

Meetings and Forums in the Explorer Scout Section



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Introduction

As young people move up through the different sections in Scouting, it becomes more and more important to make sure their views are heard. This becomes really important when they join the Explorer Scout section – they will have strong views about the way their Unit is run and about the content of the Unit and District programme. As they mature, they may also wish to play an increasing role in planning and organising activities and events.

To make sure there is a mechanism for listening to and acting on these views, and for involving Explorer Scouts in programme planning, every District should set up a **District Explorer Scout Forum**, and every Unit should have a **Unit Forum**. This factsheet outlines the composition and role of these, along with the **District Explorer Scout Meeting**.

The Unit Forum

Every Explorer Scout Unit should establish a Unit Forum. How this is done depends on the individual Unit, but its main functions are always the same:

- to make sure the Unit programme is balanced
- to make sure that the Explorer Scouts have a big say in what their programme contains.

Some Units will decide to make this a “representative forum” – a small group of Explorers appointed or elected by the rest of the Unit to meet regularly and agree the programme on their behalf. Care must be taken to make sure such a forum represents the views of the whole Unit – not just their own.

Other Units will decide to include the whole Unit in their forum – and set aside a meeting once in a while when everyone can have a say about the Unit and its programme.

It is the responsibility of the Leaders to make sure the programme happens, but if some of the Explorer Scouts want to help organise and run things, that’s great! Remember to give them whatever support they need – don’t expect them to think of everything you take for granted (like cost, risk assessment, and so on) without training and prompting.

What about giving Explorer Scouts specific roles?

Some Units may wish to make the Unit Forum slightly more formal – with a chairperson, secretary etc. This is fine, but only if the Explorers themselves feel comfortable with this arrangement. It might be a useful way to encourage them to learn leadership skills – but the main purpose has to be to ensure an exciting programme which the young people enjoy.

The District Explorer Scout Forum

This replaces the District Explorer Scout Committee, and it differs in a number of important ways. To reflect its function, you might also see it called the “District Programme Planning Forum”.

Every district should have a District Forum. Who should attend?

- Most importantly Explorer Scouts representing every Unit in the District – don’t forget that this includes the Young Leaders’ Unit. Explorers should outnumber leaders.
- Leaders from each Unit (including the ESL-YL) should also attend.
- The District Explorer Scout Commissioner is responsible for setting up the forum and convening meetings.

Its purpose is:

- to make sure that there is a district-wide balanced programme to complement the Unit programmes
- to make sure that all the Explorer Scouts in the district have access to the whole programme.
- to plan and organise district events and the annual District Explorer Scout Meeting.

How the forum operates is up to the DESC and the other members of the forum (young people and leaders). Here are some suggestions:

- It must meet often enough to make sure the programme is properly planned and reviewed – but not too often. Having a meeting for the sake of it is likely to be counter-productive. The equivalent of once every school term seems reasonable.
- Try to use imaginative ways to prevent the forum becoming boring (particularly for young people, but for leaders too!). Some examples you might consider are given in the box below.

- Remember that the focus should be on programme planning (and review) – so keep any other business to a minimum (save it for a leaders’ meeting).
- Be especially careful to keep the subject matter appropriate for young people to hear and discuss.

Not just another meeting...

It is easy to see how the District Forum can become unappealing for young people. Remember, if it’s boring for adults, it’ll be boring for Explorer Scouts (and vice versa!). Why not try:

- 1. holding the forum at an event or activity.*
 - 2. running it as a workshop or debate rather than in a traditional “meeting” style.*
 - 3. asking each member, or group of members, to do some preparation on a specific subject, ready to lead the discussion at the meeting.*
- Imagination is the key – if you have exciting and innovative ways of making the forum work, be prepared to share them with other districts.*

The District Explorer Scout Meeting

This should be a really important event in the Explorer Scout calendar for every district. What is it for?

- To bring together everyone involved in Explorer Scouting in the district in order to *celebrate* the past year
- To give the Explorers a taster of some of the exciting things to come in the next year

It will usually be an annual event – when depends on your district - either at the end of one “Scouting year” or at the beginning of the next. Why not turn it into a really special occasion? It could be part of a bigger activity, or a stand-alone event. You could use it to present Awards or to thank leaders or young people for their hard work.

Most importantly it should be *fun* and a *celebration* of Explorer Scouting.

Encouraging Explorer Scouts to have their say

These forums are designed to encourage a culture whereby young people feel able and willing to have *their* say in *their* section. But don't be afraid to use newer and more exciting ways to involve them in decision-making. If you have ideas or experience which you are prepared to share with others, please contact explorer.scout@scouts.org.uk.

Did you know....

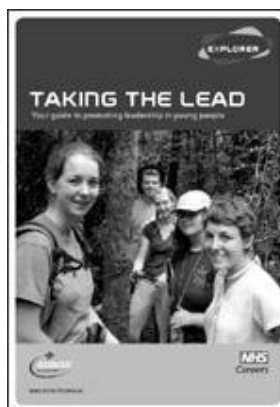
- Membership of the District Scout Council is open to all Explorer Scouts
- Membership of the County/Area Scout Council is open to an Explorer Scout representative from each District Explorer Scout Forum.

Encouraging young people to take a more active role in the wider decision-making structure of The Scout Association can only be a good thing.

Why not encourage the establishment of a County or Area Explorer Scout Forum? This is something that the Assistant County Commissioner (Explorer Scouts) may wish to take forward.

Explorer Scouts: Taking the Lead

This resource is available to download free from www.scoutbase.org.uk/6to25/explorer/resources or from the Scout InfoCentre. It contains a series of modules and activity ideas intended to be used by Explorer Scout Leaders to encourage and train Explorer Scouts in personal leadership skills. Why not use it when running Unit and District Forums to help young people develop these skills?



And finally...

Remember that Explorer Scouting belongs to the Explorer Scouts. We must always strive to give them an opportunity to have their say, and to develop their own leadership potential.