

## The Scout Association

### Report of the Under 6's Working Group

#### 1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 At the request of the UK Chief Commissioner, a small working group was established in June 2009 to investigate the provision in uniformed Youth Organisations for children in the under 6 years age group.

1.2 The membership of the working group was:

Graham Haddock (Chair)	Depute Chief Commissioner (Scotland) & UK Trustee
Helen Woolsey	Regional Training Advisor, Jersey
Alison Chapman	AAC (Beavers), Wales
David Poppleton (Staff support)	Head of Regional Development Service

1.3 The remit of the group was agreed with the UKCC

a) To explore the issues surrounding the current informal provision of Scouting for 4 and 5 year olds currently existing only in Northern Ireland, but more specifically:

- To research the current provision in Northern Ireland
- To explore the legal implications in all parts of the UK of such a provision
- To seek parallels with the introduction of Beaver Scout Section in the past and learn lessons where possible
- To investigate the provision for this age group in:
  - Girlguiding UK
  - Boys Brigade
  - Girls Brigade
  - Other uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations in the UK and in other countries
- To explore the implications of such a development on resources within TSA in terms of:
  - Adult leadership
  - Meeting venues and related safety and other issues
- To consider what a suitable programme for this age group might look like and how such a programme would be developed
- To determine the skills needed for adult leaders to work with this age range
- To determine whether WOSM has any policy, standards or guidelines for such a new provision

b) To determine whether TSA should formalise provision for 4 and 5 year olds.

1.4 The final report was to be completed and presented to the UKCC by May 2010.

## **2.0 Methods of operation**

2.1 The working group met together twice (June and November 2009) and held two telephone conference calls (August 2009 and January 2010) to progress work.

2.2 Individual members of the working group were tasked with undertaking research on a number of different topics e.g. investigating under 6's provision in other uniformed Youth Organisations.

2.3 Members of the working group undertook site visits to a total of nine under 6's Units (Squirrel Dreys) in Northern Ireland. In addition, informal meetings were held with various members of the Northern Ireland Scout Council. One member of the working group attended a one day workshop of a group of Squirrel Leaders in Northern Ireland to look at programme development for the Squirrel Section in Northern Ireland.

## **3.0 Under 6's provisions in other Youth Organisations**

We investigated the provision for the under 6 age group in other uniformed and non-uniformed youth organizations in the UK. This included Girlguiding UK, Boys brigade, Girls Brigade and St. John Ambulance.

### **3.1 Girlguiding UK**

3.1.1 The Rainbow Guides were first formed in 1987 and are the newest and youngest section of the Guiding family.

3.1.2 Any girl aged five to seven can be a Rainbow.

3.1.3 In Northern Ireland only, a girl may become a Rainbow at any time after her fourth birthday. Some girls do stay in Rainbows for a little longer though. They meet in units of between five and 18 girls and the units are usually given names like Robins or Bunnies. The ratio of Rainbows to leaders is 5 Rainbows to 1 leader but there must always be 2 leaders in attendance

3.1.4 The Rainbow programme is called Rainbow Jigsaw. The Rainbow Jigsaw is bright and modern, with a framework that encourages each girl to realise her full potential and to progress through Rainbows by taking part in a variety of fun, interesting and challenging activities, and covers the following 4 areas:-

- Rainbows Look; Helps the girls to take a look at the wider world about them.
- Rainbows Learn; Encourages learning through fun activities.

- Rainbows Laugh; Teaches the girls, games, songs and how to enjoy parties and celebrations.
- Rainbows Love; Gives Rainbows a better understanding of love and helping others, promotes in particular understanding of the Promise.

3.1.5 The Promise is simple: *I promise that I will do my best, to love my God and to be kind and helpful.*

3.1.6 Rainbows usually meet once a week and take part in many activities that help build self-confidence and team spirit, like singing, dancing and playing games. Crafts are also encouraged. Visitors are invited to speak to the girls, so for example, they also have regular outings. Depending on local availability, they might visit a farm, a museum or the theatre. There are also meet-ups with other Rainbows, Brownies and Guides for special events like Thinking Day or Remembrance Sunday. And they can also take part in a sleepover, where they will be away from home for one night, with other Rainbows

3.1.7 Rainbows have only a few badges; their promise badge (a pale blue trefoil) is worn on the right side of their chest. If the unit has a name tag this is worn on the right shoulder and any challenge badges the girls have, are either worn on the pocket of the girls tabard or at the bottom of their Rainbow tops

3.1.8 Having spoken to numerous Rainbow guide leaders for many different regions over the summer, most meetings last for about 1 hour and are generally of a similar format. They all say that the hour passes very quickly, and any activity undertaken normally needs a lot of preparation.

## **3.2. Boys Brigade**

3.2.1 The Boys' Brigade has been around for 125 years and in 2008 they celebrated their 125th Anniversary. Their Founder Sir William Alexander Smith, included in their Object "The Promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness" and that has not been changed.

3.2.2 What has changed is how they go about promoting that object. They recognise that the influences surrounding young people are not always helpful and that too many lose control at great cost to themselves, their families and the community. The answer is to catch the energy and enthusiasm of youth and to channel it purposefully.

3.2.3 The Boys' Brigade works with thousands of young people, many of whom have no other connection with the Church. Today they work with over 60,000 children & young people in over 1500 companies (groups) in the UK & Republic of Ireland every week.

3.2.4 We have obtained recent census data for BB HQ in an attempt to inform about the proportion of BB members that exist in NI compared to the rest of the UK.

3.2.5 There are 1509 BB Groups in the UK & ROI with a total membership of children and young People of 54,446 and total leaders of 12205.

3.2.6 The relative proportion of youth members and adult leaders in the different countries is as follows:

	England & Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Eire
Total Groups	730	446	300	33
5-8 years	4940	5587	6165	312
8-11 years	6473	6321	4661	379
11-15 years	5308	4856	3753	172
15-18 years	1824	1430	1522	13
Total Youth members	19275	18194	16101	876
Total Adult leaders	5839	3565	2588	213

3.2.7 From the table above it is clear that in absolute terms the BB membership in NI in the 5-8 age group is far greater than in England & Wales or Scotland. In proportion to the population of each country, this difference is extremely significant and goes a considerable way to explaining why an under 6's provision has been established in NI for many years.

