

SETTING NEW TARGETS

As your first anniversary as an Explorer Scout Unit approaches, think about how it's progressing. What could you improve on? What do your members think? It's time for a little Self-Review and **Melanie Palmer** is here to guide you through this simple process



Having started off the discussion so openly, they move quickly on to the other areas, and the agreed comments are noted on the form.

Step 4 – Drawing conclusions

Lucy heads off to make some more coffee (and break open the cookies) while the rest of the team look over the comments they have made on the form. They have decided that they would like to conclude by mentioning the things that the Tuna Unit does really well, and then by looking at the things they feel could be improved upon, particularly where they might need support.

When Lucy gets back, the rest of the team are deep in discussion about membership numbers. They have noticed that a large number of young people attended the initial meetings, but that the number of people who attend regularly (though steady and even increasing a little) has never been as high as during those first meetings. The Explorer Scouts want to know where they have gone, and how they can get them interested in their excellent programme. They decide to mention this as an area with which they might need support. They also conclude that while leadership and adult help is strong, and youth membership is increasing, more could be done to support Moving In and Moving On.

Step 5 – Looking forward

The team decides that to improve the quality of Explorer Scouting, they would like to see more on the International Programme Zone, and more Technology in the Methods. They also agree that they should review the Moving In and Moving On strategy and try to contact the members who disappeared after the first meetings to see whether they can tempt them back.

They decide that the Assistant County Commissioner (International) would be able to help them plan International activities, the DESC could help them with the Moving In and Moving On strategy and the DESA could help them to trace lost members. As for the Technology, Lucy asks Ben, a known computer whiz-kid, to think about how they could include Technology as a Method for delivering the Programme

Zones. All these proposed actions are recorded on the Looking Forward sheet.

Step 6 – Talk to your DESC

Lucy phones Ed Fish, the DESC, and invites him to have a look at their Self-Review. He is really pleased at the way they have done it. He asks if it is okay to discuss how the process went at the next District Explorer Leaders' meeting, so they can share good practice. He arranges for Moving In and Moving On strategies to be put on the agenda for that meeting and the District Explorer Scout Committee meeting.

Step 7 – Record your conclusions and actions

Lucy puts a copy of the Self-Review in with the other Unit records, and puts a note in her diary to remind her to have a



Feedback from the members is an important part of the Self-Review process

look at it in three months' time, to be sure that the action points have been followed up.

OVER TO YOU!

The Tuna Explorer Scout Unit completed a very successful Self-Review, and they did it by making sure they had all the information they needed. They completed the forms as a team, which included the Unit Leader team and several Explorer Scouts, in a relaxed atmosphere. The Self-Review was seen as an opportunity to improve Explorer Scouting and build on successes. ■

Remember:

- Be positive
- Be honest
- Involve the young people
- Don't forget the cookies! Good luck.

Districts that started Explorer Scouts immediately after the launch of the new Programme last year will be approaching their Explorer Scouting first birthday. One thing they may be approaching with unnecessary trepidation is the concept of Self-Review, which comes at the end of the Explorer Scout year.



Has your Explorer Scout programme encompassed all the Zones and Methods?

WHAT IS SELF-REVIEW?

Self-Review is not an exercise in tedious paper pushing. It is a valuable way to record and celebrate your successes, as well as extending your horizons and planning for an even better year next year. In reality, many of you will already have been using the Self-Review process under other guises in the old system. It

involves looking at your provision and your programme, noting the good bits and highlighting the not-so-good bits so that you can improve the programme for next time.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

There's a whole section devoted to Self-Review in *Unit essentials* (Section 9, pages 111–116), including a very handy Self-Review form that you can photocopy. If you are considering Self-Review, I won't bore you by simply repeating everything in *Unit essentials* – you can read that for yourself. Instead, I'll imagine that the Tuna Explorer Scout Unit in Haddock District is coming up to the time for Self-Review, and we'll go through the process with them.

Step 1 – Gathering information

The District Explorer Scout Commissioner (DESC), Ed Fish, mentions to the Leader team in the District that Self-Review is approaching. He points them in the direction of *Unit essentials*, and reminds them to phone or email if they need any support.

The Leader, Lucy Plaice, quickly makes contact with the District Explorer Scout Administrator (DESA) and asks her for information on the number of Explorer Scouts they started the year

with, how many they have now, how many new Explorers have come from Scouts and how many from outside the Movement, and who has moved on to the Scout Network. She prepares all the information she will need, including her Unit register showing who has attended which activities, the information from the DESA, and the programmes they have been using.

Step 2 – Organising discussions

Lucy arranges a meeting with a team of Explorer Scouts and the Assistant Leaders over a coffee after a Unit meeting. They don't know how long the discussions will take, as this is the first time they have done it, so they arrange a follow-up meeting as well, just in case.

Step 3 – Making comments

There are five main areas in the Review:

- Membership and Leadership
- The Programme
- Methods
- Opportunities
- Values

The group decides it will look at Membership and Leadership last, as the Explorers feel they would like to kick off with Programme and Methods, and then move onto Opportunities and Values.

Lucy starts by telling everyone that they need to be honest if they want the

Unit to move forwards, and not to worry because she won't be offended by anything they have to say.

They all have a look at the Programmes, and particularly at the Zones and Methods they have covered. The Explorers mention that they have not seen any International activities in the Programme, but that Community Service and Outdoors have been covered many times. Two of the Explorers, Ben and Lisa, also remind everyone about the Physical Recreation that was on the Programme right at the beginning. Lucy agrees with them on these strengths, and with the weakness in International activities, and she asks about the other Programme Zones. It is agreed that these have been okay, but they should probably put more effort into Relationships and Values.

