

MOVING ON UP

Chris Brammer looks at making Explorer Scouts appealing to Scouts and discusses how you can welcome new Explorer Scouts to the Section

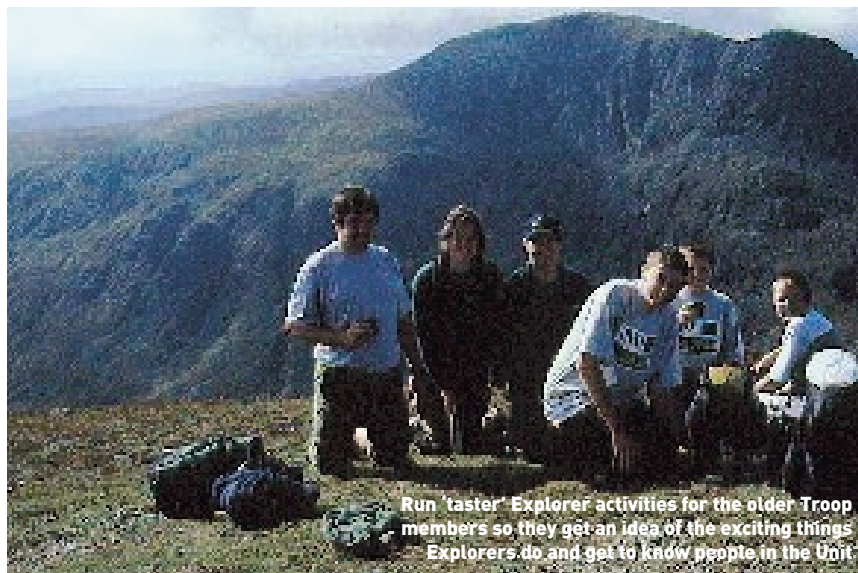
For many young people change can be daunting, so moving into a new Section can make them apprehensive. The transition from Scout to Explorer Scout is no exception. The change from being top of the pile in their Troop to being the youngest member of their new Unit, with a whole new set of peers and Leaders thrown in, might even be a reason for young people to leave Scouting and lose out on the great opportunities offered. So, how do we smooth the transition and make moving in to Explorer Scouts, and then moving on to the Scout Network, an enjoyable and rewarding experience?

BE VISIBLE

Perhaps one of the main reasons why young people don't want to move on is fear of the unknown. We all know that an exciting balanced programme is the best way to recruit and retain Explorer Scouts, but an attractive programme is of no value if it is not visible to those who might join.

For this reason, we have to make sure our Explorer Scouts are seen by Scouts. Not only will they see all the exciting and challenging things that Explorer Scouts do, but they will also get to know Explorer Scouts and their Leaders. Here are a few suggestions.

- Make sure you maintain regular contact with Scout Leaders. Ask to be involved in their balanced programme. You may be able to set up a regular series of joint activities with Scouts, or the Explorer Scouts might offer to help with running a Troop meeting or activity.
- The District Explorer Scout Commissioner (DESC) should make sure that all Scout Leaders in the District have a good working relationship with at least one



Run 'taster' Explorer activities for the older Troop members so they get an idea of the exciting things Explorers do and get to know people in the Unit

LEONARD JAMIESON

Explorer Scout Unit. This will be relatively straightforward to arrange when a Unit and a Group have a partnership agreement, but a little extra effort may be needed when a Scout Troop is not directly associated with an Explorer Unit.

- Encourage participation in the Young Leaders' Scheme. Some Explorer Scouts may be Young Leaders in the Scout Section, others in Beavers or Cubs. Either way, they can be a good advertisement for Explorer Scouting to younger members.
- Use the Group Awards to foster and enhance good relationships with members of the younger Sections and their Leaders.

BE ACCESSIBLE

Hopefully you will have developed a good working relationship with local Scout Leaders, and the Scouts will be used to having Explorer Scouts around. Now, as the time to move in to Explorer

Scouts comes closer, we can focus on making the actual transition a natural and painless event. Better still, we can make it truly memorable.

- Remember to send all Scouts a birthday card when they reach 13. The District Explorer Scout Administrator (DESA) should have a list of all these young people and make sure no one misses out. This is one of the most important of the roles that the DESA has to fulfil. Regular and up-to-date information gathering is vital if you are to target the Scouts who are soon to be Explorer Scouts.
- Let each one have a copy of your programme for the next few months, so that they can see what Explorer Scouts get up to.
- Personal contact is best of all. The DESC or an Explorer Scout Leader may wish to speak to the Scout personally, to explain what the Explorer Scout Section is about. Better still, ask the Explorer Scouts themselves to make contact – they

may already know these prospective members from Scouts or school.

