



Scouts

14-24 Programme Redesign



14-24 Programme Redesign: Discovery

Part 1:
Understanding where we've come from

February 2023

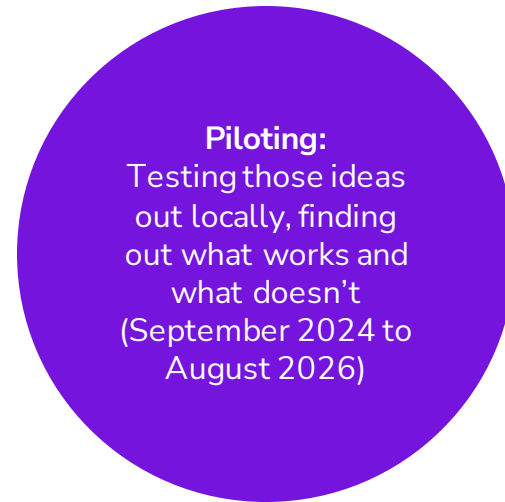
Scouts 

We're currently reviewing the provision we provide for young people aged 14-24, and seeking to understand how the provision could be adapted to cater for the experiences, skills and aspirations of young people in the future.

Adopting a user-centred design approach, this Discovery phase aims to understand the following:

- **Where we've come from:** The history and intentions of Explorers and Network, first launched over 20 years ago
- **Where we are now:** The current landscape of 14-24 provision – what the challenges and opportunities are
- **What others are doing:** What other National Scouting Organisations and Youth Organisations are doing and thinking about for this age range
- **What the future looks like:** What generational trends and research suggests young people might want, need and care about in the future.
- **How people see us:** Perceptions of non-Scouts and what the barriers to entry are.

This will help us to envision a new future for 14-24 provision, and we'll be developing ideas and recommendations which can then be prototyped.



Discovery Part 1: Understanding where we've come from

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Summary of our approach

To shape the future of the 14-24 Scouts programme, it's important to first understand where we've come from. In the initial phase of this Discovery project, we've consolidated research, evidence and views that shed a light on the original intention and design of Explorers and Network, the current provision for this age range.

We've explored how the programme has grown, adapted, and how it's being delivered in different contexts today, supported by data from the past 20 years measuring volume of provision and levels of participation.

We will continue to engage and collaborate with many more stakeholders, volunteers, and members throughout the following research phases.

Sources of information

Research interviews

We conducted eight research interviews and consulted with over 20 stakeholders who were able to fill in gaps in our knowledge, offer varying perspectives, guide us to further desk research, and test our assumptions. Interviewees included:

- Volunteers and staff who were around during the initial launch of Explorers and Network – whether that be because they were involved in designing the new provision, or because they were a member or leader at the time
- Explorer and Network members, volunteers and senior volunteers who could give us an idea of how 14-24 provision had evolved since the initial launch and what it looks like now in different contexts
- People who could point us in the direction of further desk research and other people we could speak to, such as representatives from different Scout departments

Desk research

Over 40 resources including;

- Previous research
- Marketing and support materials from the launch of Explorers and Network, and similar materials produced and updated since then
- Meeting notes and presentations produced around the time of the launch of Explorers and Network
- Scout Census and Scout Experience Survey data from the past 20 years
- Further materials shared by Heritage, Insights, and Regional Services Teams
- Archived versions of the [Scouts website](#) and [UK Scout Network website](#)

All documents reviewed as part of our desk research have been collated in a [Research Index](#), which includes a summary of each document and links to the file

Pre-Explorers and Network

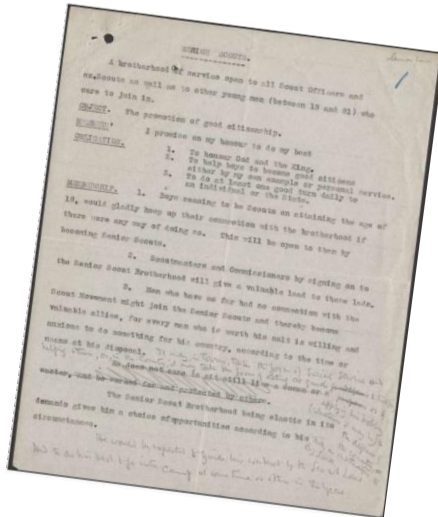
An overall timeline – pre-2002

For context, here is a high level timeline of post-Scouts provision in the years leading up to the launch of Explorers and Network in 2002.



1907 – The start of Scouting – Baden-Powell organises an experimental camp on Brownsea Island. The campers test out ideas that were written into Scouting for Boys.

1915 – Baden-Powell writes draft scheme for “Senior Scouts” for Scouts from 18 –81!



1918 – Rover Scouts introduced.

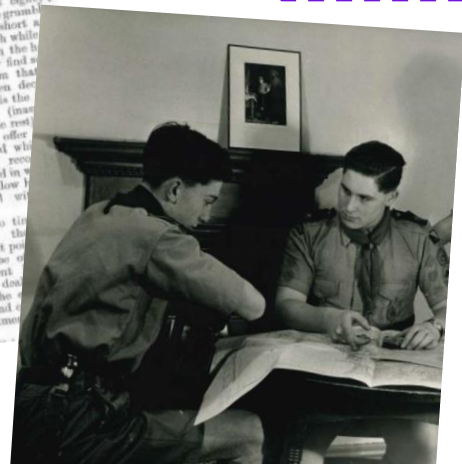
“Rovers. The word suggests adventure and freedom, which are characteristic of young men, and the appropriate evolution of his training through the stages of infancy, Wolf Cub, Scout, and Land or Sea Rover, to manhood.”

1923 – Rovers updated to 17 years plus

1931 – Rovers updated to 18 years plus



1946 – Senior Scouts is introduced for 15-18. Rover Scouts is divided into Rover Crew (18-24) and Rover Service (24+)

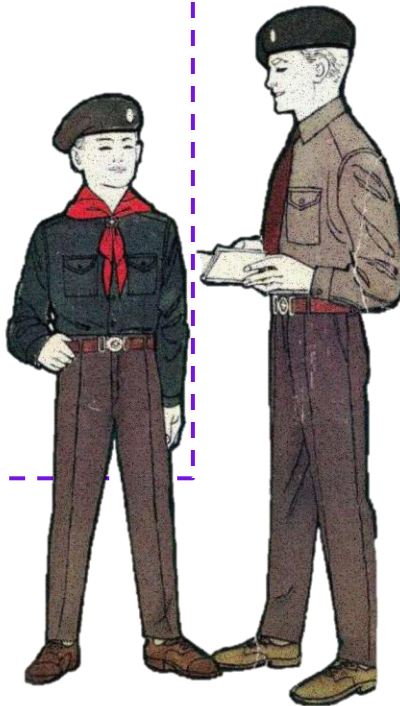


1956 – DofE launches and Rover Scouts becomes 17-24

An overall timeline – pre-2002

1967 – Launch of Venture Scouts (16-20 year olds)