3.2.8 Anchor Boys is the youngest section in the BB and is for children aged between 5 and 8. Anchor Boys have lots of fun doing different activities which include making things, crafts, music, games, sports, stories going on visits, making friends, and working towards their badges.

3.2.9 All of this is done as part of a balanced programme that is separated into 5 different zones . . .

- Body - fit for fun
- Mind - think and do
- Spirit - God and me
- Community - me and my world
- Creativity - make and do

3.2.10 Everything an Anchor Boy does helps them to develop and to think for themselves, in a safe environment.

3.2.11 Anchor Boys have a special uniform that they can wear. As everyone wears the same thing they feel as though they belong. However nobody is excluded because they do not have the right clothes.

3.2.12 The weekly section meeting would usually run for 1-1½ hours and be finished by 7.30pm.

3.2.13 Children of this age are developing rapidly. There are big changes in a child's mental, emotional, social and physical development. However, all children are different and have a variety of needs. The relationships formed with children at this age can be important in assisting them to achieve a sound sense of personal and group identity. The programme will provide a wide variety of different activities including:

- Learning new skills: the dexterity required for arts and crafts, following simple instructions for games and activities
- Developing confidence: given opportunities to do things for themselves, praise for good behaviour, taking part in simple role-play, mime and drama
- Developing physical skills: co-ordination games, hopping, skipping and balancing games
- Developing independence: being given simple choices of activities, short trips and visits
- Developing a group identity: belonging to a group, going on trips as a group, taking part in group activities
- Developing an awareness of the needs of others: learning to share and co-operate
- Developing a personal identity: learning about how we are all different, looking at the different needs and interest of others

3.2.14 We obtained a copy of the Brigade Regulations that relate to age ranges and rules. The following is an extract from Section 5: Age Regulations:

- The Boys Brigade regulations recommend that the Brigade operates on the basis of school years rather than ages. The Brigade session coincides with the school year relevant to the area that the Section meets. This has an impact on the age ranges which apply to youth membership.
- The following general rules apply:

Section	Age limits
Anchor Boys	Minimum age 5 years (entry at 4 years is subject to clause 5 – see below)
Seniors	Maximum age – end of the session when they attain their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday
Staff Sergeants	Men or women age 17 or over may serve until the end of the session when they attain their 19 <sup>th</sup> birthday

- The age of members within the Anchor Boys differs in different parts of the country as recorded in the following matrix:

England	Scotland	NI	Wales	Republic of Ireland
Reception*		Primary 1*	Reception*	Junior infant*
Year 1	Primary 1*	Primary 2	Year 1	Senior infant
Year 2	Primary 2	Primary 3	Year 2	1 <sup>st</sup> class
Year 3	Primary 3	Primary 4	Year 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> class

Entry years marked \* are subject to clause 5.

#### Clause 5

5.1 A boy will be eligible for membership before his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday if:

5.1.1 The boy has commenced statutory education

5.1.2 *The Company has gained prior permission from HQ or the appropriate Region for its Company to work with this age group*

5.1.3 *A minimum of two nominated leaders have undertaken the necessary training linked to play work standards*

5.1.4 *Separate provision is made for elements of the programme including games and crafts*

5.2 *Companies wishing to apply for permission to work with 4 year olds should take the following steps:*

5.2.1 *Companies will first need to discuss the implications of working with 4 year olds within their staff team and gain agreement for the change. Discussion should involve issues in connection with premises, staffing, skills, resources, programme.*

5.2.2 *When the Company has agreed, the Captain should then get permission from the Church.*

5.2.3 *The Captain should identify the registered officers who will have primary responsibility for this age group and arrange attendance on the BB training course 'Working with 4 year olds'. All officers completing this training will be issued with a certificate of attendance, and details added to their officer records on the HQ database.*

3.2.15 Of interest to us are:

- Differences in the age that youngsters can join the Anchor Boys in different parts of the UK. The lower age range rules in NI may explain the development of a provision for under 6's in this part of the UK.
- The need for members of the Anchor Boys of whatever age to be in statutory education.
- The content of the BB training course 'Working with 4 years olds' which we have not been able to obtain.

### **3.3. Girls Brigade**

3.3.1 This is a Christian based organisation for Girls and young women with associated provision in Scotland and Northern Ireland

3.3.2 It has a small HQ staff. Its volunteer structure in 10 English/Welsh Regions is as a predominantly Christian Church-based adult-led youth provision for girls and young women aged 4 – 18 with recent informal/flexible 'network' provision for 13 to 30 yrs.

3.3.3 Local organisations are supported by Church council structure and are membership fee based.

3.3.4 In England there are 99 Districts, comprising approximately 500 Companies with c 21,000 members (3,000 adult volunteers)

3.3.5 Its operating principals involve

- Structured training provision for adults and young leaders
- Programme provision for youth (4 age groupings)

Explorers	4 – 8
Juniors	7 – 11
Seniors	10 – 14
Brigaders	13 – 18

- It has a structured youth programme based around SPEC – Spiritual, Physical, Educational, Service
- Recent provision with flexible programme/activity approach “New Generation” network for ages 13 – 30

3.3.6 It has a structured adult training system based on a modular training scheme, relevant to adult position held

- Different modules for: Auxilliary, Lieutenants or Captains
- Young Leader Programme, three levels: Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced

3.3.7 Its programme is based and focused on: Discovering Jesus; Christian Faith; Leadership and Christian Discipleship

- 4 to 8 - crafts, games, stories, Jesus
- 7 to 11 - crafts, games, stories, Jesus, making friends, learning facts and Charity fundraising
- 10 to 14 - spiritual things, physical things, service
- 13 to 18 - Queens Award, D of E, Young Leader Training

3.3.8 The associated provision in Northern Ireland (GB-NI) is different in a number of ways.

3.3.9 Its membership larger than England and Wales comprising over 23,000 members in over 300 Companies

3.3.10 Its age ranges are lower:

- Explorers 3 – 8
- Juniors 8 – 10
- Seniors 11 – 13
- Brigaders 14 – 18

### **3.4. St John’s Ambulance**

3.4.1 St John’s Ambulance in England (and the Islands) is a voluntary charitable first aid training organisation and first aid provider.

