

Slide 1



Slide 1 – Welcome

Thanks for taking the time to join us this evening.

Welcome to this session on the new Explorer Programme, and really what this means for you as leaders, and for the young people you're working with.

My name's ... , and this is... [give short introductions]

Before we get into any detail, I want to take a moment to set the context for what you're about to see.

The new programme is a culmination of over 3 years work, and it's built on a really significant amount of feedback, not just from leaders across the movement, but from young people as well. That includes people currently involved in Scouting, people who have left, and people outside of the movement entirely.

What we're sharing today is a redesigned programme based on what young people are telling us they need from Scouting now.

Just a note, this session is focused purely on the new Explorer Programme. If you're a first-time Explorer leader this will still be useful, but it isn't the session run by the Growth Team about opening a brand new Explorer Unit.

Just before we move on, a quick point on questions, if anything comes up as we go, please drop it into the Q&A, and we'll come back to those at the end. We'll also give you the chance to ask things out loud if you'd prefer.

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- Nearly 25 years since the current programme was designed
- Existing programme is not meeting the needs of Generation Alpha

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Slide 2 – Why redesign the programme

So starting with the big question, why redesign the programme at all?

Explorers as a section came in around 2001, so we're now nearly twenty-five years on from when the current programme was first put together.

Now, that in itself isn't necessarily a problem, a lot of what we do still works. But when we look a bit more closely, there are some clear indicators that things aren't quite landing in the way they used to.

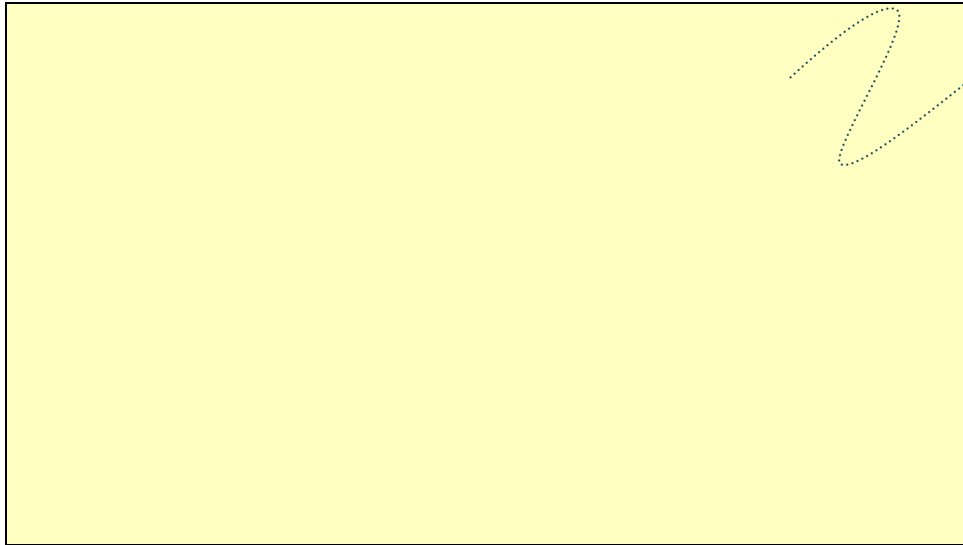
We're seeing fewer young people moving from Scouts into Explorers. We're seeing young people drop out during the Explorer age range. And we're seeing fewer continuing on into Network.

At the same time, the world around them has changed quite dramatically.

So this isn't about saying the programme is wrong. It's about recognising that it's no longer fully aligned with the lives young people are living now.

And what we needed to do was bring that back into line, while still holding onto the things that make Scouting what it is.

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Slide 3 – Who are Generation Alpha

To understand that properly, we need to think about who those young people are.

The current Explorer age group sits within what's often called Generation Alpha, and they've grown up in a very different context to the young people the original programme was designed for.

They've always had access to technology. They're used to things being interactive, responsive, and often tailored specifically to them.

They're also growing up in a world where they're constantly exposed to big, complex issues, whether that's climate change, global politics, or social and financial challenges.

What that means in practice is that they tend to expect to be involved in decisions, expect things to feel relevant to them, and disengage quite quickly if something doesn't.

At the same time, the skills they're going to need going forward are shifting. It's not just about knowing things anymore, it's about being able to adapt, to problem solve, to collaborate, and to communicate effectively.

So when we think about the programme, the question becomes: how do we create something that develops those skills, in a way that feels relevant and engaging to them? That's the starting point for everything that follows.