“The argument for: Since the inception of the Movement proving Scouting for the older boy and young man has seldom been more than a moderate success....in several respects the training elements of the Senior Scout and Rover Scout sections are indistinguishable”

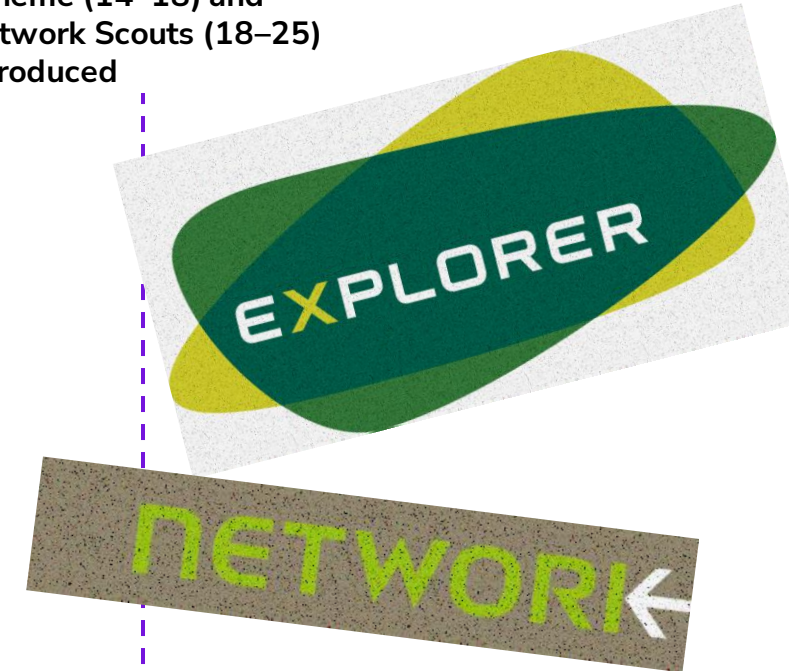


1976 – Venture Scouts become first co-ed section!



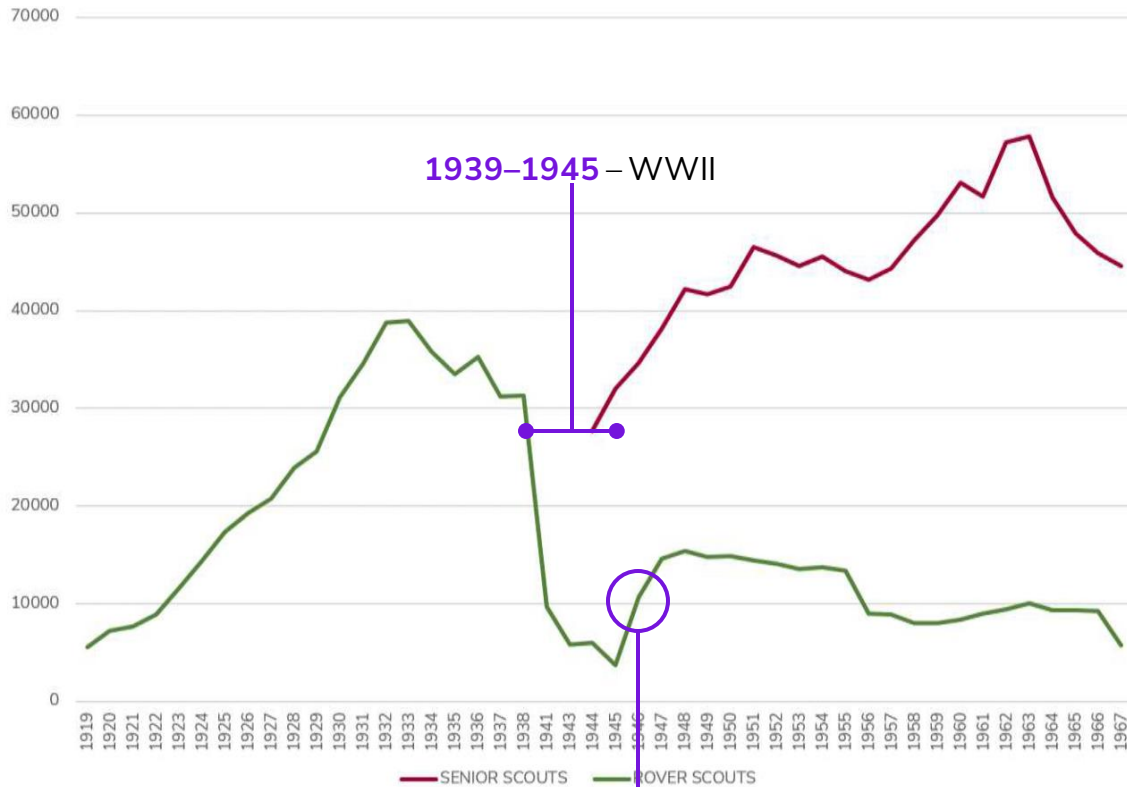
1988 – Review of Venture Scout programme. Age range dropped to 15–20 years

2002 – Explorer Scouts (14–18), Young Leader Scheme (14–18) and Network Scouts (18–25) Introduced



Pre-2002 in numbers

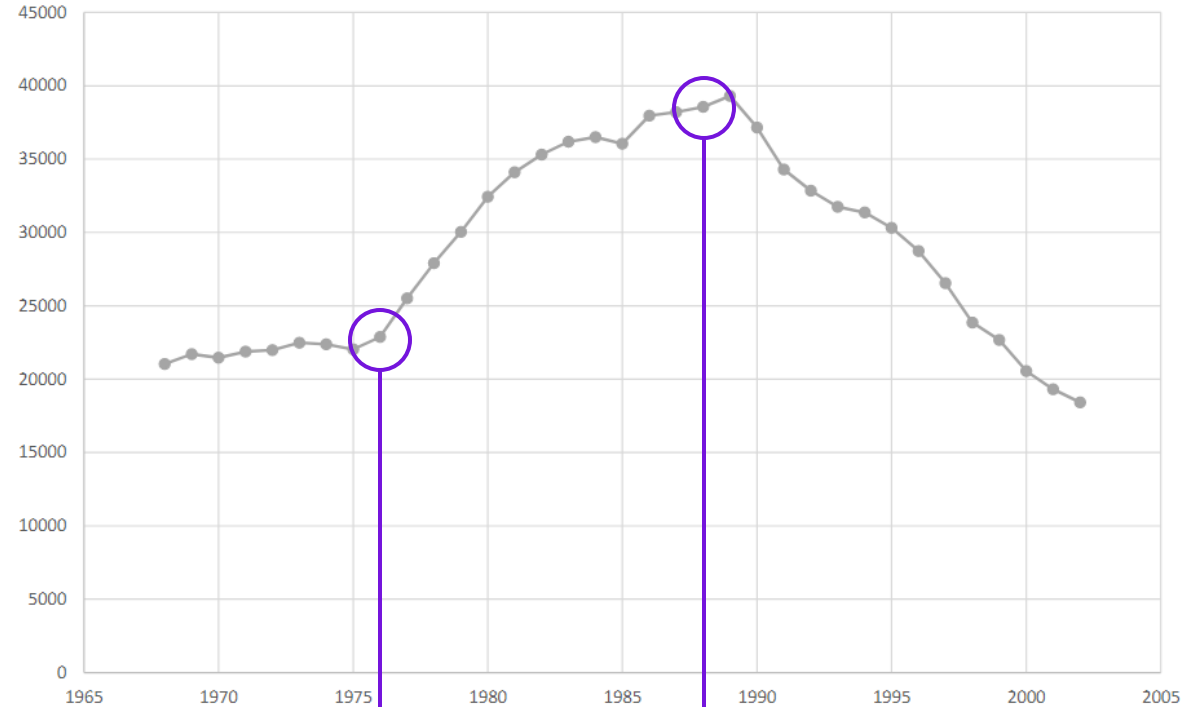
Rover Scouts (1918–1967) and Senior Scouts (1946–1967)



