



Exploring Early Years

Frequently asked questions

What is our Early Years project?

The Scouts early years pilot programme for four and five year olds was announced in November 2018. The pilots are time bound and will run through to the end of the Scouting year July 2020.

The pilots are exploring how younger children can benefit from the Scout programme to improve their confidence, problem solving, and emotional resilience and communication skills.

We particularly want to see how this age range could help us extend Scouting further into hard to reach communities and establish new approaches to increase the recruitment of adult volunteers.

The pilots will help us to some extent in understanding any impact on volunteer line management at Group, District and County level. However, as we are piloting in only a small number of areas, with high support from Headquarters, learning in this regard.

The yet to be named section will be trialled across the UK using three different models based on community needs.

How much is it going to cost Scouting?

The development of the new scheme has been made possible thanks to financial support from the Department for Education's (DfE) through the Early Years Disadvantage VCS Grants. They are funding 20 pilots across England.

We have secured funding from the Mercers Livery Company for 20 pilots in London.

We are seeking external funding for pilots in Wales. We are not piloting in Northern Ireland as "Squirrels" provision already exists. Scouts Scotland will now be contributing to the project with the addition of six pilots for four and five year olds, that'll be starting in 2020.

The pilots are charging a nominal weekly / termly fee (average £2.00 weekly) in line with their current group practice to fund local costs and programme.

How long are the pilots running?

The DfE funded pilots are running through to the end of the Scouting year – July 2020. This is agreed with the pilot leadership and parents / carers before opening the unit. The young people in the Scout led pilot are already listed on the host Scout Group waiting list for Beaver Scouts and are taking priority over those not yet involved in Scouting. The pilot leadership teams have analysed the ages of the young people and have plans in place to support them as they transition through the group. The Scout led pilots will stop taking new members from the 31st December 2019.

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To date, only a handful of young people in Scout led pilots will be under 5 ¾ at July 2020. They will all be over 5 ¾ by end of September 2020. However, this will increase as other pilots begin.

In July 2020, the Board of Trustees will either decide to commit to early years Scouting, reject the concept or continue piloting and delay the decision:

- If the Board of Trustees **rejects** early years Scouting provision, or to delay until more piloting has taken place, DfE funded pilots not reopen in September 2020 following the summer break (albeit pilots may wish to undertake a celebration/closing one-off standalone event) and we will consider alongside volunteers how to progress our Mercers funded pilots.
- If the Board of Trustees **agrees** to early years provision, DfE funded pilots will be allowed to continue until we establish any new provision in Scouting. Mercers funded pilots will continue as intended.

Can I open Early Years provision in my area?

Scout Groups do not have permission to start early year's provision outside of these pilot programmes. Unofficial early year's provisions are against our rules as they are not insured and could affect the result of our pilot programmes.

Have many Groups expressed an interest in running a pilot?

We had over 700 Groups express their interest in being a pilot location. 300 members have registered to attend consultation events to provide feedback and insight into activity in the pilots.

How are the pilot locations decided?

1. The locations are identified from the expressions of interest received from Groups/Districts in areas of deprivation.
2. Once identified, approval is sought from the funder. They want to avoid duplication of method and location with other early year's projects being delivered by their other funded delivery partners.
3. If sanctioned, the early years team consult with the Regional Commissioner for approval to proceed
4. Approval and input from the County Commissioner is sought
5. Approval and input from the District Commissioner is sought
6. Work is undertaken with the Scout Group to co-design our approach and agreed next steps.

Where does the governance for the pilots sit?

The Early Years project is governed by a *Programme Board*, which is responsible for the delivery of the pilot programme. The Board is made up of a variety of stakeholders with expertise and interest in the programme. The Board is a combination of volunteers and staff, with representation of the Squirrels Association in Northern Ireland. The Board engages individuals with specific expertise on an ad hoc basis including our evaluation partner and influencers in the early year's sector.

The Programme Board will produce a report to enable our Trustee Board to make an informed decision on more piloting, a commitment to scaling up provision or to not continue.

The pilots are the responsibility of UK Scouting who are providing national support to enable recruitment of children, programmes in a box, financial support to deliver a high quality programme, recruitment of volunteers, induction support, initial training, safeguarding training, provide full Scouting insurance cover, managing any disputes between pilot volunteers, and escalating pilot project safeguarding issues.

The Early Years delivery team are working closely with the local volunteer structure to codesign the approach and will then undertake the heavy lifting and facilitation to move from concept to pilot opening.

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Districts are providing support with new adult volunteers in the pilots being processed via standard processes. These included processing DBS applications, supporting with the appointment advisory committee requirements, and listing these adults on compass as Assistant Beaver Scout leaders.

