

# A PLAN OF ACTION

Programme Planning is an integral part of Scouting. But what is the most efficient way of providing an enjoyable Programme for all? **Mel Kesteven** provides some answers...



**W**e all have to plan things. Some of us are last minute planners, others like to plan everything meticulously years in advance, and some combine the two strategies by planning loosely in advance and filling in the detail later.

There are some of us, of course, who don't plan at all, but go through life with a 'turn up and hope for the best' approach. For Explorer Scouting we do need to plan. We have to offer a Balanced Programme and that requires planning (otherwise how do we know it is going to be balanced?). Also we want our Explorer Scouts to get the best out of all the opportunities that are on offer to them, and that needs planning too.

## HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD I PLAN?

This depends on the approach that you take to your planning and what is most suitable for your District and Unit. In some Districts, all the Explorer Scout Leaders and some of the Explorer Scouts meet once each term to plan together the Programmes for the Units and the District. In other Districts, the Units all individually plan and pass the Programme to the District Explorer Scout Commissioner. Districts might have one Unit only, and the District Explorer Scout Commissioner may be the Leader. Most Units seem to plan for a term at a time, and try to ensure that all

eight Programme Zones are covered within that term. They seem to plan about two thirds of the way through the term for the following term, so that the Programmes can be distributed well in advance to Explorer Scouts around the District, to older Scouts and to Scout Leaders.

There is no rule saying that you have to plan in this way. If it works for your Unit, you can plan two years in advance if you like, or a couple of months in advance – whatever works for you.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN I PLAN?

The Balanced Programme is key. The Explorer Scout Programme is based around the eight Programme Zones: Environment, International, Skills, Community Service, Outdoors, Values, Relationships and Physical Recreation.

It's a good idea to take the views of your Explorer Scouts into account – you'd like them to turn up to your Programme, and if they can't see anything they'd like to do, then they won't be coming along! Such views should be considered within reason, though – skateboarding every week doesn't really offer a Balanced Programme, and there are some activities that are not allowed (eg. bungee jumping and paintballing).

You can collect these ideas during Self-Review, at the Explorer Scout

Meeting or Committee, informally from the Explorer Scouts on meeting nights, or from those who are involved in your Programme Planning.

- You will also need to take into account your Leader team. If none of you feel confident in painting a mural, going bat watching, organising a trip to Iceland, climbing in the Rockies, etc., then you need to consider who else you will need to get involved to make the activity happen. If most of your Leaders work weekends, then some activities may be better shared with another Unit to make it a little easier. Play to your strengths and be prepared to ask for help.
- Other things that are going on in the District/County/Area/Country. Ideally you want your Explorer Scouts to have the best opportunities open to them. If you plan an activity that clashes with the District Climbing Competition then the Explorer Scouts' options are limited. If your Programme includes the District Climbing Competition, they then have the chance to take part in both activities (and you have an activity that you don't necessarily have to organise yourself).

## WHO SHOULD PLAN?

All the Leaders, and as many of the Explorer Scouts as possible, should be involved in planning the Programme. They will want to have some ownership

of the Programme they will be doing.

If you are not all that confident in planning, or you feel that you could do with some help, get your District Explorer Scout Commissioner involved to support you. They are responsible for ensuring that the Balanced Programme is on offer, and will be only too pleased to help. You might even want to get your Assistant County/Area Commissioner (Explorer Scouts) involved as they will be happy to help support any Leaders.

## WHERE DO I START?

Each Group has their own way of planning for the Balanced Programme. There are no hard and fast rules. As long as you are providing an active, exciting Balanced Programme, taking into account the Explorer Scout's views, encouraging participation in wider activities, and your Explorer Scouts are coming through the door each week, then what you are doing is fine. The following is an example of one way in which planning could be done.

**Step 1** – Set up a planning meeting. This will probably be just your Unit and could be held at your meeting place, somebody's home or even a café. Make sure there is plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits, and that the Explorer Scouts are encouraged to come. They may not all want to be involved formally in the planning, but it is important that they know that their ideas

are taken on board and that they are always welcome. Make sure that you have all the necessary resources to begin planning.

**Step 2** – Make a tick list of the Programme Zones. Then, if an activity planned covers a Zone, you tick it off, helping to ensure that you are planning a Balanced Programme. You may find it helpful to use a planning sheet on which, for each activity, you state the Programme Zones that you are covering.

