

# Designing a programme for Squirrel Scouts

How we gathered insights, who  
we spoke to, and what we learned



**What we started with**

## Using the three years of research into, and piloting of, Scouting for four and five year olds, we set ourselves the goal of designing:

- an age-appropriate programme,
- that meets the Theory of Change,
- and is respected by Early Years practitioners,
- without compromising our Scout values,
- which encourages community and home learning,
- and works in areas of deprivation and for BAME communities.



## Our design goal was underpinned by some key principles established by CREC

They told us that the programme should:

- focus on the outdoors and adventure,
- build an understanding of Scout heritage,
- encourage group work,
- and support child initiated activity.



## **From speaking with other experts, and evaluating the pilots, we also knew that a great programme for this age range would:**

- use game play to develop skills,
- include a variety of stories which introduce or help explore the theme of different sessions,
- repeat learning outcomes across multiple activities to embed learning, without being repetitive,
- is totally adaptable to different abilities, ages and areas.



# How we created an initial programme proposal

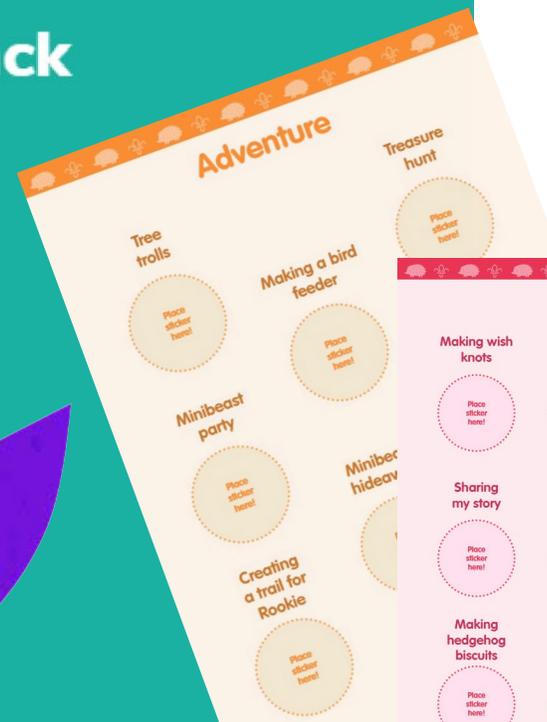
# Hedgehogs

Nest meeting

Resources pack

There were also lots of insights available from the pilots to guide us

We spoke with sections who had been trialling different activities, methods of programme delivery and badge themes for two years. They helped us establish what worked, what could be improved, and what wasn't suitable.



# Consultations were run with volunteers across the UK to explore what they thought and early years programme should look like

The most popular badge themes were

- friendship and sharing,
- nature
- the environment,
- personal care,
- cooking and healthy eating.



## **Working with internal and external experts, we set some boundaries over what should, and shouldn't, be in a programme for this age range**

- types of activities that are too easy
- types are too difficult
- what adventures are appropriate
- how can they be run safely

## Next, we wanted to understand how Squirrels would fit within the wider Scouting experience

So we mapped out all the badges and awards available across every section. Then we established where there were similarities and correlations, and used badge sale data and member feedback to understand which elements of the programme were most popular.





Social and Emotional Development
- Relationships
- Self-awareness
- Behaviour
Living and handling
Health and self-care
Communication and Language
- Listening and attention
- Understanding
- Spelling
Literacy
- Reading
- Writing
Mathematics
- Numbers
- Shape, space and measure
Understanding the World
- People and communities
- The world
- Technology
Expressive Arts and Design
- Exploring and using media and materials
- Being imaginative