Some Districts have also requested that they deliver the induction training, safeguarding training themselves and the Early Years delivery teamwork with them to make the arrangements.

How are you making sure children are kept safe?

Safety of young people in Scouting is our number one priority.

All volunteers, including those delivering Scouting in a partner setting, complete Scouts' National Vetting Process, including a disclosure check, and other vetting checks, appointment advisory committee requirements and Scout safeguarding training.

The safeguarding training is delivered by an authorised Scout safeguarding trainer. The content is the approved mandatory training provided by the Scouts Safeguarding committee.

We carry out stringent vetting of all adults who work with young people and requires them to work to a strict code of practice outlined in the "Young People First" Code of Practice Yellow Card.

All safeguarding issues and welfare concerns in all three models are escalated to the Programme Delivery Manager who follows the Code of Practice Grey Card working, closely with the national safeguarding team.

The local volunteer structure will be briefed on any issues that are raised and are provided with the same level of information they receive under current arrangements. The Programme Delivery Manager will bring the issue raised to a conclusion, working with the local Scout line management, drawing on their local knowledge and expertise.

We recognise that our pilot models create new safeguarding challenges. Therefore, the national safeguarding team are fully involved, regularly briefed on progress, process pilot volunteers vetting, and are helping to shape future processes and procedures if a decision is made to roll out Early Years Scouting.

Due diligence is completed, and we have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the partner led locations to ensure high quality care and processes are in place including how to escalate Safeguarding concerns.

What are the three trial methods of delivery?

Family Scouting: Parents / carers are asked to come together and take the lead delivering the Scouting programme with their children. A Scouting volunteer supports the Family Scouting unit by providing coaching, sharing programme resources, and linking the unit to other local opportunities and activities across the Scout District. Venue, meeting times and dates are flexible. In the pilots we are testing governance and support being provided at either Group or District level.

Scouting delivered by an existing Group: Closest to our traditional form of delivery, a number of adult volunteers will deliver a programme to a group of children on a weekly basis at a venue with occasional ad hoc events and trips. Membership between 16-24 children per unit. In the pilots we are testing governance and support being provided at Group level.

Scouting delivered in a Partner setting: Being the least established form of traditional delivery we believe professionals and others in early years settings would value being able to deliver a Scouting programme. This programme will be delivered in different settings (local authorities, nurseries, pre-schools, community and faith) to reach children from specific groups (e.g. Looked After, Young Carers, Action for Children and SEND).

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Membership up to 24 children per unit. In the pilots we are testing governance and support being provided at either Group or District level.

What is the science behind early years?

Recent research has shown that the early years are much more important in shaping life outcomes than was previously realised. These years are the time when young people's foundations for future development are established.

The science behind early years - https://youtu.be/AhF0XD_F72Q

Helping children to develop the skills and values associated with Scouting from an early age, including a sense of community, empathy and achievement, it will have a big impact on young lives as well as creating stronger communities and more active citizens.

The experience from Scouting in Northern Ireland, the USA and Denmark who already have early years provisions, tell us that early years Scouting works in achieving just that, as well as having a very positive effect on the rest of the Scouting family and helping us recruit more volunteers.

Research from work carried out in the USA with their Lion Section indicates that 75% of new parents carry on volunteering with Scouting as their children move through the various age ranges. 61% of all young people who join the Lions provision are new to Scouting

What areas are we targeting with the pilots?

We have chosen to seek funding to pilot early years in disadvantaged areas so we can test if early years Scouting could help us reach communities that Scouting is currently underrepresented in. Early years provision presents an opportunity to change the demographic of young people and adult volunteers involved through all of our Sections, by making it as easy as possible for them to begin their Scouting journey.

What are we measuring through these pilots?

Ultimately, we want to explore whether we can:

- Have an even **bigger impact** on young people
- Increase the **number of young people** benefiting from Scouting
- Increase young people in Scouting from currently **under-represented backgrounds**
- Establish whether different models could lead to increasing **recruitment and retention of adult volunteers**, whilst avoiding impact to existing provision
- Understand, as far as possible with a limited number of HQ supported pilots, any impact on **Group, District, County structures**

Who is helping us to evaluate the pilots?

In order to assess the value of the pilots, the project has appointed CREC, The Centre for Research in Early Childhood, to carry out face to face interviews, case studies and observations to evaluate:

Impact

- Can we evidence a positive impact on the development of young children related to our Theory of Change?
- Can the provision help us to reach areas of deprivation and demography's underrepresented in Scouting?

Programme Quality

- Is the programme consistent with existing sector / expert understanding of early year's activities / development for this age range?
- Is the programme appropriate for 4 –6 year olds, or is a different age range more appropriate / possible?