**Step 3** – Plan out the calendar. Which dates and activities are already fixed? Examples to think about are:

- District/County Explorer Scout Camps
- Swimming Gala
- Local Carnival
- International Camps
- Events for Explorer Scouts at Brownsea Island or Gilwell Park
- European Jamboree
- World Jamboree
- Sun Run or Dragnet (or other large scale events that you attend, or would like to attend)
- Christmas Carol Service
- St George's Day Parade/Service/Camp.

**Step 4** – Pencil onto this term's calendar any other events and activities that you and your Explorer Scouts wish to see happening, eg. Unit Camp. Then pencil in other necessary items such as training weekends for expeditions, preparation for international trips, training for large activities, rehearsals for shows etc. As you pencil in each item consider what Programme Zones are being covered.

**Step 5** – Look at the Programme Zones that are being covered; are there any that are being left out?

**Step 6** – Consider other Programme ideas and activities that the Explorer Scouts have asked for. Have you covered them? Where will they fit?

**Step 7** – You may wish to leave space for your Explorer Scouts to talk to their mentors about their progress, achievements and targets, and about the Awards and Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

**Step 8** – Look again at the Programme

Zones. If any have not received enough attention, now is the time to plan some exciting activities that will cover those Programme Zones. Why not brainstorm some ideas?

**Step 9** – Look back at your Programme; does it cover all of the Programme Zones? Does it make sense? You may wish to think about cost considerations, such as not having too many expensive activities near one another, or you may wish to change some activities around to take advantage of lighter evenings or a particular Leader's availability.

**Step 10** – Decide who is going to take responsibility for each activity on the Programme. Will that person be responsible for planning in more detail, risk assessment, getting parental permission, sorting out home contacts when necessary and getting all the resources ready? It is particularly helpful if you have more than one Leader, as everybody can take responsibility for something they are confident with and all the planning is not left with one person. An Explorer Scout may wish to take responsibility for an activity and this should be encouraged with appropriate support from the Leaders. This means that when you send out the Programme to the Explorer Scouts, each activity/event has a name next to it, so that the Explorer Scouts know whom to contact for more information.

**Step 11** – Write up the Programme and send it to the District Explorer Scout Commissioner so that they can co-ordinate the District Programme, to the District Explorer Scout Administrator so that they can send it out to all Explorer Scouts in the District, to all older Scouts, and to your Explorer Scouts, so that you know they have it.

**Step 12** – Plan each item in a bit more detail as you get nearer to it. Contact the relevant people, ensure that letters have been sent, permission sought, authorisations are up to date, resources are available and risk assessments carried out.

**Step 13** – Evaluate. This can be as simple



as a few scribbled notes on your Programme. 'Went really well', 'No-one turned up', 'Should have remembered...', 'Next time...' All of this helps in future Programme planning.

**Step 14** – As you go through the term, particularly when Explorer Scouts are talking to their mentors, at the District Explorer Scout meeting and during Self-Review, listen to the Explorer Scouts' comments. Make a note of them and use them when you are planning the Programme for the next term.

#### WHERE DO I LOOK? WHERE CAN I GET IDEAS?

**Urban Outdoors** – Log onto [www.urbanoutdoors.org.uk](http://www.urbanoutdoors.org.uk) to order your copy of the first section of this resource, which is "a colourful printed pack of 22 urban activity ideas" to support outdoor activities in an urban landscape. It's FREE! You can also order it by calling the Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818.

**Scouts Go Green** – The National Programme Initiative can be found on [www.scoutsgogreen.org.uk](http://www.scoutsgogreen.org.uk) and there is an ideas-based resource, which is available by calling the Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818. There are loads of great ideas for things your Unit can do for the Environment Programme Zone and for the Group Environment Award. It only costs £5! There are also Programme ideas for the Explorer Scout Section on the website.

**Join-in-Jamboree resources** – Join-in-Jamboree resources from Jamborees past, present and future are a fantastic source of Programme ideas for you to try. They are often based around a whole range of themes. Ask people in your County who have been involved in Jamborees, or try your County/Area Agent 2:007 for more information on current Join-in-Jamboree initiatives.

**Join-in-Centenary resource** – This is going to be an amazing resource for the year 2007. Your whole Programme for the year is planned for you. The resource will include relevant links and resources, and has been planned to link in with the seasons, other events and activities happening across the UK during 2007. Some of the activities are more suited to



be run by County/Area, or by District, and others can be taken off the page for you to use.