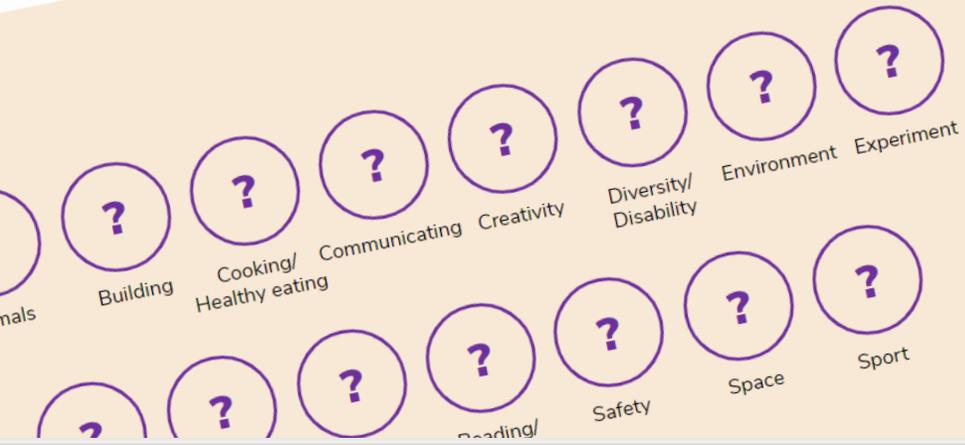
Scout: Theory of Change outcomes
Adventure
- Physically active
- Value the outdoors
- Healthy lifestyle
- Try new things
- Courage to take risks
- Tackle challenging activities
Skills for Life
- Problem-solving
- Independence
- Communication
- Practical and Contemporary skills
Wellbeing
- Happy
- Personal wellbeing
- Perseverance and grit
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Beliefs and attitudes
Leadership
- Responsible and trustworthy
- Working in a team
- Initiative and acting as a role model
Citizenship
- Active role in the community
- Self as a local, national and international citizen
Connectedness
- Meaningful friendships
- Care about others
- Respect and trust others



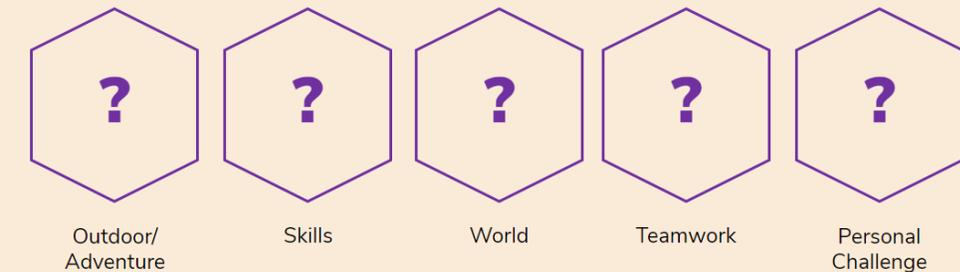
## We then established possible requirements

- in the tables are learning outcomes from the EYFS and our theory of change
- text in yellow boxes are ideas from the pilot consultations
- in purple are recommendations from the Early Years Delivery Team
- the green are from the Programme Product team
- and the blue contain similarly themed requirements present in other section's programmes

### Current ideas for Activity Badges



### Current ideas for Challenge Awards



## We presented a rough outline of the programme based on these insights to the Early Years Board

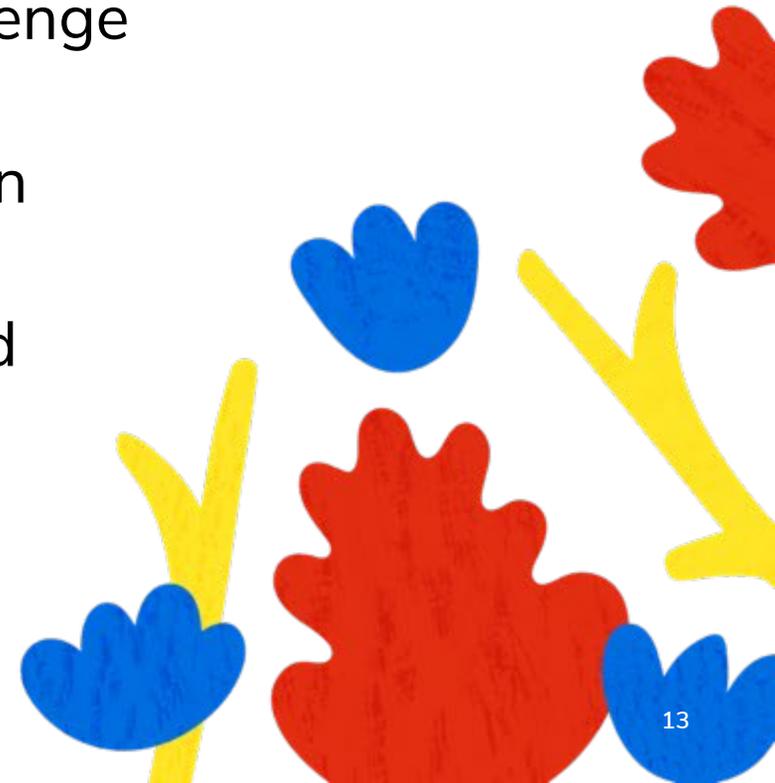
They told us:

- the top award structure should be retained,
- the number of badges and awards should be reduced,
- we needed to emphasise participation over achievement,
- the programme must use child-friendly language.

