

MONEY MATTERS

Graham Haddock answers some of your most frequently asked questions on Explorer Scout finances

Finance is always a major issue for any Section and the same is true for Explorer Scouts. What makes this an even more difficult subject is that there are many Venture Scout Units that are to be closed sometime before 31 December 2003, and their assets need to be transferred.

Listed below are some frequently asked questions to which I have tried to apply a common sense approach. If this type of approach is used, 95 per cent of the questions are easily answered. The rest may need a little negotiation!

Q When a new Explorer Scout Unit is opened who is responsible for the finances?

A A short question with a relatively long answer. First of all, the District Executive Committee acts as the Group Executive Committee for all Explorer Scout Units within the District. This means, in effect, that the District Executive has the overall responsibility for the finance of the Explorer Scout Section, wherever they are in the District. Clearly the Executive does not want to become involved in the day-to-day running of the Section and it is therefore the responsibility of the District Explorer Scout Commissioner to ensure that all the Units within the District operate in a prudent manner.

If there is a single District Unit, the financial situation is easier to control, but in reality there will usually be more than one Explorer Scout Unit in the District. Each Unit may have its own separate bank account, but a copy of the bank statement must be sent to the District Treasurer at least every quarter. The District Treasurer should also



arrange to scrutinise the accounts at least once a quarter in the same manner that a Group Treasurer reviews Sectional accounts within the Group.

Q Are Explorer Scout Units registered as separate charities?

A No. They come under the management of the District and the

charity number for the District should be quoted when necessary.

Q Which is better, central funding by the District or devolved funding by the individual Units?

A Neither. In most cases it will be a mix of the two. As with Venture Scout Units at present, Explorer Scout

Units may wish to do some of their own funding for specific projects or for the general running of the Unit. If the Unit has a Partnership Agreement with a Group then they may wish to assist the Group in its fundraising activities and likewise the Group may wish to assist the Unit with a specific project. Our watchword must be 'flexibility'.

Q So how much control does a Group have over the Explorer Scout Unit finances?

A A Group in partnership with an Explorer Scout Unit does not have any responsibility for financing the Unit. However, it may give financial support. This is down to local arrangements between the Group, District and Unit.

Q Won't the fact that the District Executive has financial responsibility for the Section cause problems and more work for the District Treasurer?

A Some Districts have decided that, in order not to overload the District Executive with Explorer Scout matters, they will set up a sub-committee to oversee the Explorer Scout Section on their behalf with regards to finance and other matters discharged by the District Executive. This sub-committee can then scrutinise the accounts for the Executive and report directly to the District Executive on a regular basis.

The exact remit of the District Executive sub-committee will need to be set locally depending on circumstances. It would make sense to have parents of Explorer Scouts on this committee in the same way that parents assist on Group Executive committees.

Q When the Venture Scout Unit is closed, what happens to the funds and other assets?

A If it is a Group Venture Scout Unit then all assets transfer to the Group (and this goes for liabilities as well). Local arrangements should be made to ensure that adequate and sensible arrangements



It is important to keep your accounts up-to-date

are made for Explorer Scouts and Scout Network to benefit from those assets. Some Groups may transfer the money back to the Explorer Scout Unit and Scout Network as a start up fund and note this in the Partnership Agreement. Likewise, if there are other non-monetary assets then arrangements for their use should be noted in the Partnership Agreement.

If the Unit is a District Venture Scout Unit, then all assets will revert to the District who can then make arrangements for those assets to be used by the new Explorer Scout/Scout Network Sections.

Q As a Group we currently rely on the Venture Scout Unit to keep us solvent with their monthly subscription. What will happen in the future?

A If the Group has a Partnership Agreement with a Unit then arrangements can be made for the same subs to be paid as before. Don't forget Groups now need only collect their subs. County and HQ subscription fees will be paid via the District.

Q I understand that to make a National Lottery application

you need to be a 'group' and that individual Explorer Scout Units will be unable to apply for grants. Is this correct?

A Yes. As lottery applications must be made by a single 'group', Explorer Scout Units cannot apply on their own. The District as a whole is still eligible to apply. Advice can be sought from the Fundraising Office at Gilwell Park.

Q My Group's equipment is insured in such a way that only members of the Group may use it. Does this mean that Explorers are unable to use the equipment?

A This is a specialist area and the best people to speak to are Scout Insurance Services at Lancing. However, check whether it is only the Group that can use the equipment or whether it is all Scouts – if it is all Scouts then there isn't a problem.

If the policy mentions the Group, check on the definition of the Group – will a Partnership Agreement that confirms that the Unit has the same name as the Group be sufficient to allow the Unit members to use the equipment? Would it make more sense to change the policy so that the maximum number of people possible can use the equipment? The Explorer Scout Unit may need to pay part of the premium cost.

If in doubt refer to Scout Insurance Services at Lancing.

Q As a Group we currently collect subscriptions through Gift Aid and benefit from the rebate of tax. How will this be effected by the new financial controls?

A The Group subscription can still be paid via the Gift Aid scheme if this is appropriate for your circumstances. District and Headquarters subs will be paid direct to District, although with our watchword of 'flexibility', alternative local arrangements may be made if there is a particularly large Explorer Scout Unit in partnership with a Group. ■