3.4.2 It also provides for the development of young people, both through a youth programme and through first aid training in schools.

3.4.3 Membership is open to all and members do not have to be a member of the Order of St John.

3.4.4 Membership numbers in 2008 - 41,000 of which 18,000 under 18. 60% of members are under 25. Youth Sections are Badgers ages 5 – 9 year olds, Cadets 10 – 18 year olds, Links 18+ (for University Students)

- 3.4.5 Badgers were founded in 1987 replacing the 'Junior Section'. Following consultations new programme launched in 2004 when membership age was officially lowered from 6 to 5.
- 3.4.6 There are 585 Badger units nationally, meeting weekly in 'Badger Setts'. They wear a uniform and have a mascot 'Bertie Badger'.
- 3.4.7 Badger Setts are not attached to St John Ambulance Divisions, not rank structured and are 'Self Monitoring'. For insurance purposes they are registered directly with SJA HQ and members pay a membership fee.
- 3.4.8 Their programme is:
- Joining - Welcome Paw Award. Learn about the functioning of the Sett and welcome ceremony.
  - 15 Badger subjects, all with equal attainment standards. Subjects cover Fitness, Outdoor adventure, First Aid, Caring, Communication, Creativity, Ecology, Entertainment, Internationalism, Health, Cooking, Community, Safety, SJA family and Wildlife. The Badger Leader selects 3 or 4 subjects that Badgers need to complete and everyone has the opportunity to vote for the subject they wish to undertake.
  - Paw Awards - awarded after every three subjects completed. i.e. 3 – Bronze Paw Award, 6 – Silver Paw Award, 9 – Gold Paw Award and 12 – Super Badger Award.
  - At age 9 - Follow-me Badger scheme, taking on a responsibility to help run the Sett. Before moving to Cadets a young person plans and takes part in a Moving-on Ceremony.
- 3.4.9 A typical evening meeting for Badgers lasts 1.5 hours. Approximately 45 minutes are spent in groups undertaking subject work led by Badger helpers (age 12 – 16) and adult unit leaders. The remainder of the time is spent undertaking games, group activities, notices etc.
- 3.4.10 St John Ambulance in Northern Ireland is independent from SJA in England however it appears to take its lead from them. No independent web sites for SJA in NI can be found but from the English web site the youth provision appears to operate under the same principals as in England. There are 10 Badger Setts in NI.

### **3.5 Urdd**

- 3.5.1 The Urdd is an exciting, dynamic movement for children and young people. It organises a range of different activities across Wales. They have 16 development officers who work all over Wales to ensure that the Urdd offers a full programme of activities for children and young people.
- The Urdd was established in 1922 to give children and young people the chance to learn and socialise through the medium of Welsh.
  - It gives the young people of Wales the chance to live vibrant lives through the medium of Welsh, learning at the same time to respect each other and people around the world.



- The Urdd welcomes Welsh speakers and Welsh learners.

3.5.2 The official age range is 8-25 although a lot of younger people are involved it is unofficially.

### **3.6 Scouting Ireland**

3.6.1 Scouting Ireland is the National Scout Association for Ireland and a member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement.

3.6.2 Scouting Ireland was formed on 1st January 2004 from the two original Scout Associations in Ireland, Scouting Ireland (SAI) and Catholic Scout of Ireland (CSI). Both Associations voted to join together to form a new single association in 2003, following a decision to set this process in motion in 1998.

3.6.3 Scouting Ireland has over 40,000 members across Ireland, including Northern Ireland where Scouting Ireland works in partnership with the Northern Ireland Scout Council, a part of the United Kingdom Scout Association.

3.6.4 Scouting Ireland has no provision for under 6's. The Beaver Scout Section is the most junior section of Scouting Ireland and is for boys and girls aged six to eight years of age.

### **3.7 Scouts Canada**

3.7.1 Information about Scouts Canada has been included in this report because it operates its Beaver Scout Section from 5 to 7 years (up to the 8<sup>th</sup> birthday) and was thought to offer a useful marker for our own investigation to provision for under 6's.

3.7.2 The Scout Canada Beaver programme emphasizes having fun while encouraging children to feel good about themselves, their friends and family, God, and nature. Beavers helps children learn basic social skills and gain self confidence. The Beaver program promotes activities that encourage children to:

- find examples of their own spiritual beliefs
- experience and express love and joy
- be healthy and have good feelings about themselves
- develop a sense of belonging and sharing in small group activities
- develop a sense of cooperation through non-competitive activities

3.7.3 The Beaver program is built around a lively variety of games, crafts, music, storytelling, playacting, spiritual fellowship and the outdoors. Beaver activities stress cooperation and teamwork, and can involve the whole family.

3.7.4 The outdoors is an essential part of the Beaver program. Weekend events, picnics, short nature hikes and family based camping opportunities round out the Beaver experience.

3.7.5 Beavers meet in a group called a colony. The colony is split into smaller groups called lodges. There is one leader for every five Beavers. Each Beaver learns a promise, law and motto to help guide their personal development.

3.7.6 Beaver Promise:  
I promise to love God and help take care of the world.

Beaver Law:  
A Beaver has fun, works hard and helps family and friends.

Beaver Motto:  
Sharing, Sharing, Sharing

3.7.7 Although the advertised age range is 5 to 7 in fact Beavers do not go up into Cubs until they are 7 ½ / 8 so in fact they are in Beavers for 3 years!

3.7.8 Attached is a link for a Beaver parents guide  
<http://www.scouts.ca/media/documents/BeaverParentGuide05.pdf>

## **4.0 Squirrels**

### **4.1. Background information**

4.1.1 The earliest known date that provision for under 6's was established in Northern Ireland (NI) in 1974. It would seem that there were a number of drivers to this development:

- Parents were requesting provision of activities for younger brothers of Beaver Scouts
- Beaver leaders were running activities for the younger brothers of Beaver Scouts during Beaver meetings.
- Competition with the Boy's Brigade. The fact that youngsters could join the Anchor Boys as young as four years in some places was seen as serious competition for recruitment into Beaver Scouts.

