

Learner Questionnaire 2008 - comments

Is three years enough time to complete the Wood Badge?

There was a clear split here on the answers given.

One half of the replies said that the variety of methods, flexibility and taking into account of prior experience, meant that they completed their wood badge within about 18 months.

There was a good understanding that where there was a strong and supportive team it worked well, and the feedback was very positive, in that it was designed for the individual and was simple and easy to use.

The other comments were that the commitment was too much, and that the emphasis on attendance of courses was not possible for the following reasons:

- Not enough available
- Cancelled
- Too far away
- Working
- Family
- Finance
- Time

This meant that they took a long time to achieve their wood badge.

It is clear that in some instances the key messages of the adult training scheme are not getting through, and there is still an insistence on attending courses whether they need to or not.

Other key frustrations included

- Applications for wood badges being lost
- Presentation of wood badges taking too long
- Validations becoming long and complicated

Training leaflet should help in getting those key messages out.

New appointments process should help with understanding what training is needed for role.

Comments:

"The new training programmed is so much better than the old one and 3 years is sufficient time to complete the training given that a lot of training and experiences at work and in scouting can be counted. I had taken so long as the old training was really tedious and did not take account of training already completed or job related work etc."

"The modular approach allows you to complete your training at a pace to suit you"

"...because we agreed that I had already picked up most of the skills and knowledge needed through my years in scouting."

"With the right support 3 years is enough, however people do have other commitments and it is a voluntary organization so flexibility is the key."

"As a single parent with two boys of my own, age 19 & 14 the 19 year old being disabled, a fulltime job and other commitments I liked very much the way in which the training was done in modules"

"I feel that a lot of leaders are not fully informed on how to achieve their wood badge on induction into their role. "

"I felt under pressure to complete my training. I am a single working parent running a section it felt like an added burden on top of an already pressured life."

"Biggest issue was the validation process which was difficult to arrange but relatively simple to do"

Experience of using different learning methods

Again, the comments coming back were two fold.

Courses

Courses still a high point for most people. The need for interaction and sharing experiences with each other is seen as rewarding. However, courses being the only option available to people, or being made to attend courses when they already have the learning is seen as a huge frustration.

"The training weekends were totally fab, we not only learned loads but got to know leaders from other groups which helps forge friendships and makes learning fun"

"While courses are time consuming they can be more rewarding than other methods due to interaction between other course members. Often what that throws up can be more useful than the course content itself. It was a Great experience being on the training weekend. Getting to meet other leaders who are going through the same work as you. It helps when you're working in a team."

"We only had the choice of going on courses and if they were over a weekend it was not possible as child care was not available"

"Was not impressed by some of the courses, some were patronizing and a complete waste of time. Training manager was unwilling to accept prior learning / experience"

"I was not given any opportunity to use any other method than through the courses. this meant a very drawn out and time consuming process - especially considering that for a large part of it I had to keep traveling back form university which was very expensive and interrupted my degree"

Previous experience

Although prior experience and courses were equal in ranking of use, some people are still experiencing difficulty in this being recognised.

"I found it difficult to have personal knowledge recognized without having to fulfill the course associated with that module"

*"The first county that I worked in refused to even look at the evidence that I had brought along to show prior learning/experience and almost demanded that I go on a course-so I did-outside of the county!
Courses are time consuming and do not find levels of competence to start with therefore become mundane and partly useless to some but essential to others"*

On the job

It was good to see comments coming out about how just doing your role, should allow you to validate your learning.

"I found it very good that by just doing my role within the group in terms of planning etc and getting involved, I could complete much of the training."

"As a Leader in the Scout Section many of the requirements needed for validation of modules occur naturally when completing and providing a balanced Programme to the Troop, this is also true for other sections."

"With my section leader we were able to Programme plan effectively to enable to 'make' validation opportunities to undertake the training modules"

Flexibility

"There wasn't anything that was complicated or asking for things that I wasn't already doing."

"The new scheme allows flexibility although some find that difficult to understand (leaders and possibly TA's)"

"I believe that new trainees gain most experience from attending courses; however the flexibility of watching DVD/Videos and doing workbook learning allows many to complete their training without giving up extra precious valuable time away from the families or work."

"If the whole range of training and validation methods is used, this should let people learn in the way that best suits them."

"The different mixtures of learning made it more interesting and meeting different people helped expand my skills. The on the job training was good, because getting the training whilst helping with the different sections made it easier to learn"

Appendix 3

No I didn't have a training adviser instead

No Ta was assigned or I had one and then they left and none assigned after
GSL/DC did it
CTM/LTM did it
I did it myself
Found own

Comments were:

- Learning not explained
- No opportunity to identify prior learning
- They didn't seem to understand what they were doing
- Kept changing
- Not available much
- Originally assigned, left and not replaced.

Appendix 4

Your experience of a training adviser

The comments below reflect the opinions given. For many the experience with the TA was good. The comments also show the variety of ways in which people are using TA

The good....

"Very fortunate to have an extremely experienced TA who was very supportive and made the whole procedure run smoothly."

"My T.A. was always ready on the other end of a phone or email to help. He never made me feel I was wasting his time or asking silly questions. He had the patience of Job with me."

"I've had very few formal 'TA Meetings' with my TA. We meet regularly and socially in the course of our Scouting - so we've had lots of opportunity to simply chat about stuff. Both have found it useful...but me more than her!"