- Organise a regular series of Explorer 'taster' events for older Scouts where they can join in with certain Explorer Scout activities. A project for a group of Explorer Scouts across the District might be to run an Explorer Scout roadshow to take the message to all potential new members.
- Try to encourage groups of friends to move together. This is where the flexibility with age ranges comes in to play. If their friends are moving on, so will they.

TIME TO MOVE

New member pack – some suggested contents

- New badges and neckerchief for the Explorer Scout Unit.
- A copy of the current programme.
- Useful contacts – details of the Explorer Leaders, DESC and DESA.
- Details of other Explorer Scout Units in the District.
- Their copy of the *Navigator* file, and details of how to register with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.
- Information about subscriptions and capitation fees.
- Suggested kit lists for camps and other activities.

The time to move to Explorer Scouts has arrived, so let's make the move a memorable one.

- Fix a date for the actual transition from Scouts to Explorers. Involve the Troop, perhaps with a ceremony of some sort. An air of mystery and adventure might give the younger Scouts something to aspire to.
- Don't let older Scouts simply disappear from the Troop – make sure the other Scouts know that they have moved on to Explorer Scouts.
- Try to develop a new member pack for each new Explorer.
- Hold an Investiture Ceremony, but be imaginative. Becoming an Explorer Scout on top of a mountain or in a canoe is far more memorable than in the local Scout HQ.
- Take a photograph of each new Explorer Scout as they are invested

Why do Scouts become Explorer Scouts?

- They know other Explorer Scouts.
- They know Explorer Scout Leaders.
- Their Scout Leader encourages them.
- Their friends are joining Explorer Scouts.
- They like what they see!

and make a wall chart of all of these photos. Being part of a bigger group of past and present members encourages a feeling of belonging.

- Make sure they all receive the Moving-On Award as recognition for making the transition.

MAKE SURE THEY STAY

Remember that the moving in process does not stop once a Scout has made the journey into Explorer Scouts. They may still feel apprehensive and lost for quite some time, so make it worth their while to stay. Here are a few suggestions.

- Offer a good, healthy, balanced programme. This is obviously the greatest incentive to staying on.
- Make sure each Scout has a mentor appropriate to their needs. In addition, why not encourage the older and more experienced Explorer Scouts to be involved by taking responsibility for the newer Explorer Scouts? This could take the form of a loosely organised Patrol system or a much less formal 'buddy' scheme.
- The involvement of young people in planning their programme is an integral part of Explorer Scouting. Make sure that even the most junior Explorer Scouts have their say.

TIME TO MOVE ON AGAIN

Well, four years go by and good times have been had by all in Explorer Scouts. How do we encourage Explorer Scouts to stay on in the Scout Network?

In many ways this is an even bigger challenge as the pressures on young people grow ever greater at 18 and beyond. But the principles of visibility and accessibility can be applied to the Scout Network just as they are to Explorers. As Explorer Scout Leaders we

have a duty to foster good contact with the Scout Network, and to encourage our Explorer Scouts to move on.

- The DESC should be in regular touch with the County Scout Network Commissioner and the Co-ordinator for the local Network, so that all the opportunities offered by the Network are available to Explorer Scouts as the time to move on approaches.
- The DESA should make sure that the local Network Co-ordinator knows which Explorer Scouts are nearing the time to move on so that contact can be made and they can be encouraged to become active Scout Network members themselves.
- Ask members of your local Network to help out with events in your programme. Once again, personal contact is likely to be much the best way to encourage membership. Perhaps some members of the Network will be Explorer Scout Leaders, or even the DESC!

The Moving-On Award requirements

- Check that you are registered with the District Explorer Scout Administrator.
- Talk with a Leader about the options available in Scouting.
- Take part in three activities with the Unit or Units that are of interest to you.
- Talk to the Leaders of the Units that are of interest to you.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Finally, as part of the self-review process, take a look at how you are managing the moving in, moving on process. Try to find ways to encourage more and more Scouts to move in each year. Your DESA will be able to tell you whether you are struggling to recruit from particular Troops or Groups, and you will be able to focus your efforts.

But equally you should look at your successes – don't forget to pat yourself on the back, and share your experiences and good ideas with other Explorer Scout Leaders. With luck, and a little help, more and more young people will want to stay to enjoy the benefits of Explorer Scouts, the Scout Network and beyond. ■