1939-1945 - WWII

1946 – Senior Scouts is introduced for 15-18. Rover Scouts is divided into Rover Crew (18-24) and Rover Service (24+)

Venture Scouts (between 1967–2002)



1976 – Venture Scouts become first co-ed section!

1988 – Review of Venture Scout programme. Age dropped to 15 –20 years

What was wrong with Venture Scouts?

Decreasing number of members

- The number of Venture Scouts had dropped year on year from a peak of almost 40,000 in 1990 to less than 20,000 members by 2002
- Every year around 14,000 Scouts were choosing not to become Venture Scouts. “That’s the equivalent of 10 Units closed every single week!”
- The numbers seem to start dropping following the 1988 Review of Venture Scout programme, where the age range was dropped to 15–20 years (from 16–20 years), although it is unknown if this was directly connected
- Held at a group level, we heard how it was sometimes difficult for a unit to get enough members – depending on the location. Apparently they averaged 8-9 members, although we were told of an exception that had over 120 members!
- The number of Venture Scouts achieving the Queen Scout Award was low
- The **Venture Scout Method of Operation (VSMO)** became dated and disconnected from award-focussed activities.

Lack of relevance or flexibility

- Documentation from the time captures anecdotal evidence that states “If you ask people in the 14 to 25 age group why they left Scouts, they will tell you that it is because they were bored, (maybe the activities were wrong, or we gave them insufficient responsibility) or they couldn’t attend the meetings (we were inflexible).”
- The point around flexibility was confirmed in our research interviews, where we were told of inconsistency across Venture provision. In some cases, the provision worked well. We heard that this was down to units being flexible and having clear leadership. For example, a successful “unit with many members met every night of the week, with each night having a different purpose”
- Educational demands on young people increased (with the introduction of GCSEs), and a growing number of young people were going off to university at 18+
- We heard how Venture was “built around being Young people led – but with no guidance on how”
- There were some high quality supporting resources, but these weren’t necessarily appealing to everyone

Age-range and safeguarding concerns

- Open to those aged 15-20, we heard how it was difficult for the provision to be relevant for all members
- The age range also presented a safeguarding concern, with under-18’s sharing accommodation with over-18’s, who were also old enough to drink alcohol
- “You could become a Leader at 18, so covered by different rules, but also still be a Venture Scout.”
- Members under 18 were already taking up Young Leader type roles, but without any formal training

Throughout this document you will see a number of “quotes” that were gathered during our research interviews. These have been anonymised.

Introducing Explorers & Network

What the vision was for Explorers and Network

Explorer Scouts and Scout Network were introduced as part of a wider programme review. According to [support material produced in 2001](#), they were developed as a direct response to the demands of young people and Leaders, who...

“...want Scouting to be both flexible and relevant for today’s young people whilst retaining the values that we hold dear. [...] The Programme should be more attractive to young people and useful to our members when trying to find employment. In principle, the new Programme should remain as challenging and rewarding as it always has been whilst making it easier to attract new members.”

Explorers was to be held at a **District level** and Network at a **County level**, compared to Venture which was held at a Group level like the younger sections. (See [Scouting Structure](#))

The vision was that Explorer Scouts and Scout Network would:

- Be two distinct sections within the Scout Movement which will work together to support the personal development of young people who become members.
- Be different to, but build on the strength attained by, Venture Scouts.
- Be recognised and valued by the wider society, especially education and the workplace
- Be liked by volunteers and relevant to young people
- Be linked to external awards (e.g. DofE) but remain faithful to our values
- Offer choice to young people and be flexible and adaptable to local needs and concerns.
- Offer a programme that is a quality product and open to as many young people as possible – easily accessible
- Be a tool in the revitalisation of Scouting as the premier youth movement in the UK.

The vision was supported by specific measures, which included:

- Every Explorer Scout will have a [mentor](#) in the Unit leadership team
- Explorer Scouts will receive a '[Certificate of Achievement](#)' each year to go into their 'National Record of Achievement'
- [Specialist Explorer Units](#) will exist such as Young Leader Units, mountaineering Units, or campsite service crews
- Every Unit must enter into a '[Partnership Agreement](#)' with their parent/partner body
- Both Explorer Scouts and Scout Network will follow eight programme zones



What the vision was for Explorers and Network



Explorer Scout specifics

- Was to be run at a District level
- Members would be aged 14–18
- Would follow eight programme zones shared with Scout Network
- Would include the Young Leader programme (from 2003)
- Would be primarily leader-led, with input of decision making by young people encouraged
- Districts with any Young Leaders must have a dedicated Young Leader Explorer Unit
- Explorers may be members of multiple Units