Feasibility

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- Can we attract and retain (after their child moves on) new adult volunteers, and not undermine existing provision?
- Is there support and understanding within the movement (both for roles likely to be involved directly in Early Years delivery, but also wider including the line management chain)
- Can we appropriately resource and administer Early Years provision on a national (staffing, processes, programme development etc.) or local (line management requirements, local training delivery, places to meet etc.) level, being explicitly conscious of challenges in areas of deprivation and reaching underrepresented demography's in Scouting?

It is important to note that there are limitations to what can be achieved and demonstrated in regard to child outcomes in a 12 month period. However, CREC will advise and make clear the limitations whilst at the same time setting out a robust and rigorous method of capturing evidence from the pilot parents, practitioners and volunteers that will act as reliable proxy data for indicating likely impact over time (short and long term).

We will receive quarterly reports with the financial full report due April 2020.

What does the pilot early years programme look like?

We have adapted the Scouting programme to be developmentally appropriate for 4 and 5 year olds, creating an active skills and language rich environment where children have the opportunity to play and develop the physical, social, cognitive and emotional skills they need to make a successful transition to school and progress in life.

'Hedgehogs' is the working title for these pilots and a curriculum has been developed with support from an external education specialist consultancy (We Are Futures), child care specialist (Action for Children), drawing on activity from other early years providers from across the UK, and other Scouting programmes around the World. The pilot programme looks and feels like Scouting with symbology, ceremonies, hands on activities, learning by doing, the outdoor environment as a primary learning space, and reward / recognition.

The curriculum has been created in line with our own Scouting outcomes and the Government Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

Nights away / camping are out of scope for the pilot.

What might a future early years programme look like?

We are working closely with the programme assurance volunteer leads, consulting with our members about what a future programme might look like if the section was approved.

Feedback received suggests:

- Online programme planning tool
- A badge-based programme
- Top award
- 5 sets of challenge awards
- 12-15 activity badges that reflect our Scouting outcomes
- Badges are consistent with other sections but avoid duplication

How are you gathering views from our members on delivery methods and programme ideas?

We have scheduled eleven consultation events over the next six months to brief members on progress, insights from the pilots, and gathering feedback on the three delivery methods and potential programme.

Each quarter we are contacting 10 District Commissioners, 10 Group Scout Leaders, and 10 Beaver Scout Leaders to capture feedback.

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The adults connected with the pilots are providing fortnightly updates on programmes delivered.

Webinars for members are running every six weeks.

Will the section be called Squirrels like in Northern Ireland?

There is no official name for any potential section yet.

The existing Squirrels programme, run under a Memorandum of Understanding with Scouts NI, will continue and is not impacted by the pilot scheme in England, Wales, Scotland.

We have waiting lists of over 60,000 young people and not enough leaders to run programmes for those young people. Why are we considering opening a new section?

Research has demonstrated that one of the reasons parents volunteer with our younger age ranges is to spend quality time with their child. For example, when a younger age range was piloted in the USA most new volunteers were parents. In addition, 75% of people who volunteered continued to volunteer with other sections and 61% of members were families new to Scouting.

We're testing through the pilots a variety of recruitment tools and techniques.

Baden-Powell focused Scouting on 10-18 year olds. Would early years take Scouting away from its roots?

Scouting is a movement, and we move with the times. We want to make sure we are constantly giving our young people a programme that is impactful and supports young people in the best way possible. Baden-Powell was a great innovator, always looking for new and exciting ways to support young people.

Do the pilots get a Start-Up Grant?

We do not provide a start-up grant direct to the host Group. We are providing funding towards delivering a quality programme purchasing materials, small tables, programme resources, clothing. On average we have spent around £800 per pilot.

Why not just start Beaver Scouts at a younger age?

Extending the age range of Beaver Scouting would be likely to create a programme that is too challenging for some children and not sufficiently challenging for others. Child development experts tell us that the early years is a distinct period of development with its own characteristics. At the age of four, one year of life equals 25% of your total life, so there can be a lot of variation between children and their individual development. If you compare a four year old and a seven year old a lot of things have changed. For example, seven year olds usually have good hand-eye coordination (utilised in a lot of Beaver Scout games) but this would be unusual in a four or five year old. Similar differences are apparent in language, concentration span and the ability to follow instructions.

Our pilot programme has been carefully designed to include and test content (e.g. games which introduce turn taking) and approaches (e.g. storytelling) to help younger children with the skill development relevant to their age and stage.

What is happening with the pilots during Covid19 while face to face scouting has been suspended?

While face to face scouting has been suspended many of the pilot groups are trialling virtual meetings using platforms such as zoom, skype etc. The young people involved in the pilots have also been sent activity packs to complete at home with their families.

The Early Years team are still busy collating evidence to submit to the Trustee Board in July.