4.1.2 In 1992, a pre-Beaver Steering Group met for the first time. It is not clear who the main players were in getting this new Section off the ground were, and whether any members of The Scout Association were involved. At this time it was known that there were 22 pre-Beaver groups in NI. All but two of these groups used 'Squirrels' as the name for their Section.

4.1.3 At this time a committee of like minded individuals was established to investigate whether there was any mileage in formalising the Section. A pre-Beaver seminar was arranged and held in May 1992. The age range of 4 – 6 years was agreed and a conference organised for October of the same year. At this conference a constitution was agreed and a management committee established to run the Section.

- 4.1.4 The Section was run by Northern Ireland Squirrel Management Committee from 1992. Members of the Management Committee were appointed at the AGM each year and included Squirrel Leaders from across the Province.
- 4.1.5 The aim of the Squirrel Association was stated 'to promote the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities, and to encourage them to become members of the Scout Association when they reach the appropriate age'.
- 4.1.6 Members would be between their 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> birthday. Squirrels would meet in 'Dreys', which could be single sex or mixed. They would be led by adult leaders between the ages of 18 and 65.
- 4.1.7 The maximum number of members in any Drey was 24 and there was to be an adult-to-child ration of 1:8 indoors and 1:6 outdoors.
- 4.1.8 Insurance was the responsibility of the leader of the Drey and was made available through the Squirrel Management Committee.
- 4.1.9 The programme was stated to be appropriate for the age of the members, but a clear instruction was issued to avoid using any material used by Beaver Scouts.
- 4.1.10 The uniform was navy sweat shirt, grey shorts/knee socks or navy jogging trousers and a scarf. Squirrels were not allowed to use the same scarf as members of the Scout Group.
- 4.1.11 Squirrels were not allowed to wear any Scout badges. On joining, members were entitled to wear a membership badge which comprised a grey squirrel on a red background. After membership and attendance at the Drey for nine months, Squirrels were allowed to wear a badge comprising a white acorn on a grey background. After 18 months in the Section a badge comprising a white acorn on a red background could be worn.
- 4.1.12 The Squirrel promise was: 'I promise to be a good Squirrel and to love God'.
- 4.1.13 The Squirrel prayer was: 'We place our hands together, and close our eyes up tight. And ask you, dear Lord Jesus, to help us do things right.'
- 4.1.14 The Squirrel sign was a raised and bent index finger of the right hand and was made while saying the Promise.
- 4.1.15 The Leader of the Drey was known as Red Squirrel. The Assistant Leader was known as Grey Squirrel and any other leaders were known as Brown Squirrel.
- 4.1.16 Other useful information about the early Northern Ireland Squirrel Association is contained in appendix 1.

## **4.2 Factfinding**

- 4.2.1 Members of the working group met with personnel from the Northern Ireland Scout Council (NISC) on two separate occasions. Useful supplementary information was obtained on both occasions, much of which was confirmed during visits to Dreys in NI.
- 4.2.2 Squirrels have been underway in NI since mid 70's. They were started for two main reasons:
- Beaver Leaders were struggling to run Beavers when they had younger boys to look after. One solution was to start another Section for under 6's. They were initially called 'Little Brothers' or 'Grey Brothers' in some places.
  - Competition from Boys Brigade – they took youngsters in from aged 4/5 and these young people were then lost to Scouting.
- 4.2.3 Squirrels started in North Down and Lisburn, which still have to largest number of Dreys in NI (30%).
- 4.2.4 The NISC considered reducing the age range of Beavers to 5 rather than start another Section, but Beaver Scouts had just become formalised UK-wide and they were reluctant to make changes in NI so soon after the Beavers were launched.
- 4.2.5 25% of Squirrel leaders hold other appointments in Scouting.
- 4.2.6 There are currently 60 Dreys in NI with 882 Squirrels and 120 Leaders.
- 4.2.7 There is no evidence that having an under 6's Section has had an adverse effect on older Sections in Scouting. Almost all Queen Scout and Chief Scout Award recipients in NI have been Beavers.
- 4.2.8 There are plans to develop specific Adult Training modules for leaders working with under 6's.
- 4.2.9 There are no plans to develop badges for Squirrels at present. NISC would like to keep the Section simple as it is at the present.
- 4.2.10 Despite repeated attempts, the Working Group has been unable to speak to members of the original grouping that established the Squirrel Association of NI.

## **4.3 Visits to Dreys**

- 4.3.1 Members of the Working Group have visited 9 Dreys at their weekly meeting place during the months of October and November 2009. The Working group are extremely grateful for the assistance of Mr Ken Gillespie in the NISC Office for arranging these visits.

4.3.2 The following Dreys were visited:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Kilbride
- 9<sup>th</sup> East Belfast
- 4<sup>th</sup> Portadown
- 21<sup>st</sup> Belfast
- 109<sup>th</sup> Belfast
- 1<sup>st</sup> Dromore
- 9<sup>th</sup> Bangor
- 6<sup>th</sup> Newtownards
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Holywood

4.3.3 All visits were well organised and each Drey leader was aware that we were visiting. All leaders were very keen to answer questions about their Squirrel Drey and were clearly proud of what they were doing at their Drey.

4.3.4 The Dreys visited had been in operation from between 5 and 21 years. Most had between 14 and 24 members and were run by female leaders. Some of the Dreys have a waiting list to join.

4.3.5 Five Dreys visited had male members only; the others had male and female members. Many Squirrels were also members of the Anchor Boys (BB) which met on another night.

4.3.6 All but one of the Dreys visited met in a church hall and many met on the same night as Beaver Scouts or another Section in the Scout Group.

4.3.7 All meetings last for about one hour in the early evening and followed a similar format: opening promise and prayer, game(s), craft, simple cooking or other activity, story or song, closing promise and prayer.

4.3.8 Most Dreys would go on an annual outing and some held some of their programme outdoors when possible (although they were in the minority)

4.3.9 Some Dreys seem well supported by leaders while others struggled. Half the Dreys had Explorer Scout or other Young Leaders helping out. Many leaders seem to have been parents of members at some time in the past. Many of the Dreys had leaders that held other adult appointments in TSA.

4.3.10 All Dreys reported an almost 100% transfer rate to Beaver Scouts. In most Groups, Squirrels would take precedence in being able to join the Beaver Scout Section over non-Squirrels.