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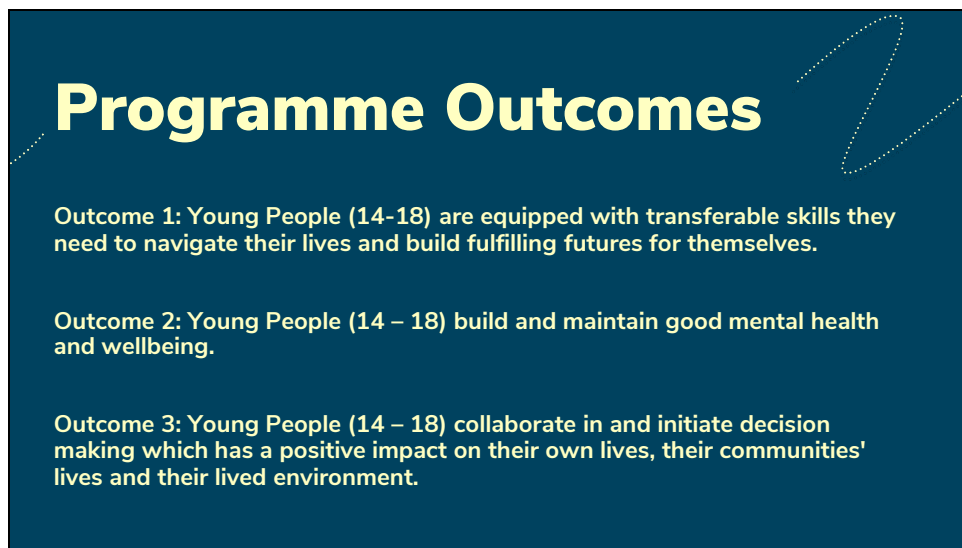
Slide 4 – Testing the programme

One of the key decisions early on in this work was that we couldn't just design something and hope it worked.

It had to be tested properly.

So over two terms in 2025 (summer and Autumn) Explorer Units have been running the new programme in real settings. Right across the UK and British Scouting Overseas. This wasn't a pilot in a controlled environment. This was normal weekly meetings, real camps, real activities.

And that's important, because it means the feedback we've had reflects how this actually works in practice, not just how it looks on paper.



Programme Outcomes

Outcome 1: Young People (14-18) are equipped with transferable skills they need to navigate their lives and build fulfilling futures for themselves.

Outcome 2: Young People (14 – 18) build and maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

Outcome 3: Young People (14 – 18) collaborate in and initiate decision making which has a positive impact on their own lives, their communities' lives and their lived environment.

Slide 5 – Programme outcomes

Throughout that whole process, everything has been built around three clear outcomes.

We want young people in Explorers to leave with transferable skills that they can use in their lives.

We want them to develop and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing.

And we want them to be able to make a positive difference, in their own lives, in their communities, and in the wider world.


Now, none of that is new. This is what Scouting has always been about.

But what we've done here is make those outcomes explicit and make sure that everything in the programme clearly links back to them.

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Testing

- 116 Explorer Units from across the UK and British Scouting Overseas (BSO) have been involved in the testing of the proposed programme
- Testing took place during the Summer and Autumn Terms of 2025
- Over 1000 pieces of formal feedback
- 14 unit visits



Slide 6 – Testing detail

So if we look a bit more closely at that testing phase.

We had one hundred and sixteen Explorer Units involved, from across the UK and also British Scouting Overseas.

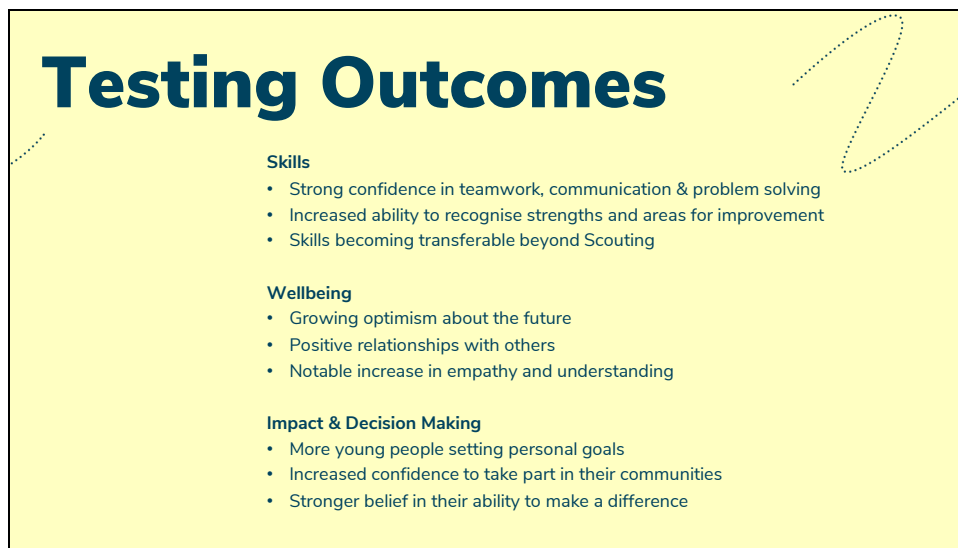
Across that time, we gathered over one thousand pieces of structured feedback. That's not just quick comments, that's feedback we could actually look at properly and learn from. Alongside that, we carried out visits to different units so we could see how sessions were being delivered in real time, not just hear about them afterwards.