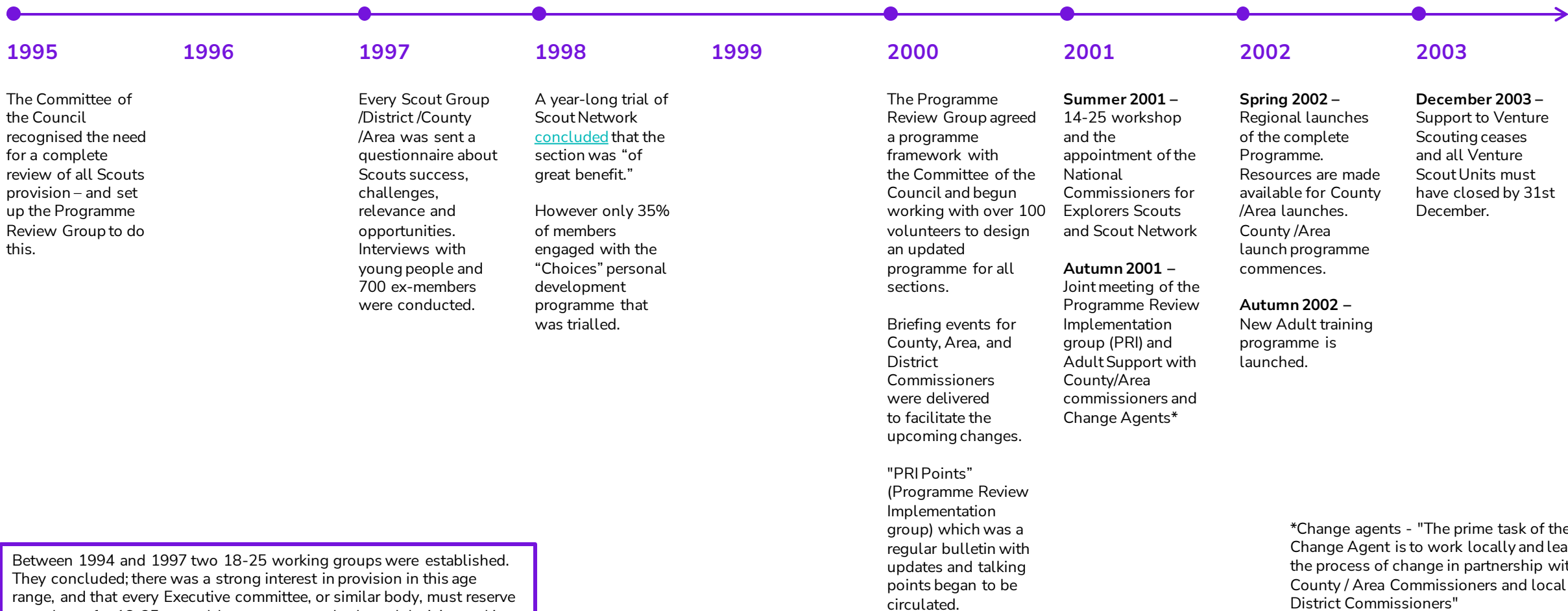


Scout Network specifics

- Was to be run at a County level
- Members would be aged 18–25
- Would follow eight programme zones shared with Explorer Scouts
- To be self-led by Network members
- Members of Network can also be adult volunteers



How Explorers and Network were rolled out



Between 1994 and 1997 two 18-25 working groups were established. They concluded; there was a strong interest in provision in this age range, and that every Executive committee, or similar body, must reserve two places for 18-25 year olds to ensure youth-shaped decision making.

*Change agents - "The prime task of the Change Agent is to work locally and lead the process of change in partnership with County / Area Commissioners and local District Commissioners"

What's happened since the launch of Explorers & Network

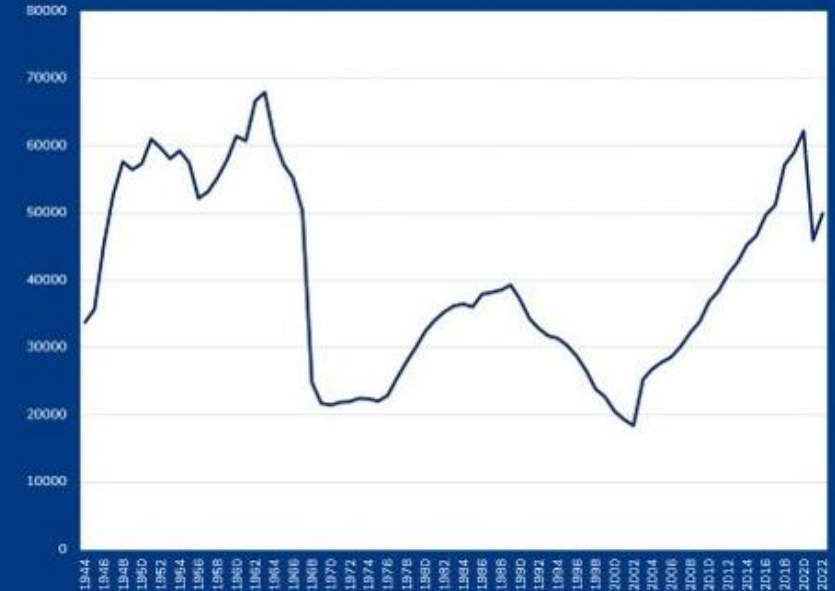
How it was received

The launch of Explorers and Network was carefully managed with lots of communication, workshops, district roadshows and conversations with District leadership teams. The new sections were however still received in a mixed way:

- Many Scout leaders were unhappy with the changes, as they would lose their older, more skilful, Scouts to the Explorer section
- However, some Scout leaders welcomed the change as their section became more manageable and relevant through the reduced age range
- Scout groups didn't want to lose their linked Venture units with the move to County provision

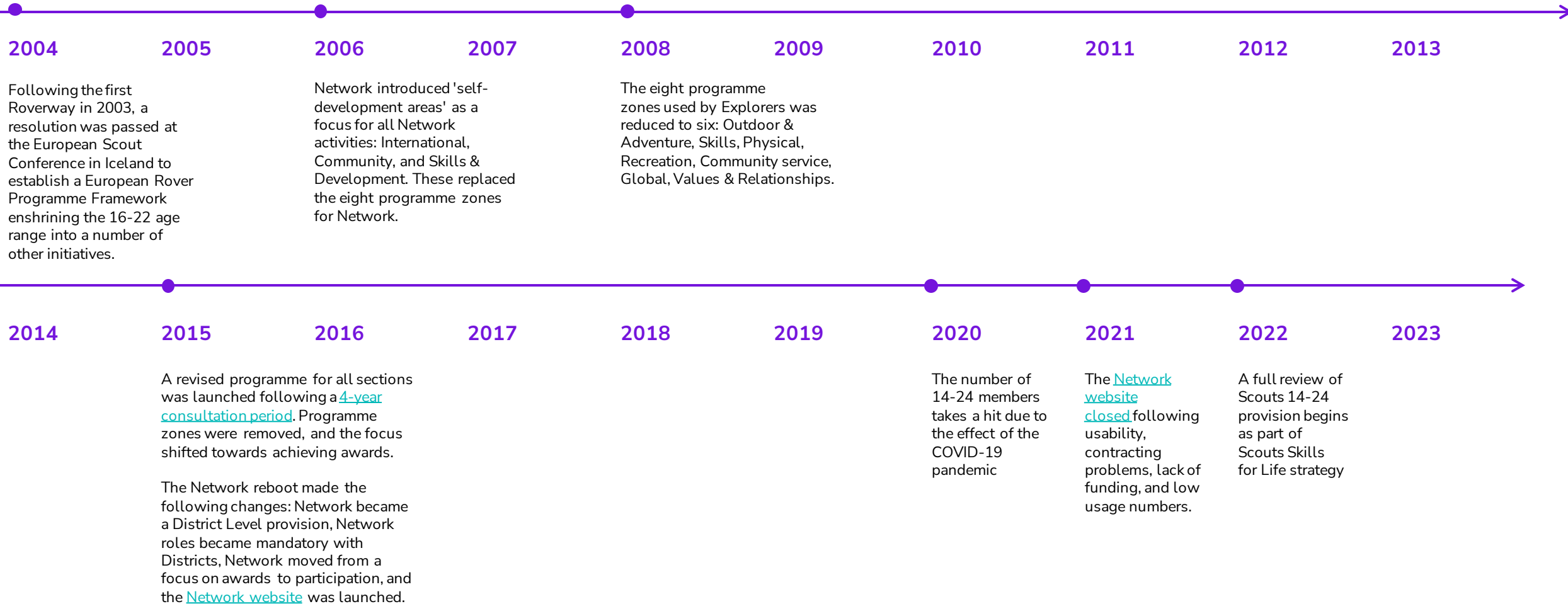
In the longer term however, we can see how the introduction of Explorers and Network had a very positive effect on the number of members aged 14-24.