4.3.11 Many Dreys reported strong support from the local church (often where they met) and from the local Scout Group and Group Scout Leader.

4.3.12 Until affiliation, none of the Squirrel leaders had undergone any training other than First Response or similar First Aid course and Safeguarding Training.

4.3.13 Squirrels were charged a variable sum to be members: between £20 and £60 per year or up to £2 per week.

4.3.14 Some Squirrel leaders welcomed the formal affiliation to NISC, in particular leader training, participating in Scout Group events, programme development and joint 'District' activities. However, some questioned the need or added value that such affiliation would bring in particular raising concerns about the additional costs.

#### **4.4 Visit to Squirrel Programme Planning workshop**

4.4.1 One member of the Working Group (HW) had the opportunity to visit a Programme Planning Workshop for Squirrels on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.

4.4.2 The day was led by the NI Commissioner for Beaver Scouts and attended by 20 female Squirrel leaders. The purpose of the day was to gather Squirrel programmes to make up an online resource for leaders to access. This day was the first of 3 planned days being held at different locations in the Province and it is hoped to have approximately 2 years worth of programmes at the end of these sessions. The NI Commissioner for Beaver Scouts is collating and producing the resources with a small team. She had previously produced a similar resource for the Beaver Leaders and found that to avoid duplication and provide continuity it is easier for one person to undertake the task.

4.4.3 In a plenary session the participants developed 4 mind maps with activity and theme ideas based on each season. They then looked at the structure of a typical programme. A typical format would be opening ceremony, play games, storytime, activity, quiet game and close.

4.4.4 The participants then split into 5 groups based at tables, one for each season and a table called fun. They were then asked to share ideas on the theme and write down these ideas including instructions which were then placed in a box on the table. With a break for lunch this was the format for the day and leaders moved around the tables at their own free will.

4.4.5 As a predominant part of the programme there were lots of craft ideas shared. Sources of information came from the internet and books. Equipment is sourced from cheap craft shops and special offers at supermarkets but mostly from recycled bits and pieces.

4.4.6 Simple games were adapted to fit with the programme themes. Ideas for putting over the promise were varied and included challenges to be undertaken at home (similar to the Cub Scout Good Turn diary).

4.4.7 Outdoor activities varied from just doing things in the church garden to planned visits further a field i.e. fire station. Quite a few were going to participate in the Christmas event at Crawfordsburn. Visitors include dentists and police. Leaders would ask parents for their skills.

4.4.8 The opportunity was taken to chat to many of the Squirrel Leaders present at the workshop. It should be noted that these leaders by virtue of attending the day are positive and pro active in their roles as Squirrel Leaders.

- 4.4.9 All of the leaders present were based at or linked to a church. Meeting numbers varied from 15 – 24. They were aware of Dreys at Scout Groups with separate Headquarters but these are small in number. Most are well staffed with a ratio if possible of 1 adult to 4 young people. Sources of help came from parents whom they proactively engaged for assistance. The church congregation was another source of help. All have Young leaders and found male Explorer Scouts made good role models. Adult leadership tends to be female and some have been in the role for many years. Some leaders have Scouting roles but some have only been involved with Squirrels. All Dreys are mixed although one leader preferred boys only and did not attract many girls due to a strong Rainbow unit also at the church. All have waiting lists.
- 4.4.10 All meet at the same time as Beavers in separate rooms and had close links with their Beaver Colony. All Squirrels move onto Beavers. They acknowledged similarities to Beavers i.e. mascot, themes etc but all were aware they must not encroach into the Beaver programme. They see their role as introducing ideas at a level suited for the capabilities of 4 & 5 year olds.
- 4.4.11 Not all of the leaders present had Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade or GirlGuiding at their church and it was made clear that 'competing' with these organisations would be too strong a word as often the children do both. Sections have been around for a long time, one leader has run a Drey for 30 years.
- 4.4.12 Insurance is now arranged centrally by NISC. Previously, liability insurance had been provided by the church or arranged by the leader. There was some resentment at paying a capitation fee to NISC especially for leaders who hold other Scout roles. (Insurance and capitation for Squirrel leaders is organized separately from other Scout Sections which mean in effect some leaders pay twice.) One leader did say that she still has her insurance through the church. All proactively risk assess although the outputs may not be written down.
- 4.4.13 All felt well supported at all levels and welcomed the affiliation with NI Scouts being formalized. It gave them confidence to have that support and structure around what they are doing. The programme workshop was very welcome. Although currently supported by an elected committee they were looking forward to falling into line with the District and County Commissioner support structure.
- 4.4.14 All the leaders at the workshop had first aid training and were NI Access (CRB) checked. Some had Scout Leader training from other roles and some had participated on Getting Started training. (There have been some special training days provided by NISC for Squirrel leaders.)
- 4.4.15 Subscriptions seemed to vary from £25 to £60 per year, which included fee paid to NISC. Collection varied from weekly collections to annual payments to Groups. One of the reasons for the variation in charges related to if hall rent was paid or not. Churches on the whole did not charge. The cost of running

the evenings appear to be quite low. It was highlighted that there are grants available particularly if the Scout Group is Ecumenical.

4.4.16 All the leaders felt positive about being part of The Scout Association (TSA) even if only currently affiliated. We were told by some that they were aware of similar under 6 groups in England although may not have the same name.

4.4.17 We asked whether they had given any thought to reducing the age of Beaver Scout entry to five instead of having another Section. This was felt to be unworkable as then the age difference and abilities became too difficult to manage. We also queried what they felt about Squirrel Dreys meeting on another night from Beavers if the building only had one meeting room available. Once they had understood the idea that not everyone met in a church building and that the majority of Scout HQs often only have one hall with maybe a kitchen, office and toilets they still could not see Squirrels working on another night from Beavers. The leaders were all Christian and felt quite strongly about promoting Christianity at their meetings even if the children are not. This relates to their local environment where there are not many representatives of other races and faiths.

#### **4.5. The process leading to affiliation with Northern Ireland Scout Council (NISC)**

4.5.1 The process of affiliation has been an evolutionary one. Five years ago, the Squirrel Association of NI (SANI) approached the NISC and asked whether they could affiliate with NISC. NISC asked them to consult with their leaders.