We also set up two different approaches within the testing.

One group tested the full programme, so both activity badges and challenge awards working together.

Another group focused specifically on activity badges, so we could really understand how that part worked in isolation.

That split was important, because it meant we could see both the bigger picture and the detail. So when we talk about the programme now, it's based on a combination of real delivery, structured feedback, and direct observation.



Testing Outcomes

Skills

- Strong confidence in teamwork, communication & problem solving
- Increased ability to recognise strengths and areas for improvement
- Skills becoming transferable beyond Scouting

Wellbeing

- Growing optimism about the future
- Positive relationships with others
- Notable increase in empathy and understanding

Impact & Decision Making

- More young people setting personal goals
- Increased confidence to take part in their communities
- Stronger belief in their ability to make a difference

Slide 7 – Testing outcomes

If we come back to the three outcomes we mentioned earlier – Transferable skills, Mental wellbeing and Community impact – the picture across all three is really positive.

Starting with skills, young people reported high levels of confidence in key areas like teamwork, communication and problem solving. But what really stands out is what sits underneath that, more young people were able to clearly talk about what they're good at, and where they need to improve. That self-awareness is what makes those skills genuinely transferable beyond Scouting.

In terms of wellbeing, young people are feeling optimistic about their future, and that has increased over time. They're also getting on well with others, but importantly, we're seeing a real growth in empathy, more young people say they can understand how others are feeling. So it's not just about practical skills, it's about how they relate to and support each other.

And finally, on impact and decision making, this is where we saw some of the most noticeable change. More young people are setting goals, more feel they have the skills to take part in their communities, and more believe they can make a difference.

That confidence doesn't happen by accident – it comes from being given real opportunities to make decisions, take ownership, and see the results of their actions, something the programme now deliberately builds in.

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Slide 8 – Introducing the programme

So with all of that in mind, what young people need, and what the testing has shown us, we now move into what the new Explorer Programme actually looks like in practice.

Because the key question at this point is how this translates into what happens in your unit, week to week.

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Slide 9 – Programme Structure

At first glance, this should feel familiar, because we haven't removed the core elements that you already recognise.

You still have **Activity Badges** and **Top Awards**, just as you do now.

What we've done is introduce something new into Explorers — **Challenge Awards**.

Now, Challenge Awards themselves aren't new to Scouting. They already exist in other sections. But this is the first time they've been brought into the Explorer Programme in this way.

And they've been introduced very deliberately.

Activity Badges still sit at the base. These are the things that will make up most of your regular meetings. They are short-term, flexible, and designed to be engaging week to week.

At the top, Top Awards remain largely as they are. They still represent that longer-term achievement and overall journey through the section.

What Challenge Awards do is sit in the middle and **connect those two more clearly**.

They take place over a longer period of time and require young people to work towards something in a more sustained way.

But more importantly than that, they provide a **more structured and scaffolded route** from the everyday programme into those Top Awards.

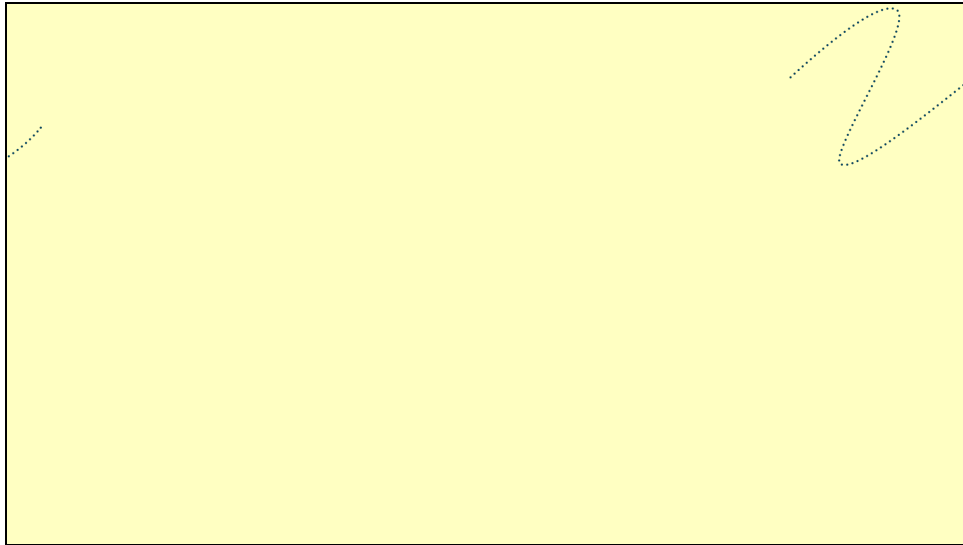
So instead of that jump from activity-based sessions straight into something much larger, Challenge Awards help bridge that gap.