**Gapp Pack** – *The Bridging the GAPP* resource was originally created by the Global Awareness Partnership Project between The Scout Association and the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs. It contains a range of activities focusing on aspects of global awareness such as fair trade, the environment, healthy living, landmines etc.

Members of the National GAPP Network also constantly update it. The resource was originally written for all Sections, so there will definitely be activities suitable for Explorer Scouts. Some of them are short icebreaker-style games while others can take a whole evening. The activities have all been tried and tested across the world at World Jamborees and Moots, as well as in this country at International Camps, and in Groups and Units.

You can get a copy of the *Bridging the GAPP* resource by contacting the Scout Information Centre (0845 300 1818 or [info.centre@scout.org.uk](mailto:info.centre@scout.org.uk)). Alternatively, the GAPP Network has a website ([www.gapp.me.uk](http://www.gapp.me.uk)) with electronic versions of all the resources and activities, as well as huge numbers of other activities from outside organisations.

You can contact the GAPP network via their website and ask for more information, or even ask for somebody trained in delivering GAPP activities to come and help you with an event. It's likely that in your County/Area somebody has been trained as a

'GAPPster' and can help you.

**Programmes on a Plate** – In *Scouting Magazine* each month, the Explorer Scout Programmes On A Plate has been focusing on a different Programme Zone with a list of different activity ideas.

**STAR (Student Action for Refugees)** – STAR is a national organisation set up by young people wanting to do more to help asylum seekers and refugees. They aim to raise awareness about refugees and asylum seekers, get involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers in practical ways, and campaign for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

They are keen to work with other organisations and could come and talk to your Explorer Scouts and run activities with them to help raise awareness (Values Programme Zone). Or your Explorer Scouts could get involved with one of their practical projects (Community Service Programme Zone).

Contact Vivienne Jackson, Youth Outreach Officer, on [youth@star-network.org.uk](mailto:youth@star-network.org.uk) or call 020 7840 4425 or check out the website [www.star-network.org.uk](http://www.star-network.org.uk)

Other resources include:

- **Craft and cooking pages in Scouting Magazine.**
- [www.scoutbase.org.uk](http://www.scoutbase.org.uk)
- [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)
- **Other Units' and Districts' Programmes** – (You aren't stealing their ideas, you are sharing good practice!). ■



# PROGRAMMES ON A PLATE

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| TIME                  | ACTIVITY             | ZONE                | METHOD                                   | INSTRUCTIONS  |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|---|
| One evening           | Trainee Michael Fish | Skills, Environment | Technology                               | Log onto the Met Office website education page ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/education/index.html">www.metoffice.gov.uk/education/index.html</a> ) or the BBC weather website ( <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/weatherwise/">www.bbc.co.uk/weather/weatherwise/</a> ) and find out all sorts of things about how weather works and how the weather is forecast. If you don't have access to the web at your meeting place, there are lots of activity ideas on the Met Office page. |
| An evening/afternoon  | How do they do it?   | Skills              | Visits                                   | Arrange a visit to a television station to find out how the weather forecasts are put together. They might even let you have a go in front of the famous weather map!   |
| One evening/afternoon | Weather danger       | Skills              | Visits/visitor                           | Invite a visitor from Mountain Rescue or from the Lifeboat Service and find out all about the hazards of weather on the water or on the mountains. Ask about the importance of being able to predict and be prepared for the weather around you.  |
| One evening           | Contingency planning | Skills              | Programme planning, Working with others  | Ask your Explorer Scouts to look through your Programme or camp plan and consider which activities could be affected by the weather. Could they still go ahead? Would they need modifying? Do we need a contingency plan for wet weather?   |
| One evening           | Weather station      | Skills, Environment | Craft, Project, Working with others      | Make a weather station for your local headquarters. You will need to consider what needs measuring, how data will be collected and how the items can be made. What scales are required? More ideas are available on the Met Office website (see above).   |
| One evening           | Discovery            | Skills, Environment | Technology, Project, Working with others | Make a video about an environmental weather situation, such as Global Warming or the El Niño phenomenon. Is it really happening? What can we do about it? Consider how you can find out what information you will need to put in your video, and where you will film, etc.  |
| Long term             | Weather station 2    | Skills              | Environment Project, Working with others | Collect data and record the weather in your weather station over a long period of time. This is something that could be done in conjunction with a younger Section and could form part of a Group Environment Award.  |