These comments are recorded as they go along by one of the Explorer Scouts who has agreed to act as the scribe. Commenting on the Methods, the whole team agrees quickly that whilst Outdoor activities, Service, Themes and Projects have been particular strengths, they would like to see more Visits and visitors, Technology, and Design and creativity. They have a discussion about Prayer, worship and reflection – how much of it they do and how they could incorporate it more often.

Crackers for Christmas

Andy Slaney takes a look at another 'unworkable' idea, involving songs, Cinders and a ball, that was so successful it has turned into an annual District event

Following last month's introduction to this feature, here is an idea on a theme that many of you will have used in the past. But have you taken it this far before?

Christmas madness

The theme is Christmas, which I suspect many of you will have used at some point. It is a great excuse to decorate everything, make presents, play party games, and take part in all the other normal Christmas activities.

How many Christmas themes include a full-blown pantomime acted out for the entertainment of all those present? When we suggested this, there were many in the room who doubted that it would work. This included me, and I was the one who suggested it!

Following a meeting with someone who had actually set foot upon a stage in the local theatre, we had a rough script. Those who saw the performance will know that 'rough' was how it stayed and the acting was probably even worse, but – and this is the important thing – everyone was thoroughly entertained for an hour and a half. So much so, in fact, that every year since we have included a similar performance.

The plot

If you think that this is a good idea but still can't get your head round what the pantomime should be about, let me explain what ours was about. We noticed (quite how we aren't sure) that the songs in the film *Grease* matched the story of *Cinderella*, and thus *Cinderella does Grease* was born.

The carriage was *Greased Lightning*, the Prince got *Stranded at the Banquet*, while *You're the One that I want* was acted out in the woods and the palace by the two main characters. We spoke to a local friendly Gang Show costume designer who kindly lent us the necessary clothes. The disco, which ran after the show, provided the lights, microphones and special effects. I say



'special effects', but they weren't really very special, or particularly effective, but we managed a couple of bangs and voice-overs.

Other ideas

In our Gang Show, we had the Leaders acting (up) in the show, but there is no reason why you could not get the Explorer Scouts themselves to do it. Or maybe you have a Gang Show Unit – this sort of thing could be right up their street. If a full-blown pantomime seems a big step, then why not split the Explorers into three or four groups and give them each 20 minutes or so to perform a small 'pantomime-ette'?

Just go in with one attitude – of course it will work. I am sure many of you have made an impossible theme work for you. Please write in and tell us all about it. ■

Contact Details

You can write to Andy care of the *Scouting Magazine* office at The Scout Association, Gilwell Park, Chingford, London E4 7QW or email him at scouting.magazine@scout.org.uk

Gang Shows are fun for everyone – all you need is a bit of imagination to make it work

Enter and win!

This month there's an opportunity for every Explorer Scout Unit to take part in a huge competition and have a few fun evenings on the way. The concept is simple – you can enter when you like and wherever you like. The event is The Explorer Scouts' Ten Pin Bowling Competition 2003. Organised by Rick from West Sussex, this is a new competition for the Explorer Scout Section, and is designed to allow every member of every Explorer Scout Unit to participate without the hassle of thinking about team sizes, age limits, or any other restrictions. It works like this. Register by 30 July. Choose a venue, and pick a date or dates between 1 August and 31 December 2003. Play two games of ten pin bowling and note down the scores. What could be easier? Prizes will be awarded for teams and individuals. A full copy of the rules can be obtained from Rick. What are you waiting for? Contact Rick now on 07703 568214 or email him at richard@cooper8596.fsnet.co.uk

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
10-15 mins	Our skills	Skills	Game, Reflection	Each individual spends five minutes quietly reflecting on the skills they feel they have and then they write their top five skills on a card. Put the cards in a hat and then each Explorer pulls one out and matches it to the correct person. This can be very interesting, as some Explorers may have hidden skills or may be very modest.
At least 30 mins	Powerpoint	Skills	Technology, Activities with others	Take along a laptop or meet at a location with computer access and teach the Explorers how to use Powerpoint to create a presentation. Some may already know, in which case they can teach the others and you can learn from them too. Encourage them to create a Powerpoint presentation of their own. What about something for the AGM?
Several evenings	Willow craft	Skills, Outdoors, Community service, Environment	Team-building, Outdoor activities, Design and creativity	Find a suitable location (District or County/Area campsite) and invite an expert to teach your Explorer Scouts how to make a Willow Igloo. The Explorers work together to make this permanent structure, which then grows into a beautiful and permanent reminder of their teamwork. Some of the Explorer Scouts may then be able to run a similar activity with younger Sections.
Several evenings	Circus skills	Skills	Visits and visitors, Themes, Projects	Visit a circus. Invite a circus skills expert to come and demonstrate circus skills to the Explorer Scouts. Encourage the Explorer Scouts to learn and practise some of these new skills. They could turn this into a longer project and put on shows for fundraising or to entertain younger Sections.
Evening or at camp	Camp cooking	Skills, Outdoors	Activities with others	For most Explorer Scouts, camp cooking means a greasy fry up. This is an opportunity for them to learn the skills of camp cooking the traditional way, extending the repertoire of meals they can cook over a camp-fire. There are several books and websites that offer advice and recipes, so a bit of research beforehand should yield enough ideas to keep your hungry Explorers happy.
30 mins	Nominations	Skills	Team-building, Reflection	The Explorer Scouts should discuss the 'person specifications' for a mentor, a Young Leader, and a member of the District Explorer Scout Committee or County Forum. What skills should these people have? Take this opportunity to nominate appropriate people to represent the Unit on these Committees.