4.5.2 Three years ago at the Squirrel Association AGM, the membership agreed to seek affiliation.

4.5.3 The NISC then held a meeting of all Drey Leaders – 55 leaders attended representing most of the Dreys in NI. Affiliation was agreed to start early in 2009.

4.5.4 The general public have always thought that Squirrels were part of the Scout Association in NI. This posed the potential for reputational risk and was one of the drivers for affiliation to NISC. The introduction of Access NI (Child Protection process) was another driver to affiliation.

4.5.5 The current Squirrel membership fee set by NISC is £14.50 per head plus Group, District or County fees. Insurance provision previously offered by the Squirrel Association of NI was thought not to provide the same level of cover as Scout Insurance provision.

4.5.6 The new insurance policy offers similar cover to The Scout Association. Unity Insurance were invited to tender for the policy but declined. The new Head of Unity currently has a different view and is putting together a quote. This quote will have to be very competitive to match that of the current insurance provider.



#### **4.6 Current rules and guidance (Appendices 2 and 3)**

- 4.6.1 Since affiliation to NISC, the operating rules of the Squirrel Section have been slightly amended.
- 4.6.2 The operation of the Squirrel Section would now fall under the guidance of a Squirrel Commissioner and NI Squirrel Team – both part of the NISC.
- 4.6.3 Members of the Squirrel Section will be affiliated members of the NISC and pay an appropriate membership subscription as determined by NISC.
- 4.6.4 Members of the Squirrel Section may now wear Scout badges but not the World Scout badge. They can also now wear the Group neckerchief.
- 4.6.5 Adult leaders working with Squirrels can be members of the Scout Association and will be registered as Group Fellowship members, although subsequent discussions with members of the NISC suggested that this decision had been altered in recent times.
- 4.6.6 We were informed by members of the NISC that adult leaders working with the Squirrel Section will be appointed using a process that mirrors the appointment process of the Scout Association.
- 4.6.7 Adult Leaders may continue to wear their current Squirrel Leader uniform but will eventually change to the Adult Scout uniform.
- 4.6.8 Squirrel Sections will become a Section of Scout Groups and be the responsibility of Group Scout Leaders.
- 4.6.9 Adult leaders will require to undergo training. A training programme specific to the Squirrel Section but based on training modules of the Scout Association will be developed.
- 4.6.10 Adult leaders who have completed the appropriate training will be allowed to wear a suitable training emblem (a pewter Squirrel badge is under consideration).
- 4.6.11 A support resource entitled 'Drey Essentials' is currently in preparation.

#### **5.0 Under 6's provision in other parts of UK Scouting**

- 5.1 While the remit of the Working Group is clearly stated in section 1 of this report, the guidance given to the Working Group to be 'low key' in our work methods and in so doing to avoid starting a wider discussion on the provision of Scouting for the under 6 age group, has made investigation into the extent of under 6 provision outside of Northern Ireland very difficult.

- 5.2. Anecdotally we are aware of patchy and limited under 6 provision in parts of Scotland. From discussion with NI Squirrel leaders, there may also be such patchy provision in parts of England.
- 5.3. Attempts by UKHQ to further investigate the full extent of under 6's provision outside of Northern Ireland run the risk of starting a debate that The Scout Association may not be ready, or indeed willing, to engage in at this time.

## **6.0 Parallels with the development of Beaver Scouts**

In drawing parallels with this current piece of work, it would be very easy to make subjective comment. The Working Group have reminded ourselves of our remit and therefore make no direct comment, but invite readers to formulate their own thoughts from information contained in section 4 of this report and the following historic report extracts.

- 6.1 Extract taken from "Beavers – A Northern Ireland Success Story**  
– Paper presented to the National Cub Scout Board in 1974 by Mr Mervyn Douglas of NI Scout Council on behalf of the Beaver Association.

### Opening Statement

*"Over the years, the status of the Beaver Association in relation to the Northern Ireland Scout Council has moved from friendly dependence on a somewhat unofficial level to one of mutual respect and independence, coupled with a recognition and acceptance by practically all Scouters and Commissioners. Per-Cub organisations have now proved their worth – even in the eyes of most of their former opponents, whose early fears have now proved unfounded. The resultant position is one of a working partnership with a strong desire on part of both Associations to form even stronger links and accept Beavers as an integral part of the Scout Movement in Ulster. Last November, both Beaver Leaders Annual Conference and the Scout Commissioners Conference overwhelmingly endorsed this viewpoint and provided the Beaver Executive Committee and the N.I. Scout Council with a clear mandate to proceed in this direction".*

- 6.2 Extracts taken from "Under Eight Activity – an in-depth investigation into many aspects of Under Eight Activity with particular reference to a possible future involvement by The Scout Association**  
– Andrew Wellbeloved – October 1975

### Chapter One – what Scouting is doing in the United Kingdom.

#### Northern Ireland

*(page 10) "The evolvement of Beavers in Northern Ireland seems to lie closely to what is happening in the other big youth organisations in Northern Ireland. This being the Boys' Brigade who already had some unofficial groups of very young boys attached to their established groups (for more details of the Boys' Brigade in Northern Ireland see page 30). The development of under eight groups in Northern Ireland seems to have been both spontaneous*

*and somewhat parallel to what is happening in the Boys' Brigade. It was noticed that in the early sixties that the number of Cub Scouts in Northern Ireland was falling and one of the reasons blamed for this was the operation in some areas of a pre-Boys' Brigade units. This naturally attracted the younger boy who did not want to move later into another organisation such as Cub Scouts when he could simply move on up in a familiar organisation. If nothing had been done it could have radically affected the Cub packs in some areas. In response to this, therefore, several groups began to operate some form of under eight Scout Training to counter the actions of local Boys' Brigade. The Boys' Brigade was obviously not the sole reason for this development, but it was quite likely the catalyst. Altogether one can list five of the probable reasons for the establishment of an under eight section in Northern Ireland.*

- 1. To provide something for boys below eight years of age and to stop early entry into Cub Packs.*
- 2. To answer the repeated requests from clergy and parents for a reduction of the Cub Scout entry age.*
- 3. To establish an alternative organisation in areas where the Boys' Brigade catered for this age group.*
- 4. To create a sort of nursery for the Cub Pack and to kindle the enthusiasm.*
- 5. To reduce the Cub Pack waiting lists.*