- **In 2002**, when the new sections launched, there were 18,424 14-24 members:
 - 15,292 Explorers in 1,224 Units
 - 1,474 Network members in 152 Networks
- The number of 14–24-year-olds in Scouts increased sharply year on year from 2002–2020
- **By 2020**, there were 62,463 14-24 members, almost as many as the peak engagement of 67,961 14-24 members in 1963
 - 45,962 Explorers (inc. Young Leaders) in 2,958 Units averaging 16 members (range from 0–173)
 - 16,501 Network members in 564 Networks averaging 29 members (range from 0–171)
- The COVID-19 pandemic saw the 14-25 membership numbers drop to 46,033 in the 2021 census, but they have since begun to recover
- **In 2022**, there was a total of 49,986 14-24 members:
 - 41,199 Explorers (inc. Young Leaders) in 3,036 Units averaging 14 members (range from 0–135)
 - 8,854 Network members in 578 Networks averaging 15 members (range from 0–384)



Graph showing the number of 14-24 members since 1944–2022

What's happened since



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Two distinct sections within the Scout Movement that will work together to support the personal development of the young people who become members”



How this turned out

- Two distinct sections were successfully created, although in many areas there is still a lack of Network provision (Out of 639 Districts, 13.15% don't have a Network. This compares to 4% of Districts without an Explorer Unit*)
- There is a big drop in members between Explorers and Network (41,199 Explorers compared to 8,854 Network members*), this is often pinned down to young people going to university, the provision not being available, or Network being unfamiliar
- Some feel the vision for Network has never been particularly clear
- The two sections don't always work together, especially outside of events. This often relies on local relationships
- Supporting the development of young people is still very much the focus, but the quality and shape of this support varies depending on how it is delivered and run locally
- Beyond these two sections, members can also be part of Student Scout and Guide Organisations (SSAGO), be an adult volunteer (18+), and can take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE). Explorer Scouts could also take part in the Explorer Scouts Young Leader scheme, and this may make up their sole involvement with Scouts at this age. The overlap between these and how they are provided can be confusing.

* [Census 2022-01 UK.xlsx](#)

How did the vision play out?

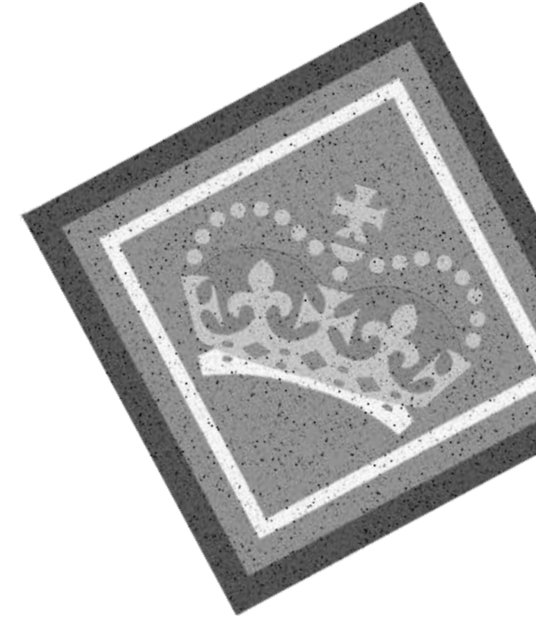
Key element of the original vision

“They will be recognised and valued by the wider society especially education and the workplace”



How this turned out

- Opinions on this appear somewhat mixed. Some believe the provision is valued by the workplace, while others believe wider society doesn't recognise it at all
- It is felt that young people aren't set up to articulate the benefits of their experience and skills effectively
- Relationships and marketing can have an impact on how Scouting is perceived locally
- DofE appears to be more widely recognised. People are less aware of Explorers and Network, and what the top awards signify
- Not enough young people are achieving the top awards
- People recognise Scouts as a brand, and this can sometimes spark personal connections, but there is no added benefit or recognition for 14-24 provision
- “I don't think anyone will have a clue what Network is. Not a chance.”



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Linked to external awards (e.g. DofE) but remain faithful to our values”



How this turned out

- Scouts is one of the [biggest licensed providers](#) of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Helping young people to achieve DofE awards is a big priority in 14-24 provision, although this can vary locally
- The wider programme for Explorers is often shaped by DofE
- Some feel that badge work has less purpose and relevance in Explorers
- Completing DofE can help young people to achieve their top Scout awards, and may also “tick off some badges along the way”
- The external perception of the relationship between Scouts and DofE can sometimes be confusing. TSA Contact Centre has “received queries about DofE even when they’re not associated with Scouts (e.g. doing it through school)”
- “DofE is our focus. It has a better structure and is more widely recognised. This is undeniable.”
- DofE may be difficult to deliver in a group setting as is it mainly an individual award



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Flexible and adaptable to local needs and concerns”



How this turned out

- Generally, both Explorers and Network are successfully adapting to local needs and concerns – although the level of flexibility can vary from section to section
- Roles are adopted differently across areas. For example, we heard of a District Explorer Scout Commissioner role being shared between a number of people
- We also heard about a County which had chosen to combine the Assistant County Commissioner roles for both Explorer and Network support into one – this enables increased relationships between Explorers and Network
- Explorer Units, sitting at a District Level, naturally have more flexibility to younger sections, as they are (sometimes) less affected by group politics
- Each Explorer Unit and Network is entirely individual – “This is key. We must reflect the make-up of the local community and be welcoming to everyone.”

