return, it might indicate that the GSL or Group Chairman have the right to attend meetings of the Explorer Scout Unit leadership team or of the Unit membership. It will also try to define how often the Explorer Scout Leader will meet with the Leaders of the Troop or Troops, which feed into that Unit.

Clearly, the more closely the Explorer Scout Unit can relate to its partner Group, the better its Leaders will work together, which means that Scouts are in turn more likely to want to

move up into the Unit. In the terms of the dictionary definition above, there can be no doubt that the more effectively we work together, the better the team and the better the quality of Explorer Scouting being offered.

Links

In terms of the Partnership Agreement, this part relates to how the Unit and its feeder Troops will try to ensure that all Scout become Explorer Scouts – the 'Moving In' bit. Make a note of how the Explorer Scout Unit will try to ensure that its members all join the Scout Network – the 'Moving On' bit, although this is not a formal part of the Agreement.

MiMo (moving in and moving on) requires effort on the part of all our team players. Scout Leaders must inform the District Explorer Scout Administrator of Scouts aged 13 years and over. This will allow the District PR machine to kick into gear to inform the Scouts of the opportunities that await them in the Explorer Scout Section. The agreement may also define what tools are to be used to ensure effective MiMo – regular joint activities, an annual Scout/Explorer Scout camp or whatever. Team players regularly talk together and train together. This is no different for an Explorer Scout Unit and its feeder Troops.

The kit and other resources

This has been the part of the agreement, which seems to have caused most difficulty in implementation: "If the Explorer Scout Unit is not going to be part of my Group, why should I let them use my tents?" and so on. One of the reasons for establishing a Partnership Agreement is to try to avoid potential disputes, such as the one given above. This part of the Agreement can define in advance the responsibilities of each party. It can define when and where the Unit will meet and what access to the

Group equipment the Unit will have, and vice versa. It may allow the Unit to wear the Group neckerchief and to use the Group's name.

But the Agreement can't be one-sided. If the Group is going to support the Explorer Scout Unit in a real practical way, then the Unit should expect to help out with various aspects of Group function. The Unit may be asked to help out at Group fundraising events, maintain Group property and assist with activities for younger members.

The financial arrangement between the Unit, the Group and the District has also caused considerable concern and this will be the subject of a separate article in *Scouting Magazine* later this year.

Common sense will take most of us a long way to defining this part of the Agreement. Possessiveness over minor points of detail will only serve to damage the relationship between an Explorer Scout Unit and its partner Group.

The review

No agreement should be open-ended. Things may need to be adjusted in the light of experience and changes to the Agreement made. For this reason, every Partnership Agreement should be reviewed on a regular basis. In the first few years, there is sense in reviewing the Agreement annually. Thereafter, less frequent review may be appropriate.

IN SUMMARY

A Partnership Agreement is a tool to help make a success of our new Section. It should not become a chore or a cause for friction between players in our team, unless we make it such. We need to talk to one another more frequently – we have much to learn from each other. Perhaps the Partnership Agreement will encourage dialogue, which will result in better Scouting for more young Explorer Scouts. Our future starts with you! ■

Further Information

Factsheets explaining how to draw up Partnership Agreements with some worked examples and an outline template agreement are available on ScoutBase UK (www.scoutbase.org.uk) or via the Information Centre.



THE SAME SIDE

One dictionary definition of partner is 'one who plays on the same side with another in a game'. A Partnership Agreement could therefore be defined as 'an understanding between people who play on the same side of a game'. The 'same side' bit is the most important!

Explorer Scouting has been established as a District provision. This has caused a lot of discussion and argument, both during the development of the Programme and subsequently. But the District is only one partner in this aspect of our 'game'. It may be worth reminding people that both the District and the Scout Group are playing on the same side when it comes to Explorer Scouting! Explorer Scouts are independent young people looking to adults to provide them with a worthwhile Scouting experience. They don't want to see Leaders fighting over Partnership Agreements.