*These unofficial under eight groups grew rapidly in number and by the autumn of 1965, shortly after the pre-Boys' Brigade units had become affiliated"..... (page 11)....." to the Boys' Brigade organisation for an experimental period, Northern Ireland Scout Authorities decided that it was time for them to find out exactly what was happening in their scout groups. It was made clear that would in no way imply any official recognition of the under eight groups but it was obvious that the scout authorities needed to know what was happening in case any assistance or control became necessary. It was thus decided that one of the Northern Ireland Cub Commissioners should undertake an investigation. Several meetings were subsequently held and a large degree of agreement reached on such things as age limits, uniform and programme. The name Beavers was adopted by all but one of the under eight groups (it is just coincidence that the Canadians have also called their new under eight section Beavers)".*

*The steady growth of Northern Ireland Beavers led to a discussion at a meeting of the National Cub Board. This meeting was interested in the under eight development, but was very non committal. In late spring and early summer of 1968 there were several other meetings to discuss the under eight developments and amongst these was a meeting of the Belfast District Commissioners and, subsequently, a meeting of the Chief Commissioner and his assistants with the County Commissioners. There again was a polite meeting. However, it was made clear that the Commissioners would not put any obstacles in the way of development of the under eight work and, in addition, they did offer limited financial help providing a governing body was established. The Beavers, therefore, though not an official part of the Northern Ireland Scout Movement did achieve some form of associated status".*

### 6.3 Comment

It should be noted that both reports quoted from above contained substantive detail. The first being four pages in length; the second being 148 pages in length. Extracts above are shown in the context of parallels. We do not believe they would mislead readers of this report or in any way misrepresent the context of the original reports.

### 7.0 World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) perspective

#### 7.1 WOSM mission and purpose

7.1.1 Whilst there are no 'formal' age limitations to membership the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is unequivocal in its mission:

*'The mission of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.'*

7.1.2 This is achieved by:

*'involving them throughout their formative years in a non-formal educational process using a specific method that makes each individual the principal agent of his or her development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person assisting them to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social and personal principles as expressed in the Promise and Law.'*

7.1.3 WOSM is also clear as to its educational purpose:

*'As an educational movement for young people, Scouting's purpose is to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities.'*

7.1.4 It includes all four pillars of education:

- learning to know,
- learning to do,
- learning to live together and
- learning to be, the last two requiring a particular emphasis.

7.1.5 It belongs to the category of non-formal education since, while it takes place outside the formal educational system, it is an organised institution with an educational aim and is addressed to a specific clientele.

7.1.6 In addition, Scouting's educational approach is characterised by the following:

- it adopts a holistic approach to a young person's education;

- it seeks to achieve its educational purpose on the basis of an educational proposal;
- as a non-formal educational agent, it plays a complementary role to that of other educational agents;
- it recognises that it can only make a contribution to the education of young people.

7.1.7 Further ongoing work is being carried out and promoted to national scout organisations (NSOs) as a strategy for scouting – action for growth through its Educational Methods Committee.

## **7.2 WOSM strategy**

7.2.1 Strategic area 1 of WOSMs Strategy for Scouting - Young People, is clear in the aim of enhancing the growth of the Movement (more scouting) yet retains and formulates strategy ( the deliverable responsibility given to NSOs) based upon the fundamental principles of scouting, that meet the needs of young people in their country. All this based upon educational principles of scouting.

7.2.2 Clear comment was given by the European Director regarding pre-Cub provision being outside the fundamental principles whilst accepting some Associations do provide such activity, the belief being such provision is stretching boundaries.

7.2.3 Scouting at its heart provides an educational method designed primarily for adolescents that may be adapted to Cub age, below the age of six being a clear departure from the fundamental nature of scouting.

## **8.0 Implications of the possible formalisation of provision for under 6's in UK Scouting**

### **8.1 Legal issues**

The Working Group believe there to be no legal issues that would have a negative impact on the establishment of an under 6 provision in any part of the UK.

### **8.2 Resourcing issues**

The Working Group considers that there are a significant number of resourcing issues that would conflict with existing provision in finances, development and provision of support material, insurance and added staffing in areas such as Membership Services.

#### **8.2.1 Adult Leaders**

The Working Group is of the opinion that initial support for the introduction of an under 6's provision across the UK would be good, as potential leaders would see something new and exciting. However, the Working Group also

has grave concerns that, in time, we would face a similar challenge to that seen currently across leadership teams in existing sections. Consideration must be given to how often we hear of our current leadership struggling with recruitment.

#### **8.2.2 Venues**

The Working Group is conscious of the fact that many current Scout Groups struggle to develop additional Sections to cope with existing joining lists through lack of space or availability. Existing venues with available space would generally be suited to an additional Section but would be subject to the appropriate H&S risk assessment with a younger age grouping.

#### **8.3 Safety**

The Working Group believes that this is an area where as an organisation, the Scout Association would need to be acutely aware of the enhanced degree of reputational risk that could occur should serious incidents occur with an under 6 age group. In addition, the issue of health and safety assessment of suitable venues and activity for under 6's could add to that reputational risk.

#### **8.4 Child Protection**

The Working Group believes that this is another area where there may be significant reputational risk to TSA. TSA has substantial and robust policies and procedures currently in place to manage this area, developed in line with current provision. Should an additional Section be established, significant research into attitudes and practices with the younger age grouping would need to be carried out. We do not believe we can, or should assume an extension to our existing frameworks would suffice. This would constitute an added burden to current resources.

#### **8.5 Programme**

The Working Group members have been unanimously impressed by the simplicity of the Under 6's programme in operation in the Squirrel Section in NI. However, we do not assume that it would be easy to translate this programme to TSA or to develop it as a simple extension to our existing Sectional programmes. Our current framework relies upon themes and links which have been structured over a significant period. Extending or condensing the existing programme would not be an option.

#### **8.6 Possible impact on the Beaver Scout and older TSA Sections**

While the evidence provided by NISC would suggest that provision for under 6's has not had an adverse impact on the health of more senior Sections in TSA, the Working Group is of the opinion that this may reflect the almost unique situation that exists in Northern Ireland. The Working Group was concerned at the impact on equity of access to the Beaver Scout Section by ring fencing places for Squirrels. As an Association we have not carried out

substantive research into the 'life' of a Scout and, as a consequence of this lack of evidence it should be assumed that extending our provision to include under 6's might have a negative impact on our older youth membership.