## We tested the conclusions from the board meeting with some of the current pilot leaders.

They told us:

- use a similar structure to the existing sections (65%),
- the Top Award should be earned by gaining all Challenge Awards and one or two Activity Badges (73%),
- all badges and awards for the new early years section should be released at the same time (88%),
- cooking, safety, experiments, creativity, exploring and animals are the most important topics to include.



## From this feedback, we choose three badges (adventure, exploring and stories) and designed four different styles of programme for them

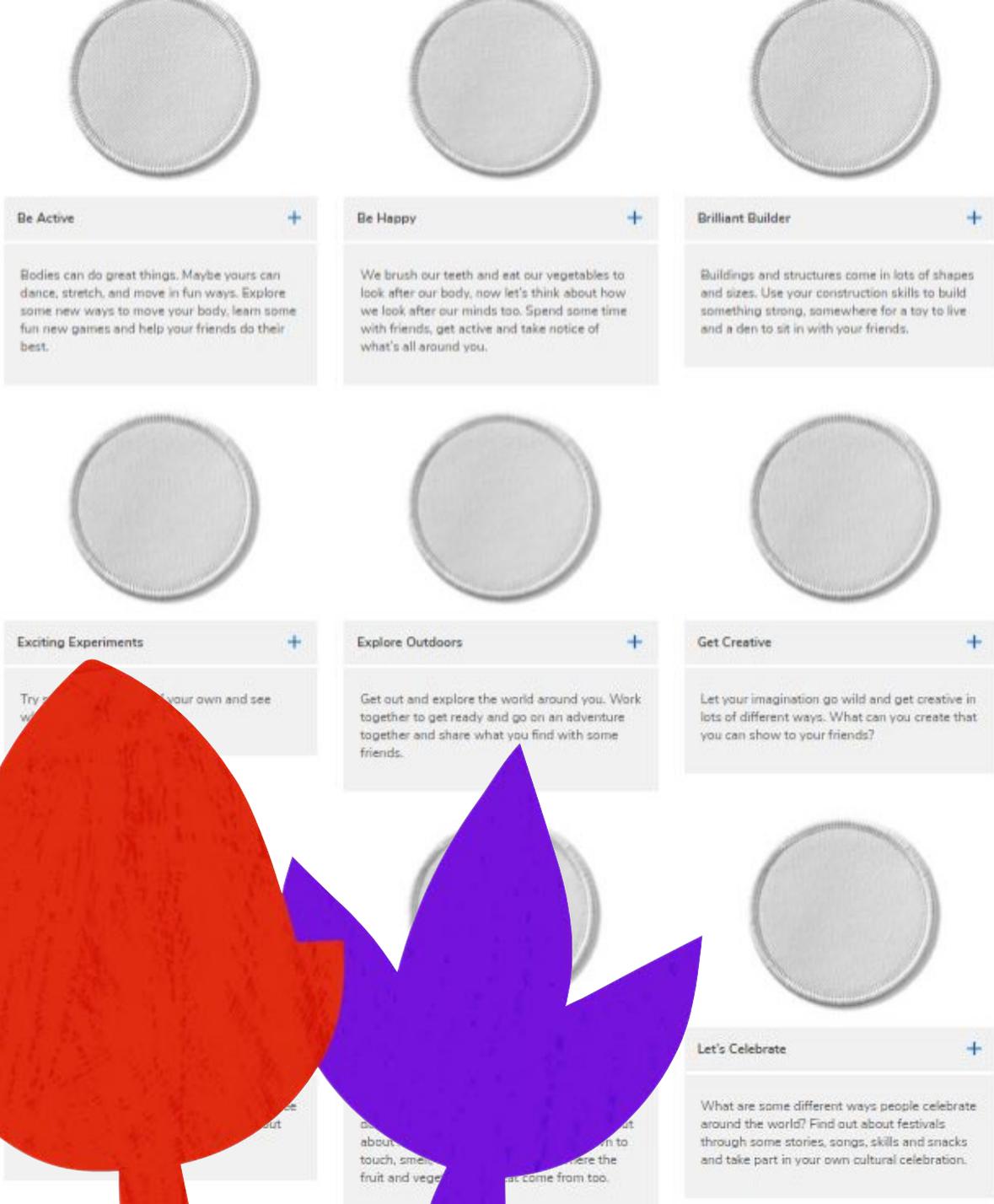
1. a scaled-back version of the Beavers badges
2. an early years experience inspired by Forest School principles and outdoor education practitioners
3. an adaptation of the pilot programme
4. a no-holds-barred vision if there was unlimited resource to support the new section