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Open to as many young people as possible – easily accessible”

We will be continuing to understand the barriers to 14-24 provision in the next phase of this research



How this turned out

- Those we spoke to believed that while this **should** be true, it hasn't always been achieved
- A number of barriers were identified that could be making Explorers/Network less accessible to some young people. For example:
 - **Lack of adult volunteers** – Some perceive volunteering at this level to be more challenging than younger sections due to the increased complexity of activities. There are 468 young people on waiting lists* for Explorer Units due to there not being enough volunteer capacity
 - **Cost barriers** – At this level, activities, equipment and trips become more substantial and costly, meanwhile young people become increasingly self-funded, therefore making the provision exclusive only to those who can afford it
 - **DofE is available elsewhere** – A big focus of Explorer and Network provision is DofE, but this can also be completed elsewhere. If, for

example, a young person is completing DofE at school, then they have less reason to come to Explorers

- **Lack of awareness** – Some of those we spoke to believed that more could be done to raise the profile of Explorers and Network amongst young people across Scouting and to non-Scouts
- **Time** – At this age young people have to increasingly prioritise their time for out-of-hours activities as they, for example, complete their exams or pursue careers / specialist interests
- **Alcohol** – At Network, it is common that meetings can take place in social drinking environments which makes the provision less accessible to some
- **Location** – Being run at a District level means provision can often be based far away from a members home or previous Scout group.

How did the vision play out?

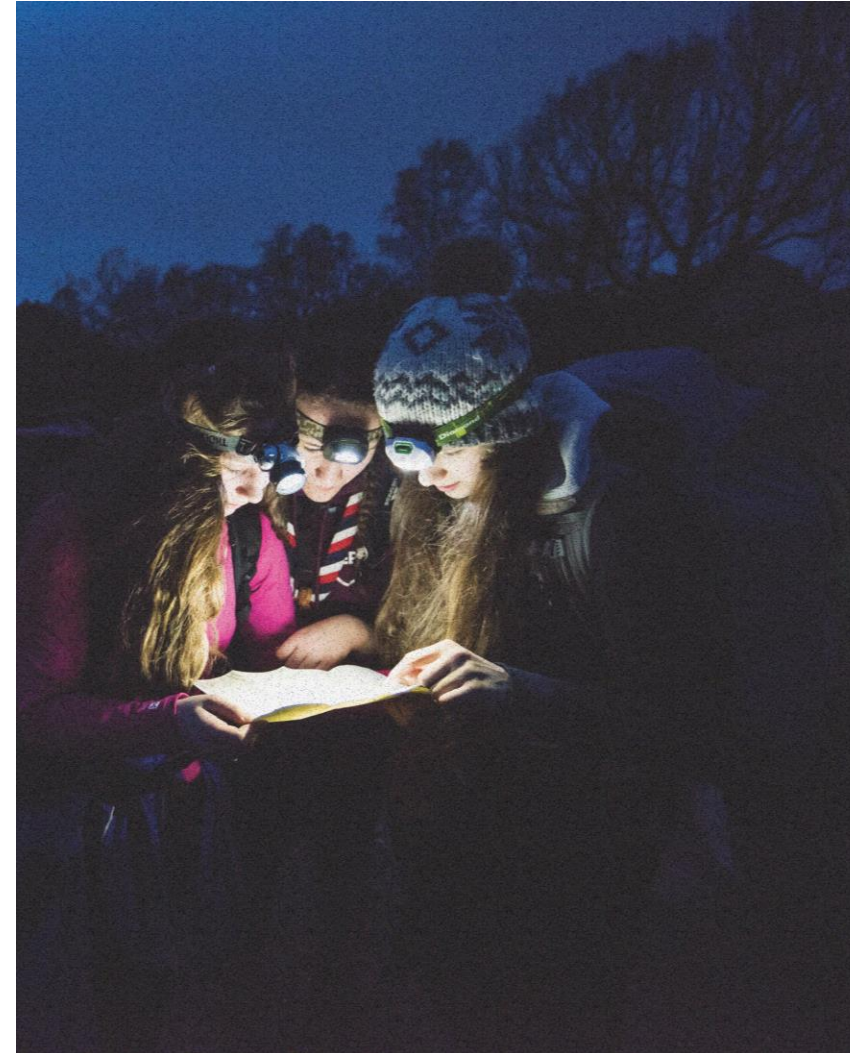
Key element of the original vision

“Explorer Units will primarily be Leader led, with as much participation in decision making by young people as possible”



How this turned out

- Those we spoke to generally agreed that this statement was the sign of a successful Explorer Unit, although reality is fragmented
- They all shared challenges associated with encouraging participation, suggestions or leadership from members – especially those in the younger age ranges
- “It's really hard to collect useful feedback and suggestions from young people - they need a lot of handholding”



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“A young person should be encouraged to move to Explorer Scouts when it is appropriate for them, for instance, moving on with friends of a similar age – a young person may join ES any time between 13½ and 15 years of age”



How this turned out

- We heard that the approach to ‘moving up’ Scouts to Explorers can vary from group to group
- Some are less flexible, with set processes in place
- Others are more flexible, giving young people more agency to decide when they are ready / move at the same time as friends, etc.
- We heard how, at launch, when age ranges were altered, many Scout leaders tried to keep hold of their older Scouts. These older Scouts would often play an unofficial support role to younger Scouts, and some leaders were not happy that to lose this support
- We heard that in some cases, Scouts may prefer the option to stay at their Scout group – especially if the Explorer Unit is viewed as not having a close relationship with the group they are coming from
- Building a relationship between Scout Groups and Explorer Units seems to be key to managing the expectations and worries of young people – helping them to feel more familiar with what they are moving onto. Many Scout groups do not seem to have a ‘familiar’ relationship with Explorer Units
- We heard that “15 is a bit late” and that today Scouts are expected to have progressed to Explorer Scouts by 14½.

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“All Explorer Scouts belong to a Unit, and may belong to more than one Unit.”



How this turned out

- We heard that Explorer members can sometimes belong to more than one unit – although it isn't overly common
- This happens most likely when a member is also a Young Leader, and is part of a YL unit and a regular unit
- We also heard that young people can sometimes be members in more than one district (e.g. if a different district is actually closer to home)
- One interviewee told us that politics between leaders can sometimes prevent this from happening – and confusion around how to count the member in the yearly Scout Census
- “The idea was specialist units – not sure this has happened to any great extent”



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“There may also be Explorer units with links to particular Groups, or units that specialise in specific activity areas such as mountaineering, water sports or campsite service crews.”



How this turned out

- Those we spoke to suggested this statement hadn't commonly translated into reality, with the exception of Sea Scouts
- “Example – Unit in Grimsby that acts as the follow-on from local Sea Scout unit, so consists of almost only Sea Scouts. Only gains members from elsewhere is specifically signposted to the right young people”
- “There's just not enough young people and leaders who can make this work”
- “Not aware of any specialist units - some do have more specialist relationships e.g. one Unit that backs on to a woodland so helps to manage it”
- The example of campsite service crews – Scout Active Support Units (SASUs) (over 18) are better placed to fulfil this role, and sometimes involve local Explorer groups



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Every Unit must enter into a Partnership Agreement with their parent/partner body. This may be a Scout Group, a number of Groups, the District; and activity centre or campsite etc.”