## **9.0 Comment**

### **9.1 A Provision for under 6's across the UK?**

9.1.1 The Working Group has taken a great deal of time to reflect on the possible outcomes from this report.

9.1.2 Firstly, we considered whether there was any justification for establishing any provision for under 6's outside of Northern Ireland, either as a separate Section or by reducing the age of eligibility for membership of the Beaver Scout Section.

9.1.3 We have reached the considered view that such a course of action is currently unwarranted on the following grounds:

- Such a provision or change of age range does not fit with the philosophy of Scouting as espoused by WOSM
- Lowering the age of eligibility for membership of the Beaver Section to 5 years without reducing the upper age of membership in that Section would require that the Section covers three years in the development of a young child. The difference in development of a young person during these three years would not be easy to programme for or to manage. There would be a risk of having to either simplify the current Beaver Scout programme or to encroach on the Cub Scout programme to compensate.
- A separate Section for under 6's might create several significant problems:
  - difficulties with leadership recruitment and training
  - identifying a suitable programme to fit with Scouting Fundamentals
  - joining lists moved to lower age range
  - extra funding required for resources
- There is evidence that the Squirrel Association as run in Northern Ireland (NI) works well but would not necessarily transfer well to other parts of the UK where church and community cohesion are not so established.

### **9.2 Squirrels in NI**

9.2.1 In not making a recommendation to offer a provision for under 6's across the UK, there remains a dilemma about how to manage the 'affiliation' of the Squirrel Association of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Scout Council that is currently proceeding.

9.2.2 Squirrels in NI have a successful formula and work well within the community and culture of Northern Ireland. They meet a social need and address a demand from parents. In general terms the Section seems well run and has

good, committed leadership. As a 'Squirrel Association' there is no reason not to continue with this youth provision.

- 9.2.3 However, the Working Group is very concerned about the process and nature of this affiliation. In our view, there is a significant risk that the formula that has made Squirrels a success could be damaged.
- 9.2.4 The Working Group is also concerned about the possibility of reputational and other risks for The Scout Association (TSA) from several perspectives.
- 9.2.5 There is a possibility that if the provision for under 6's is accepted by TSA as legitimate in Northern Ireland, other parts of the country could follow suit in the belief that such a provision is now an acceptable part of TSA. In NI there is clearly a perception in the public eye that Squirrels have been and are part of Scouting. This perception has been encouraged by Squirrel meetings taking place at the same time and in the same place as Beaver Scouts and young people being encouraged to move on from Squirrels into Beavers.
- 9.2.6 The challenge therefore is how to allow Squirrels to continue in NI but not to be part of TSA in any other part of the UK. Indeed, the Working Group wonders whether the Squirrel Association of Northern Ireland would not have been better off remaining as a separate organization.
- 9.2.7 There are clearly positive aspects to the current process of affiliation between the NI Scout Council and Squirrel Association:
- The requirement for Squirrel leaders to undergo adult training should be beneficial to the provision for under 6's in NI
  - There are clear benefits to Squirrels in being supported by a bigger Association i.e. safeguarding, legal advice and support, insurance
  - A more professional handbook for leaders and online programme resource currently in development should allow the further development of the programme for under 6's
  - The adoption of a commissioner structure with leadership integration at Group, District and County level should offer more support to the under 6's provision
  - The affiliation should have benefits to both Squirrels and Scout Groups in a possible sharing of resources i.e. buildings, equipment, manpower etc
- 9.2.8 There are however some negative aspects to the affiliation:
- There is some resentment from some leaders who are members of both Associations in the requirement to pay two membership fees
  - Publicly and administratively there is little to distinguish affiliation from full membership of TSA
  - The imposition of Scout programming and methodology onto the Squirrel Association could damage its current successful structure



- By adopting a more formal commissioner structure and losing their current independent committee structure, the Squirrel Association loses its independence
- There may be difficulty in linking the Scout Association brand to Squirrels
- There may be a negative effect of not allowing both organisations to maintain their own identity

9.2.9 The Working Group is of the view that the key challenge remains how to preserve the positive contribution that the Squirrel Association has made to the community in Northern Ireland over many years in its current guise, while offering the benefits that membership of a larger Association might offer.

9.2.10 There seems to be a lack of clarity about the actual relationship of two separate organisations. The current process of affiliation, while not yet complete, seems to be deficient in trying to get the 'best of both worlds'. It is clear that the Squirrel Association wishes to work more closely with the Northern Ireland Scout Council. The Working Group wonders whether there are other models which might offer such an arrangement e.g. in the form of a service level agreement seen in commercial relationships. Such an agreement would allow the relationship to be developed in a clear way while preserving all that is good in the current Squirrel provision.

9.2.11 Services that possibly could be provided by NI Scout Council are:

- Insurance – Unity Insurance
- Adult training – First response, safeguarding, management and leadership
- Safeguarding checks and advice
- Use of Scout meeting facilities on a commercial basis

## **10.0 Recommendations**

10.1 The Squirrel Section in Northern Ireland has developed to address a significant local need in that part of the UK as a consequence of the strength of the Boys Brigade and the close relationship that exists between Scouts and churches in the Province. The Section works well and has much to commend it. Nevertheless, the Working Group feels that such a provision is not necessary in any other part of the UK and does not recommend that a provision for under 6's should be established outside of Northern Ireland.

10.2 The Scout Association should require the Northern Ireland Scout Council to address areas of concern noted in this report in relation to the lack of clarity surrounding the process of affiliation of the Squirrel Association of Northern Ireland. Issues relating to insurance, risk assessment, leader training, membership subscription and membership benefits need to be clearly defined.

- 10.3 The Scout Association should require that the Northern Ireland Scout Council not provide support to any under 6's provision outside of Northern Ireland. Failure to do so constitutes significant reputational risk, both internal and external, to TSA.
- 10.4 The Scout Association should make its position on provision for under 6's clear to line managers across other parts of the UK – namely that such provision is not condoned or supported and that, where it exists, such provision should cease.

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