**We worked each approach  
with volunteers and staff**

**Their feedback helped us  
revise our initial proposal  
into one which captured the  
best bits of each style**



# How we tested our revised proposal on a bigger scale



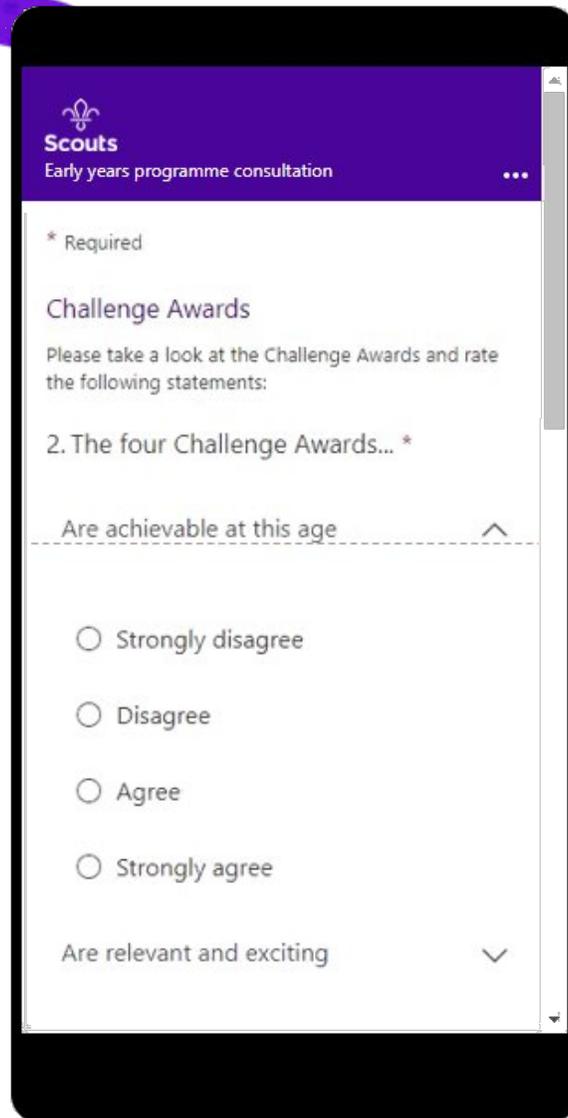
## We created a web page containing each badge and it's requirements

Using the network of contacts we had built during the piloting phase, as well as social targeting via Twitter and Facebook, we were able to share this page with a variety of current and potential user groups.

## At the bottom of the programme proposal was a Microsoft Form to submit feedback

This form surveyed testers on the extent to which they felt the badges and awards were:

- achievable,
- age-appropriate,
- relevant and exciting,
- had the right number of requirements,
- made it easy to plan sessions around,
- and developed a good range of skills and outcomes.



The screenshot shows a mobile interface for a Microsoft Form. At the top, there is a purple header with the Scouts logo and the text 'Scouts Early years programme consultation'. Below the header, there is a section titled 'Challenge Awards' with the instruction 'Please take a look at the Challenge Awards and rate the following statements:'. The first statement is '2. The four Challenge Awards... \*'. Underneath, there are two statements: 'Are achievable at this age' and 'Are relevant and exciting'. Each statement has a set of radio buttons for 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree', and 'Strongly agree'.

## Some of the feedback could be incorporated straight into the programme

Other questions that arose needed to be explored further with specialists in early learning, so we ran workshops to understand:

- the appeal of the programme to different early years audiences,
- how traditional Scout and outdoor skills be incorporate,
- ways to support leaders in delivering the programme using a learning by doing approach.

## The different people who tested and reviewed the programme included:

- parents of three-to-five year olds in IMD1-3 regions across the UK,
- parents of three-to-five year olds in all London boroughs,
- the Centre for Research in Early Childhood,
- children's charities like Coram,
- early years practitioners,
- current Drey leaders in Northern Ireland,
- adult volunteers in Scouting.



# The finished product?

We know that great programmes evolve over time, so we will continue to gather feedback on the badges and activities as new Squirrels and leaders across the nation try them.