How this turned out

- Those we spoke to were all aware of Partnership Agreements in principle, and acknowledged how they could be important/helpful
- The emphasis/importance placed on Partnership Agreements appears to vary from District to District and group to group
- The need for agreements varies depending on local needs and relationships. E.g. Explorers based in a school vs Explorers based in a space that they own
- Those that have created Partnership Agreements understood why they were useful, but suggested that they aren't often used beyond creation
- The remit/scope of Partnership Agreements seems to be unclear. One person we spoke to suggested that it could be used as “a contractual agreement between Scout group and Explorer Units around transition processes”



Partnership Agreement templates and guidance are available [on the Scouts website](#)

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Every Explorer Scout must have a mentor. The mentor should be a member of the Unit Leadership Team. Alternatively, for Young Leaders, the mentor maybe a Leader in the Section in which they work.”



How this turned out

- Those we spoke to universally agreed that this hadn't translated into reality
- Primarily they felt this was due to there not being enough volunteers to do this
- Some did highlight the role that Young Leaders / younger volunteers can naturally have in becoming mentors to the young people
- “Relationships of this style form more naturally”
- “Its really the responsibility of the entire leadership team to get to know all young people”

"The role of the mentor is to help the Explorer Scout get the most out of their time in Scouting by reviewing their progress, and discussing and agreeing their personal goals. "

[Mentoring in the Explorer Scout Section – Feb 02](#)



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Eight programme zones:
Outdoors, Community
Service, Physical recreation,
Skills International, Values,
Environment, Relationships”



How this turned out

- These programme zones were originally shared between Explorers and Network, but have been reviewed and adjusted numerous times since
- In 2006 they were changed for Network to self development areas: International, Community and Skills & Development
- They were tweaked for Explorers in 2008 to six programme zones: Outdoor and Adventure, Skills, Physical Recreation, Community Service, Global, Values and Relationships. These aligned with Beavers, Cubs and Scouts
- In 2015 the programme was updated again. Explorers changed to 15 challenge areas around three broad themes concurrent with all the younger sections
- Today, in 2023, more emphasis is placed on the Top Awards, with the intention being that focussing on these will work as a proxy to accessing a diverse programme. The Top Awards focus on International, Community and Values
- These original programme zones still felt relevant to some of those we spoke to
- Some Explorer units may create their own “programme zones” to plan with – adapting to local needs and context, and the desires of young people in their unit

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“Certificate of Achievement usually awarded annually or for specific projects Can be included the National Record of Achievement, C.V. or University application”



How this turned out

- Today, Certificate of Achievements do not appear to exist in an official capacity
- National Record of Achievements were a folder given to secondary school pupils in the UK in the 1990s and early 2000s. They were intended as a portfolio of documentation related to a pupil's academic and non-academic achievements, typically including GCSE certificates, certificates from extracurricular activities, school reports and anything else of relevance, presented in an official-looking folder. After not being widely adopted by higher education or employers, these were phased out in the early 2000s
- We heard how some Units produce their own certificates or awards as a way of recognising the contributions of Explorers
- “Never heard of this - we do our own yearly awards e.g. Explorer of the year”



How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“The Scout Network will be run by the members for the members. Networks are encouraged to organise their structure in a way that best suits their local situation.”



How this turned out

- Opinions on the outcome of this part of the vision varied across those we spoke to
- In some cases, being “run by members for the members” appears to be true, with “one or two members responsible for overall planning - with individual sessions delegated between members”
- In other cases, this doesn’t appear to work in practice: “Nope, this hasn’t worked at all – nobody was taking the lead and coordinating this”
- At launch, Network included all members of The Scout Association between the age of 18 and 25. Network formed part of Scout County
- A few years later, Scout Network Leaders were introduced to help administer and guide the Network, and multiple Networks within the same County were allowed to open
- In 2015, responsibility for Scout Network units was handed down to Districts, with one Network per District. County roles would continue to play supporting roles (e.g. Assistant County Commissioners), and the District Scout Network Commissioner role replaced the Network Leader role
- Scout Networks may wish to assign Programme Coordinator roles, although there is no formal appointment process
- [As mentioned earlier](#), both Explorers and Network appear to be successfully adapting to local needs and concerns – although the level of flexibility can vary from section to section (and this often has a direct link with the level of success a section sees)

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“University/College clubs may be a part of the Scout Network provision, as will the Scout Fellowship for 18 - 25-year-olds.”



How this turned out

University / College clubs:

- Over 30 UK Universities have [Student Scout and Guide Organisations](#) (SSAGO)
- Students can join SSAGO as an individual if there isn't one at their University
- SSAGOs focus on the objectives, and methods of Scouts and Girlguiding, but are not affiliated
- We heard how it was envisioned that SSAGOs would become part of Network, but this didn't happen due to fees and membership being tied to university turnover and timelines
- SSAGO and Network overlap does exist. We heard how SSAGOs sometimes join Network events, Networks using University facilities or people being members of both. SSAGO members may also volunteer for Scouts
- We heard how the student population is “more likely to come and go”, which can negatively impact the planning of activities and the experience of local Network members

Scout Fellowship:

- Scout Fellowship was renamed in 2009 to [Scout Active Support](#) after a three year review
- People over the age of 18 can volunteer for a SASU while also being a member of Network
- According to the 2022 Scout Census, there approximately 37 national Scout Active Support Units (SASUs), and 1,659 units at a county, district and group level, with 11,191 members
- Many SASUs provide support and resources available to Section Leaders and local Groups, while a few undertake specific specialised activities in partnership with UK Headquarter teams
- We weren't able to define how many Network members were also SASU volunteers

How did the vision play out?

Key element of the original vision

“The County/Area will arrange a central database to be held of all Network members (and 17+ year old Explorer Scouts) to allow effective communication with all in the Section.”



How this turned out

- This failed to come to fruition in any consistent way due to tech issues
- Some believe this is part of the reason why Network had never fully met it's potential. There was “no way of knowing who/where young people were”
- In 2015, Scouts introduced a UK Network website which allowed members to create profiles, collect digital badges and discover events and opportunities happening at both local and National scales. However, this website was closed down in 2021 due to a lack of usage and funding to continue development
- All Network Members do appear on [Compass](#), a Nationally held database created by The Scouts Association to “keep track of adult Members in Scouting.” Compass cannot be used for communication however, other than gathering email addresses
- Many Districts and Groups do use [Online Scout Manager \(OSM\)](#), an unofficial database/tool

“designed by leaders, for leaders.” However, we heard that “you drop off OSM at the age of 18”, meaning it is not relevant to Network.

- There are other unofficial ways that Networks will communicate with one another, for example via WhatsApp or Facebook groups

Where we are today

How are things looking today?

- In 2022 Explorers and Network members make up nearly **12% of youth members** with 41,199 Explorers and 8,854 Network members
- Our research has shown that **Explorer and Network provision varies greatly** from Unit to Unit, and County to County
- Volunteers we spoke to told us that **where Explorers works, it really works well**. The programme isn't particularly relevant, but the opportunity for provision in this space really is, and our volunteers are making it work
- The Duke of Edinburgh awards hold a lot of social capital, and as such our **volunteers are building their programmes around these awards instead of our own**
- On the other hand, the Volunteers we spoke to told us that **Network really isn't working** (although there are some rare successes). The offering for 14–24-year-olds is much too confusing, compounded by this being the busiest time in their lives so far
- There is confusion about the aim of Network (a social club vs a deployable force of leaders) and **outside of strong existing friendship groups, it isn't easy to build and sustain** strong Scout Networks. Marketing around Network isn't clear and still contains some [outdated messaging](#) (e.g. about the UK Network site)

In 2022, Top Award achievements are low. Of those eligible...

