

A study of the **IMPACT OF SCOUTING** on the UK's young people, adults and communities



PACEC
Public and Corporate
Economic Consultants

This report summarises the independent research conducted by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC) between September 2010 and February 2011 to review the impact and benefit of The Scout Association on its young people, its volunteers and the wider communities in which Scouting operates.

The research draws on a substantial body of evidence following surveys with over 2,500 people. The research team consulted and engaged with 260 Scout volunteers, almost 800 Scouts (aged 10-25), over 600 former Scouts, 100 young people not involved in Scouting, and over 800 external organisations including voluntary and neighbourhood groups, public sector organisations and the private sector.

This report highlights how the nature and scale of Scouting brings significant personal and professional development opportunities to its 500,000-strong membership, as well as how Scouting's attributes and activities provide considerable benefit to employers and local communities.

It's not just about tents and campfires anymore

People are quite jealous when you tell them what you do, then when you explain to them and tell them you have been to Canada, gone abseiling or windsurfing they are surprised. I do it because I put commitment into it. I enjoy it and I've got things out of it and I'm a better person for it.

Explorer Scout

UK Scouting is unparalleled in terms of its scale, geographical locations, range of participants and activities. It has gained a reputation as a modern, co-educational and development organisation for young people and adults who regularly volunteer.

- In 2010 there were some 400,000 young people engaged in Scouting and 94,000 adult volunteers.
- Activity covers all UK regions, inner-city, urban and rural locations through the involvement of 6-25 year olds in Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers and Scout Network.
- Girls account for 15 per cent of all youth members and five per cent of youth members come from black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds.¹

Scouting provides a package of interrelated benefits for participants. For those involved the key benefits are fun, friendship, exciting activities, contributing to the community and improving life chances in terms of education and employment. In particular:

- 91 per cent of volunteers and 88 per cent of youth members stated that Scouting had helped them develop key skills.
- 97 per cent of volunteers and 92 per cent of youth members stated that Scouting had helped with relationship-building.

The sheer variety and scale of activity on offer to young people and adults at a relatively low cost, makes Scouting unique.

Over a third of Scouts² agreed that it was unlikely or impossible that they would have had the opportunity to gain these benefits in the absence of Scouting.

¹ 2010 Census: The Scout Association.

² Unless otherwise stated, 'Scouts' refers to youth members, former members (aged 6-25) and adult volunteer leaders.

Staying true to Scouting's goal of helping people to 'learn through doing', the activities that are offered are integral to the personal, emotional and physical development of young people and adults. While nine out of ten youth members will take part in at least one camping or hiking expedition each year, the most commonly undertaken activities involve team building and problem solving. Half of youth members and volunteers participate in this type of activity at least ten times a year.

In addition, the activities help Scouts to build long-lasting social networks which lead to a sense of commitment to oneself, one's peers and the wider community. This holistic package of benefits ensures that those involved in Scouting take responsibility for themselves and others.

“ When I was younger I almost got into a life of crime and was hanging around with the wrong crowd. Coming to Scouts and learning from others meant that I moved away from influences that probably would have meant I ended up in prison.

Scout Network member

It is clear from the research that Scouting provides long-lasting and varied benefits to young people. It is also evident that by becoming an adult volunteer in Scouting and supporting young people to develop their own sense of self and responsibility, adults will also obtain a wide range of skills, useful not only to them, but to their employers and communities.

Developing the leaders of today and tomorrow

“ My job is working with disadvantaged kids and my employers told me that being a Scout influenced them and was why they took me on.

Scout Network member

Scouting makes a significant contribution to the supply of labour nationally and the quality of skills and personal attributes derived from Scouting activities due to its large membership.

As the UK continues to feel the effect of the economic downturn, the skills and attributes gained by participating in Scouting are in demand by many businesses and community organisations.

89 per cent of Scouts identified that Scouting had helped them to build 'key skills' including social, team working and leadership skills. The external organisations surveyed said that many of the key Scouting attributes such as respect for others, friendships, teamwork, character building and personal development were very important attributes for their staff or volunteers to have in the workplace.

Soft skills, like those above, are often difficult to value. Yet this research proves that Scouts, regardless of age and experience, are developing skills which meet the needs of employers and help strengthen organisations.

External organisations said that staff within the workplace who had been involved in Scouting were above-average employees across a range of attributes. In particular around six out of ten employers said:

- Scouts had developed team working skills
- Scouts showed respect for others, which was important when working with peers, customers and clients
- Scouting helped build character and personal development
- Scouts showed confidence and leadership ability.