The difference now is that instead of those elements feeling quite separate, they work together much more intentionally.

So the work a young person puts into a Challenge Award can contribute towards their Top Awards.

What that does is create a clearer journey through the section, where effort builds over time instead of being repeated — and where young people can see how what they're doing week to week fits into something bigger.

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Slide 10 – Experience Principles

At the centre of the new programme are the Experience Principles.

These are Discover, Solve, Create, Reflect, Mobilise, and Experience.

Now, these are probably the most important idea in the redesign, because they change how the programme feels in practice.

They're not a checklist, and they're not something you simply tick off.

Instead, they act as a framework that shapes the kind of experiences young people have.

So rather than saying "this is exactly what you must do", the question becomes:

What could you do that helps you discover something new?

What could you do that requires you to solve a problem?

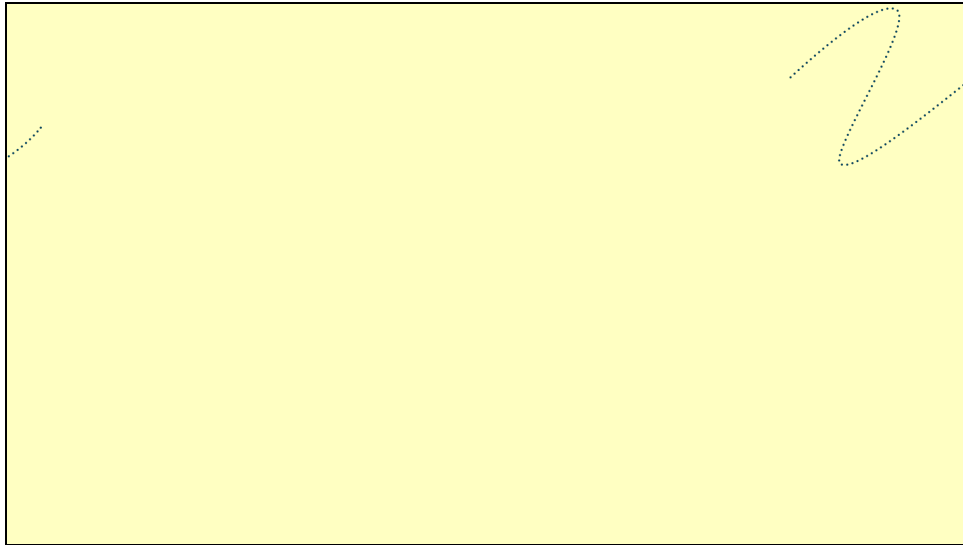
What could you create, or who could you bring together?

That gives much more flexibility.

And more importantly, it gives young people much more ownership over what they're doing.

As leaders, it shifts your role slightly, from delivering a fixed programme, to helping guide and shape the experiences your Explorers are creating.

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Slide 11 – Activity Badges

Let's take a closer look at Activity Badges.

The structure is deliberately simple and the activities you are doing week to week will probably not change that much.

To achieve a badge, young people complete three activities, and each of those activities links to a different Experience Principle.

Now, we do provide example requirements to help you get started.

But they are just examples.

Young people don't have to follow them exactly, and you don't have to deliver them exactly as written.


As long as what they're doing clearly links back to the principles, and meets the purpose of the badge, it counts.

That flexibility allows you to adapt activities to your group.

It allows young people to follow their interests.

And it means different units can deliver the same badge in completely different ways, while still achieving the same outcomes.

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- Requirements are not strict rules
- You can adapt, stretch or simplify activities
- Focus on the Experience Principles, not the task itself
- Different approaches = equally valid outcomes

Slide 12 – Flexibility in Practice

What's really important to understand is that these badges are designed to be adaptable in practice.

The requirements you'll see are much closer to guidance or suggestions than strict instructions.

They're there to help get you started, not to limit what's possible.

So if something feels too simple, or not quite right for your group, you're absolutely encouraged to adjust it.

You can stretch it, reshape it, or take it in a completely different direction.

What matters is that young people are engaging with the Experience Principles.

As long as they're discovering something new, solving problems, creating, or reflecting, then they're meeting the intent of the badge.

That means two groups might approach the same badge in very different ways, and both be completely valid.

It also means you can better match activities to the abilities, interests, and confidence levels of your Explorers.

So rather than asking "have we followed the requirement exactly?", the question becomes "are our young people having the right kind of experience?"