- 5% achieved the Chief Scout Platinum Award
- 7% achieved the DofE Bronze Award
- 2% achieved the Chief Scout Diamond Award
- 3% achieved the DofE Silver Award
- 1% achieved the Queen Scout Award
- 2% achieved the DofE Gold Award
- <1% achieved the Explorer Belt
- 10% achieved the Young Leader belt
- <1% achieved the Scouts of the World Award*



(The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the number of Explorer Belts being achieved. For example, 362 (2%) were achieved in 2019-2020 compared to only 46 (<1%) in 2020-2021. Other awards were not affected so significantly.)

In the Skills for Life strategy, it states “By 2025, 10% of young people 14+ will be achieving Top Awards”

Top five Explorer badges sold (2015–2021)

- Chef activity badge – 13,601
- International activity badge – 9,721
- Survival Skills activity badge – 8,186
- Camper activity badge – 7,287
- Pioneer activity badge – 7,136



What Explorers looks like today

It's almost impossible to summarise exactly what Explorer and Network provision looks like, as it varies from place to place.

We'll be continuing to explore the 'current landscape' of 14-24 provision throughout the next part of our Discovery research, understanding the challenges and opportunities.

In our research **so far**, we've come across several examples of different and interesting Explorer provision around the country, including:

- DESC roles filled by two or three people to share out and manage the workload
- Explorer Units with strong links to 'feeder' Scout groups helping to maintain the numbers
- Units that focus solely on DofE over Scouts top awards as they're seen as more valuable.
- Units that meet at the same time and place every week, with quite rigid movement of timelines
- Units that meet in a different place every week to even out travel times for their members across the district
- Specialist Units that are fed from Sea Scout troops so have a focus on nautical activities
- Explorers who attend multiple Units in different Counties as they live near the County border
- Explorer Units that use Patrols and Patrols leaders to foster and build peer leadership skills
- Explorer Units so large that they've split across multiple weeknights.

What makes a successful Explorer Unit?

- Explorer Commissioners being in place – sometimes with responsibilities split between people
- Enough adult leaders with the skills and motivation to deliver fun and relevant activities that may take more time and money
- Strong links to Scout groups and a clear transition process
- A programme built around achieving DofE over Scouts top awards is seen as more valuable.

What could cause an Explorer Unit to struggle?

- A lack of an effective District Explorer Scout Commissioner (DESC) driving strong communication between different Explorer Units and Scout groups in the District
- Competition from local schools providing Duke of Edinburgh awards and other time commitments
- An unexciting programme that doesn't offer skills to support further education and employment.

What Network looks like today

In our research so far, we've come across several examples of different and interesting Network provision around the country, including:

- Networks only meeting outside term time as that's when their members are back at home (or even back on the same island)
- Peer leaders that have emerged and take on a leadership role in the planning and delivery of Network activities
- Network members that take it in turns to plan, organise, and deliver one session each in a rota
- Networks that meet in different places each time to share out the travel responsibilities
- Networks with strong links to SSAGO's and that meet on University premises
- Networks that are purely social spaces and aren't working towards any top awards.

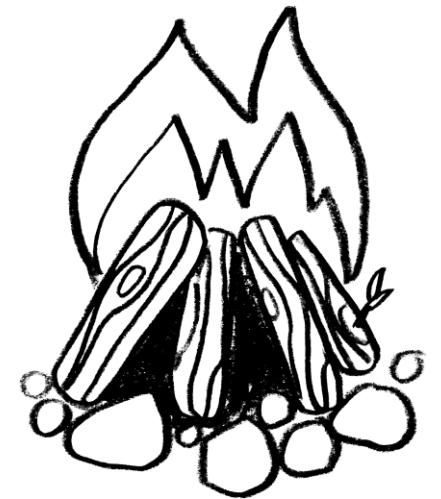
What makes a successful Network?

- Network commissioners being in place – sometimes with responsibilities split between people
- A focus on social activities for like-minded individuals
- Strong existing relationships between members built through previous sections
- Someone to take on a 'peer leadership' role and lead the organisation of people and activities
- A 'critical mass' of members to effectively share tasks and maintain momentum.

What could cause a Network to struggle?

- A lack of clarity in the District as to the real purpose of Network
- Poor links between Explorer Units and Networks to advertise and create a smooth transition into Network
- Inadequate support and guidance from the District and Scouts around self-management
- The sheer number of other options and commitments at this age, both within Scouts and externally

We'll be continuing to explore the 'current landscape' of 14-24 provision throughout the next part of our Discovery research, understanding the challenges and opportunities.



What's next

What we'll be doing next

Over the coming months we'll be continuing to understand:

- **Where we are now:** The current landscape of 14-24 provision – what the challenges and opportunities are in more detail
- **What others are doing:** What other National Scouting Organisations and Youth Organisations are doing and thinking about for this age range
- **What the future looks like:** What generational trends and research suggests young people might want, need and care about in the future
- **How people see us:** Perceptions of non-Scouts and what the barriers to entry are.

The research will lead to:

- Another moment (like this one) to tell members what we've learned and check if we're in the right place
- Translating all the insights we gather into a vision for what the provision should aim to achieve in the future
- Another moment (like this one) to tell members what we think we've concluded and if we're in the right place
- Agreement by our Trustee Board of the above, allowing us to co-design pilots from SEP-23 to AUG-24

Who we'll be working with

We're growing a committed team of staff and volunteers, and we'll be engaging with the Movement as a whole in numerous ways:

- **Programme Board:** Who'll give guidance to the project, ensuring young people and volunteers feel consulted at every step of the journey. Half are under 24 and represent communities we seek to serve
- **Youth Panel:** A pool of 14-24 year olds who are going to seek out exciting and impactful ways to support older young people – in Scouting and the wider youth sector, at home and abroad. They'll spot what could work for the future, and what they would rather see left in the past
- **Working with WOSM:** Who'll help us to understand what other Scouting organisations around the world are prioritizing and doing
- **Community of Interest:** Who'll be kept up to date and will have plenty of opportunities to get involved and have their say
- **Non-Scouts:** Engaging with other Youth organisations and young people to understand their priorities, desires and perceptions of Scouts
- **Collaborating with Scout Groups and Districts:** Who'll get involved through events, by engaging with our Youth Panel members or by helping us to conduct research through tools we provide
- **Other Scout teams and projects:** Who'll help us to understand research that has already taken place, and what other changes we'll need to consider in our vision for the future

Thanks!