"My TA has almost 40 years scouting (and Cubbing) experience, and was happy to discuss my previous scouting / leadership experience, testing it verbally and through observation at a number of formal and informal settings. She was also understanding & flexible on taking into account external professional and work based skills that fitted well with scouting."

"Having a Training adviser meant I could get on with my training and if I had a problem a quick Email to her and I was sorted, I would not have completed my training with out her."

"My training advisor was the GSL at my group, so I already knew and had a working relationship with them, prior to training - this made training simple and flexible."

"It was good to have my GSL as he is very committed to the cause, and his enthusiasm rubbed off on me"

"Training adviser was DC who has worked with me for may years both in Group and District so I only had to brush up on the changes (it helped being a training adviser myself) although I could not get away with ANY shortcuts -he knows me too well!"

"She had good knowledge of our Scout Group and how active we are. She was confident that the team I am part of would provide every opportunity to gain all the experience I needed for the modules. Where necessary, I attended a training day"

"My training advisor was and still is a great source of information and encouragement!"

"My training advisor was an individual I have known for many years and who knows me well. This made her even more useful as she knew some of my experiences and was able to point me in the right direction and show me where things were already completed and where I needed to focus more."

"My training adviser was my GSL who is knowledgeable and motivated and passionate about Scouting who made it all very easy and enjoyable. Many people are not that lucky and I was validated by a district team member who has many years experience and was very supportive."

The bad.....

"I saw my training advisor once for 10 minutes when he came to a meeting. He subsequently left scouting which I found out by chance. I got the training manager to validate my training as nobody else had been assigned to me. I was very motivated to do my training but had I not been then nobody would have been encouraging me to do it or supporting me along the way. I can understand why people give up."

"Training advisor was only present to validate the modules covered at the end of all my wood badge training .It appeared they were only interested in confirming that I 'd been to certain courses rather than gauging the usefulness of the training or making themselves available routinely to answer any questions."

The reflective....

"If you have been performing the role - or a similar one - for some years, then it is probable that your TA has seen enough of you to know your capabilities, experience and knowledge."

"I feel the WB is a wonderful opportunity to build on personal skills and is a great incentive to stay in scouting. The WB however can only be worthy of its reputation if the TA's and valuator's do carry out their roles with integrity and honesty. I have observed others undergoing the WB and being 'validated' and rushed through modules/learning when clearly they had not got the skills or ability. I would have trusted some of those I'd seen to sit the right way round on a toilet seat, let alone 'lead' a section of young members."

"My second training advisor was brilliant and matched all of the above. The first was obstructive, pedantic and often condescending"

Appendix 5

Do you think the training should be a requirement for your role?

91% said yes

These are the general comments coming through from those who said no.

"It takes too long. Most of it was already known or learnt by running a troop."

"It should only be required if you have no previous experience within scouting or with working with young people"

"The training was much too time consuming. Most of it was unnecessary. I had been a leader for 2 yrs before starting training and learnt 'on the job'"

"I would prefer a training advisor to come and watch the pack in action and talk to the Cubs."

"Think you should be assessed on what you know and how you are with the beavers. The training can be a put off of doing the job and I know of other members who have not become leaders just because of the training"

"I believe that little credit is given for past scouting experience and while training is obviously necessary, it should be more flexible to tailor to individuals' experiences, etc"

Appendix 6

If there is anything you would change about your experience what would it be?

Support from managers

"I would have liked to have had more support from up line managers"

Taking into account the individual

"Tailored more to individual requirements, less courses, weekends are the only time most people can spend with families"

More flexible

"More evening courses so it didn't eat into our spare weekends which can be very few and far between, especially with children who have activities outside Scouting."

"We need more courses available locally (within the County). DVD's and workbooks are ok but there is no substitute for getting out there and meeting other people who are doing a similar thing to you."

Better administration

"A lot of the paperwork and form filling the complete inflexibility of thinking about my real life role - the inability to think that I do have a life outside of scouting...."

Better quality

"Reduce average age of trainers by 30 years"

"Quality of some of the residential trainers ability to run and manage a course and respond to the ability level/pace of the group. "

"Better training for training advisors in that I think standards of what is acceptable amount of work to validate a unit differs between advisors - very open to different interpretation."

"I was mostly being lectured by elderly Scouters who had not been actively involved for a number of years and this showed! I was often presented with racist, sexist and inappropriate views."

Getting the wood beads

A TA that did their job, a clear process for moving from training to wood beads.

"Length of time between completing training and being awarded wood beads"

Relevant to role

"More relevant to actually running the section you are leading"

Understanding prior experience

"My experience would have been far better had I not had such difficulty in getting my prior knowledge and experience recognized."

"Experiences in your work life should be considered more. Most training would be very good for a novice and I accept the need to make training a 'one stop shop'"

"Take into account what people already have in terms of skills and experience. I feel strongly that this would reduce the training period and therefore attract more volunteers. I have a few friends who were immediately

put off by the amount of training to be done in terms of time demands. I work full-time and enjoy scouting having completed my training which was time consuming.”

Making validation easier

“Make the level of validation evidence more obvious (my TA wanted everything written/documented which wasn't clear before hand)”

“Some modules are being signed off due to 'prior experience', but it doesn't really relate to the Scouting role that much”

Understanding what was required

“To have been given a simplified 'welcome pack' at the outset- it seemed a bit mind boggling to be faced with 19 modules to complete. A brief overview would be helpful, a sort of framework for where it all fits in and who everyone is.”