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Slide 13 – Badge Range

If we look at the range of badges available, you'll see there's a deliberate mix.

We still have the core Scouting activities, outdoor skills, adventure, and practical experiences that have always been part of the programme.

But alongside that, there's a stronger focus on areas like employability, communication, financial understanding, and global awareness.

That's been done intentionally.

Because the role of Explorers is not just about what happens in Scouts, it's about preparing young people for what comes next.

And that means giving them a broader set of skills and experiences that they can take into education, work, and life beyond the movement. Soft skills buried in the heart of our badges.

You can check out all the badges and see them up close here: - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/running-your-section/meet-the-new-explorer-activity-badges>

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Slide 14 – Activity Badge Example (Chef)

The Chef badge is a really good example of how this has changed.

In the previous programme, it could feel quite rigid, and sometimes even a bit unrealistic in terms of what it expected young people to do.

In the new version, it's been simplified and made more practical.

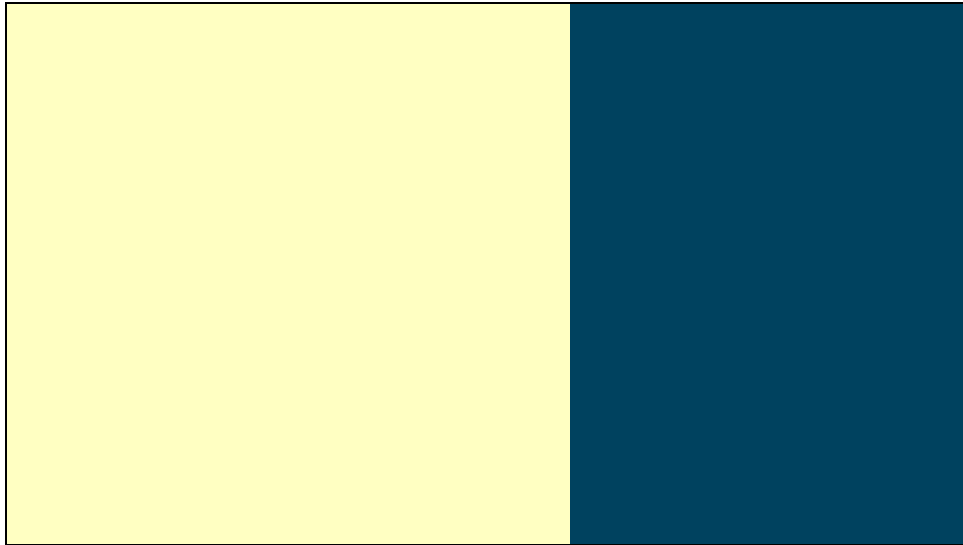
So instead of focusing on complex requirements, it focuses on real-life skills.

Things like planning a meal, working to a budget, adapting recipes, and thinking about how you would cook in different situations.

So it still develops cooking skills, but in a way that is much more relevant to how young people actually use those skills.

It also links much more naturally into other parts of Scouting, like cooking on camp or working in outdoor environments.

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Slide 15 – Activity

At this point, we're going to pause for a short activity.

What we'd like you to do is think about how you would actually deliver one of these badges with your own Explorers.

So consider which Experience Principles you might focus on.

Think about what activities your young people might choose.

And importantly, think about how you would adapt those activities for different abilities, different interests, and different levels of experience within your group.

Take around 7 minutes to discuss that, either individually or in small groups.

And then we'll come back together and share some of those ideas.

[when the time is up invite others to share their ideas. Verbally or in the chat.]

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Changing your badges to suit your young people...

Chef	→	Backwoods Chef
1. Discover - Choose a recipe, a cooking technique or a traditional food, and find out about its history. Have a go at making something using traditional methods and ingredients, avoiding modern techniques.	→	1. Discover - Research traditional outdoor cooking methods used by different cultures, like ember baking, clay cooking or spit roasting. Learn about the history of backwoods cooking and how people cooked before modern kitchens.
2. Experience - Hold a cooking competition with your Unit or District.	→	2. Experience - Run a backwoods cooking challenge with your Unit. Set up different stations (fire building, prep, cooking, serving) and try out various techniques. Make it fun, competitive and collaborative.
3. Mobilise - Look at the social issues that surround our food production, and see if you can take any actions to reduce their impact. This could involve researching certain ingredients, or visiting production facilities or farms.	→	3. Mobilise - Explore the environmental impact of food waste and packaging on camp. Work with your group to reduce waste, maybe by using locally sourced ingredients, reusable containers or cooking with minimal equipment.
4. Solve - Plan a recipe or menu that you would make in your usual kitchen facilities. Then, try and make that using a different cooking facility. For example, you could try camping stoves or a campfire instead of a normal kitchen. Think about how you could improvise utensils and maintain hygiene.	→	4. Solve - Take a recipe you'd normally cook at home and adapt it for the campfire. Think about how to improvise utensils (e.g. using sticks, foil or natural materials), manage hygiene and cook safely without a kitchen.
5. Create - Create a menu for a specific event. This could be anything from a gala style dinner, or a street food tasting night! Build your budget and shopping list and design the menu for the event.	→	5. Create - Design a themed backwoods menu for a special camp event, like a "wild feast night" or "forest café". Include starter, main and dessert. Think about how to present it creatively using natural materials.