With 20 per cent of 16-24 year olds currently unemployed³ it is now even more important that the skills developed by young people in Scouting are articulated in CVs and at interview. Employers agreed that the skills gained in Scouting were important to their organisations and as such 41 per cent reported that a job applicant's involvement in Scouting would be a positive influence on their decision to employ them.

There is now strong evidence that the skills and attributes developed from Scouting are attractive to and valued by employers from the public, private and voluntary sector.

³ ONS May 2011 Labour Market Statistics.

I get a sense of achievement [from Scouting] and this has helped with my CV and when I have applied for certain jobs... at a couple of interviews I was asked about my involvement in Scouting... I do think that it helped me in the end to get the job I now have.

Scout Network member

As increasing numbers of businesses take the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) more seriously, supporting Scouting financially and/or supporting their staff to become a volunteer would help them to meet a broad range of CSR objectives. These may include working with diverse populations or young people, supporting community cohesion, improving deprived communities, and creating long-lasting skills development in young people.

An integral community resource

...helping the community makes me feel that I have achieved something and helped people who are not as privileged as others... when we did a sleep out to raise money on World Homeless Day we met homeless people and this made us see for ourselves the problems they face.

Explorer Scout

In the past 12 months the concept of 'community' has gained new momentum as policy makers struggle with public sector cutbacks and ever-increasing demands to improve services through greater engagement with the communities they serve.

Volunteering in the community is a key component of the Scout programme. Some 47 per cent of the adult leaders surveyed said that they volunteer outside of Scouting, sharing their skills and knowledge freely with others. In addition, Scouting has a strong ethos of helping young people to take an active role in their local community through volunteering activities and 82 per cent of youth members take part in volunteering activities at least once a year.

The research shows that a substantially higher proportion of Scouts engage in voluntary activities than children and young people not engaged within Scouting. This effect is also long-lasting:

- 36 per cent of former youth members volunteer regularly (at least two hours per week)
- This is set against only 26 per cent of the general population volunteering regularly.⁴

Of the former youth members that do volunteer, 66 per cent said that Scouting positively influenced their decision to get involved.

Scouting provides opportunities for young people to engage with their communities in a productive manner through routes that might otherwise be difficult to identify and/or access.

This community integration and support was welcomed by the external society-wide organisations surveyed with 80 per cent stating that Scouting benefited their organisation and 69 per cent stating that it benefited their clients or service users. When Scouting was present in a community it provided a broad range of mutual benefits including:

- shared facilities/property
- help from volunteers
- training opportunities
- shared expertise and knowledge
- youth diversion activities
- support at community or civic engagement events.

⁴ 2008-09 Citizenship Survey: *Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report*.

The external organisations surveyed were also asked whether, in the absence of Scouting, some of the activities would have been undertaken anyway. Only six per cent said that their organisation would undertake the activity themselves. More importantly, 40 per cent stated that the work would not be done at all by either their own organisation or others.

This demonstrates that if Scouting did not exist a high number of community groups and their beneficiaries would miss out on both valuable community action and the sharing of knowledge across local, regional and national activities. One community participant noted that Scouting helped to share good practice across the voluntary sector and create:

“ a more powerful and effective voice for the whole sector. ”

For Scouts, being involved in Scouting encouraged them to participate in community activities outside of Scouting. Some 38 per cent of youth members took part in a wide range of volunteer activities such as outdoor sports and leisure, health and social care, conservation and the environment.

Where communities can support Scouting to grow – by encouraging new adult volunteers or working in partnership on shared objectives – those same communities will benefit from the skills, knowledge and volunteering support that Scouting can and willingly offers.

Summary

“ One thing which is good about it is that we help each other when we are doing things. We’re kind of learning all the time when we’re doing it. ”

Scout

The independent report of The Scout Association and its impact on young people, its volunteers and the wider community, highlights that the benefits of Scouting go beyond the individual. Offering social, environmental and economic benefits to its members and its communities, Scouting can now illustrate the value and return of its method and activities across the UK.

With a waiting list of over 34,000 children and young people, Scouting needs to engage more adult volunteers and sources of funding to continue to deliver a modern and progressive educational programme of activities.

It is clear from the research that those who have been involved in Scouting as a young person, volunteer, employer or as a beneficiary of community action see Scouting as a positive influence with tangible benefits to a wide range of groups and individuals.

Further information

The full report, *Impact Assessment Evaluation of The Scout Association* is available on request from Jenni Anderson at The Scout Association on 020 8433 7100 or jenni.anderson@scouts.org.uk



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