Slide 16 – Adapting badges

Now this slide is really about bringing that flexibility to life.

Up to this point, we've talked about how badges are structured, how the principles work, and how young people can choose what they do. This is where we show what that looks like in practice.

So here, we've taken the Chef badge, which we've already looked at, and adapted it into something quite different, something like a Backwoods Chef experience.

What's really important is that the principles haven't changed.

You're still covering Discover, Solve, Create, Mobilise and Experience.

But what the young people are actually doing looks completely different.

[pick out a couple of the requirements and how they change]

Instead of working in a kitchen, they might be cooking over open fires, adapting recipes to work outdoors, thinking about how to safely manage food in a camp environment, and improvising equipment.

Because of that, they are building additional skills such as resilience, problem solving and confidence in an outdoor setting.

So the point here is not just that badges are flexible, it's that they are designed to be adapted.

The structure stays consistent, but the experience should reflect your young people, your setting and what excites them.

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Slide 17 – Challenge Awards

Moving up from activity badges, we come into the Challenge Awards.

There are six in total, covering Adventure, Community Engagement, Employability, International, Leadership and Values

These are designed to be quite different from activity badges. They are not short-term, and they are not something that will usually be completed in just a few sessions.

Instead, they take place over a longer period of time and require a higher level of involvement from young people.

Each award follows a clear process. Young people start by identifying a Challenge Award theme, and then use the six experience principles to plan how they're going to achieve it.

From there, they carry out their plan, documenting their progress in a way that works for them, and then showing what they've achieved and how they've developed.

So the shift here is from simply taking part in activities to taking ownership of a project – choosing it, shaping it, and reflecting on it.

And that's where a lot of the deeper learning and development takes place.

Just as a practical note, particularly for colleagues in Scotland, if Explorers over 16 are carrying out regulated activity as part of these projects, they will need to have a PVG Disclosure in place. There is guidance available on the Scouts website to support with that.

Again, you can learn more about them and access the guidance from here: -

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/running-your-section/introducing-challenge-awards>

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Slide 18 – Challenge Award example

This example helps to bring that to life.

In this case, a group of Explorers focused on improving a local woodland space.

They started by understanding the issues in that space, carrying out surveys and speaking to people who use it, including park rangers and local residents.

They then planned and ran activities such as guided walks and conservation sessions, and worked with others in the community.

Importantly, they also looked at the impact of what they did.

For example, they were able to measure a reduction in litter over time.

They also created something lasting in the space, sharing information for others to use.

So within that project, they developed a wide range of skills including planning, teamwork, communication and problem solving.

And they were able to see the difference they made.

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Slide 19 – Activity (documentation)

At this point, we'd like you to think about how projects like that are recorded.

Traditionally, this might have been done through a written logbook.

That's still one option (and we will provide a logbook), but it's not the only way.

Young people might choose to document what they have done through video, photos, presentations or other creative formats.

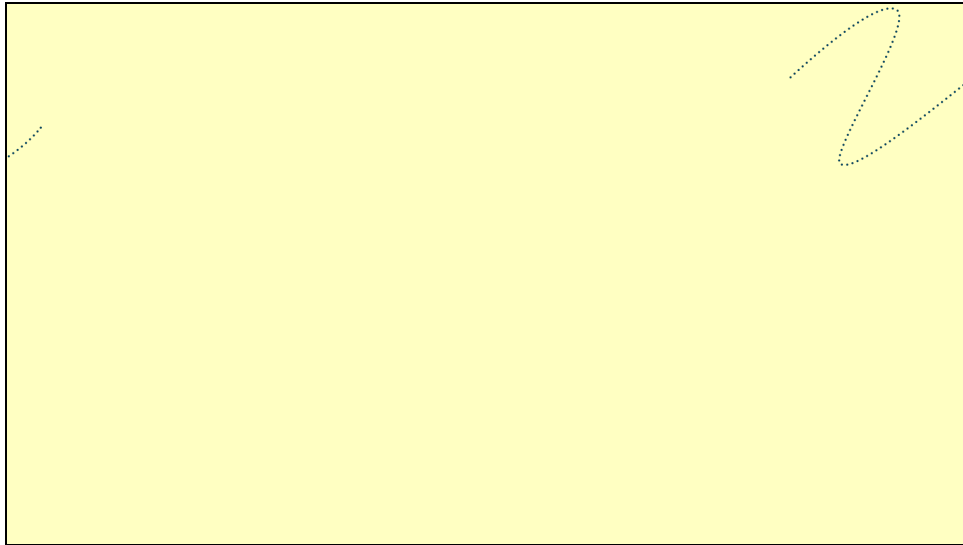
The important thing is that they are able to show what they have done, explain what they have learned, and reflect on how they have developed. This can then be transferred and written up into their top awards logbooks in the future.

So take a few minutes to think about how different approaches to documentation might support different young people within your group.

Consider what options you might offer, and how you would support them in capturing their work.

[when the time is up invite others to share their ideas. Verbally or in the chat.]

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Slide 20 – Nations alignment

Before we move on, it's worth touching on something practical that came through quite strongly during testing, particularly for those of you working in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We know that across those nations there are already established awards and recognition systems that sit alongside the Explorer programme.

One of the big questions during testing was whether young people would end up having to repeat similar work to satisfy different requirements.

So what's been done here is to map those existing nation-specific awards against the new Challenge Awards.

What that means in practice is that, where appropriate, the work a young person is already doing can count towards both.

So instead of duplicating effort, we are recognising it.

For you as leaders, that should reduce the pressure of having to run parallel programmes, and instead allow you to align what you're already doing with the new structure.

And for young people, it means their effort feels joined up rather than repeated and that their time and effort is respected.

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Slide 21 – Top Awards

When it comes to Top Awards, the overall picture remains largely unchanged. We've been careful not to disrupt something that already works well and is widely understood.

There are, however, a couple of important updates.

First, Challenge Awards can now count towards the ICV requirements within Top Awards, as long as they meet the relevant criteria.

Guidance on how to use these will be published, alongside a new Top Awards guidance page. This will outline expectations for ICV projects and how Challenge Awards can contribute.

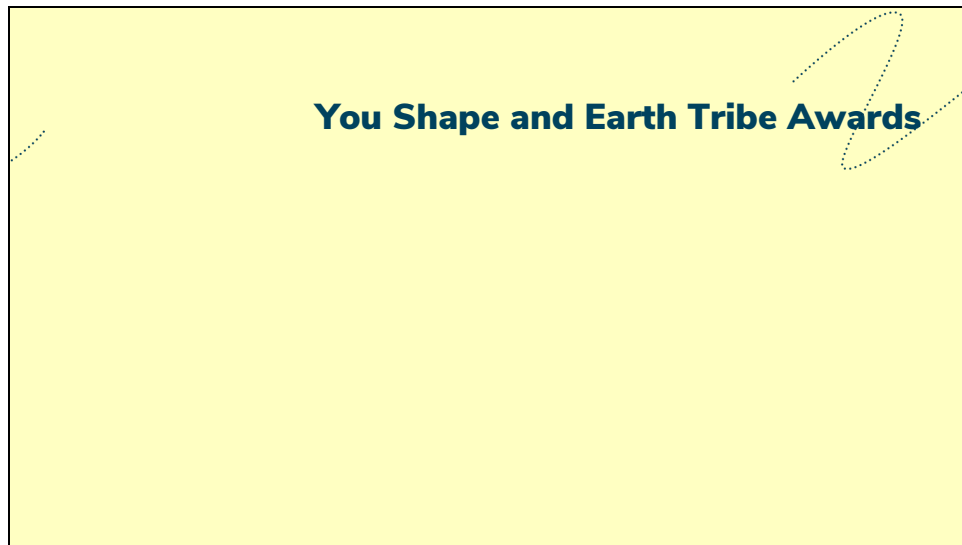
All of this will be available at the launch of the new programme. Overall, this helps connect the programme more clearly, rather than treating elements as separate tracks.

Second, a new Gateway Award has been introduced. Developed with Mencap, it is designed to support young people with learning disabilities to access and achieve within the Top Awards structure.

In summary, the approach is to maintain continuity while improving accessibility and strengthening connections across the programme.

Looking ahead, the ongoing 18+ project may also explore Top Awards in more detail over the coming years.

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Slide 22 – YouShape and Earth Tribe

YouShape and Earth Tribe both remain key parts of the Explorer programme.

In fact, what we've seen through the redesign is that they now fit much more naturally into everything else.

YouShape is about young people having a voice, being involved in decisions, shaping their experiences, and leading what happens within their section.

And as you've seen through the programme, that's now a much stronger thread running throughout everything we do.

Earth Tribe, on the other hand, links to environmental awareness and action.

That connects really well with a lot of the new badges and Challenge Awards, particularly those focused on community, sustainability and the wider world.

So rather than feeling like additional things to fit in, both of these now sit comfortably within the overall programme.

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Slide 23 – Testimonials

At this point, we're going to pause and hear directly from the people who have been involved in testing the programme.

That includes both volunteers and young people.

The reason we include this is because it gives you a much more realistic sense of how this has worked in practice.

You'll hear about what felt different, what worked well, and what impact it had on both delivery and engagement.

And often that gives a far clearer picture than we can just describing it ourselves.

[Hit the play button at the bottom left of the screen]

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Slide 24 – Transition

Finally, one of the most important points for you as leaders, transition between programmes.

We know you will be excited to jump right in but there is no expectation for you to move straight across to the new programme overnight.

The new materials will be available from June 2026.

The current programme will remain available until August 2027 on the dedicated Explorer page.

So you have a significant period where both are available.

That's been done deliberately, to allow you to take a gradual approach.

You can explore the new programme, try elements of it with your Explorers, and build it into what you do over time.

There's no requirement to change everything at once.

This is about supporting you to adapt in a way that works for your unit, your team, and your young people.

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Slide 25 – Support

So, moving on to support.

One of the key things we've recognised throughout this process is that introducing a new programme isn't just about providing the content, it's about making sure that you, as leaders, feel confident and supported in using it.

So alongside the programme itself, there will be a range of support available to you.

This will include guidance materials that explain how the programme is structured, how to deliver different elements, and how to adapt it for your own unit. All the stuff we have told you hear today but in a more digestible format. In fact multiple formats!

There will also be supporting resources to help with specific areas, whether that's delivering activity badges, planning Challenge Awards, or supporting young people with reflection.

The intention here is that you're not starting from scratch.

You have a framework, you have examples, and you have support to help you apply it in a way that works for you.

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Slide 26 – Brand

Alongside the programme itself, there is also a refreshed Explorer brand. Top Secret for the moment. All be revealed on launch day!

You'll see this reflected in updated logos, badge designs, and supporting materials.

The aim here is to give Explorers a clearer, more consistent identity that reflects the direction of the programme.

However, it's important to say that this is not about changing everything. There are no plans to change the uniform at this time.

So while the look and feel of materials is evolving, the core identity of the section remains the same.

Add links to Brand Centre and Scout Store-

<https://scoutsbrand.org.uk/>

<https://shop.scouts.org.uk/>

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Slide 27 – Resources and guidance

To support the rollout of the programme, there will be a dedicated online space for Explorer volunteers. This will bring together everything you need in one place.

That includes detailed information on the new programme, guidance on activity badges and Challenge Awards, and additional materials explaining how and why changes have been made.

You'll also find practical resources, things you can use directly with your young people.

In addition to that, there will be optional e-learning available.

This will cover key areas such as youth-shaped Scouting, planning within the new structure, and approaches to reflection.

So whether you prefer to learn through reading, doing, or structured learning, there will be options available to support you.

We will share the location of all this information closer to launch.

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Slide 28 – Next steps

So, in terms of what happens next.

The most important first step is to take some time to think about how this might look in your own unit.

You don't need to change everything at once. You might choose to start by exploring the new programme materials, running through the guidance, or trying out a single badge, and then building from there.

It's also really important to bring your young people into that process early. Share the new programme with them, get their input, and involve them in shaping what you do – because ultimately, it works best when they have ownership of it.


From there, you can begin planning your new programme, and when they're available, take a look at the new badges through Scout Store as well.

Alongside that, there are a couple of practical steps that are really worth doing now. This is a moment where interest in Scouts is likely to be high, so it's a great opportunity to recruit new volunteers.

Make sure any leader or volunteer vacancies are up to date on the Volunteer Opportunities Tool, and check that your contact details are correct on the system for both you and your group. That way, if someone goes looking for their local Scout or Explorer unit, they can easily find you and get in touch.


We'll also be sharing a version of this presentation, along with an activity to help introduce the new programme to young people, after launch day.

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Thank you!


Any questions or comments around further support you may need?



Please take a few minutes to fill in this short feedback form.



Scouts



Slide 29 – Close

So that brings us to the end of the session.

Thank you for your time, and for your engagement throughout.

We know that what you do as leaders has a huge impact on the experience young people have in Scouting, and we hope this has given you a clear understanding of how the programme is evolving to support that.

We will be in touch shortly after launch with a hand out that will explain where you can find all of the information we have talked about today. We will provide an overview of what we have talked about and links directly to the new resources.

Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey to help us understand how confident volunteers feel delivering the Explorer Programme and where we can better support you.

[Discover the New Explorer Programme Delivery - Evaluation form – Fill out form](#)

We'll now open things up for questions.

If there's anything you'd like us to go back over, or anything you'd like more detail on, please do ask.

Thank you.