The Scout Association – written evidence (CCE0202)

1. Introduction

1.1. The Scout Association (herein also referred to as TSA or The Association) welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to this Inquiry. As the UK’s largest co-educational youth organisation, we deliver non-formal education and everyday adventure to over 460,000 six to twenty-five year olds across the UK: activity that builds character, changes lives and has a positive impact in communities.

1.2. TSA is a federation of over 8,000 individual Scout Groups, Districts and Counties, all of whom are independent charities led and maintained by a network of over 150,000 volunteers.

1.3. TSA welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the inquiry. The evidence submitted is based on existing literature, learning from TSA and a consultation with other national youth organisations.

2. Executive Summary and Recommendations

2.1. British society is changing, and recent events have exposed the growing divisions within our society. In a time of increasing segregation, active citizenship and giving young people a sense of belonging has never been more important. Supporting young people to make a positive contribution and engage with their local community is key to giving them a sense of belonging in their communities.

2.2. There is a crucial role for the youth sector to play in promoting civic engagement amongst young people. The sector is already doing exceptional work in empowering young people to make positive contributions to their community. However more that can be done in partnership with government.

2.3. Rather than overlook enduring solutions in favour of new ones, we urge government to expand the reach and impact of current civic engagement programmes to ensure greater prioritisation and promotion by public bodies and private sector businesses.

2.4. This submission makes a case for core funding of programmes that build active citizenship (such as Scouting) in young people from as early an age as possible and supportive infrastructure.

2.5. Namely:
2.5.1. Core and targeted funding
2.5.2. Increasing likelihood of partnership between formal and non-formal education
2.5.3. Revisit the previous Government's manifesto commitment to 3 days voluntary leave

2.6. This response uses Scouting as a case study of what that approach could achieve in terms of citizenship and active citizenship

3. What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21 century? Why does it matter and how does it relate to questions of identity?

3.1. TSA believes itself to be a great vehicle for civic engagement in the 21st century. By this we mean that Scouting empowers children and young people, to be active citizens who can make positive contributions to their local communities and the world around them.

3.2. A comparison study found that young people involved in Scouting scored 29.1% higher on Active Citizenship than non-scouts. Furthermore Scouts reported volunteering for 82 hours over the past twelve months, whereas non-Scouts contributed 24.

3.3. Young people are keen to participate meaningfully in their local communities, however many believe that they are not afforded the opportunity. Polling conducted by ComRes for TSA, found that 82% of 12-24 year olds across the UK believe it is important that young people help to solve some of the biggest social issues in this country, but only 36% believe they were given that opportunity.

3.4. We believe that young people, if empowered, can play an important role in their communities. However this can only be achieved through continued funding and support for youth social action projects.

Benefits of engaging young people in civic engagement.

3.5. Encouraging young people to become active citizens is one of core objectives of Scouting. Research has demonstrated considerable benefits for young people, as a result of their civic engagement through Scouting.

3.6. Research released by the University of Edinburgh has shown that Scouting and Guiding during childhood can be linked to a lower risk of mental illness in middle-age. The analysis was drawn from the National Child Development Study – a long running study of almost 10,000 people from across the UK who were born in November 1958. Around one-quarter of study participants had been in the Scouts or Guides, and were
found to be around 15% less likely to suffer from anxiety or mood disorders, compared with others.

3.7. Civic engagement through organisations like the TSA also helps improve the life chances of young people in terms of education and employment. Polling conducted by ComRes for TSA revealed that 89 per cent of Scouts identified that Scouting had helped them to build ‘key employability skills including social, team working and leadership skills. Young people involved in Scouting also scored 19.5% higher on Life Skills and Employability than non-scouts.

3.8. TSA research also suggests that Scouting can assist the development of team-working, leadership, resilience and problem-solving, as well as demonstrate commitment and resolve. In a poll conducted by ComRes young people involved in Scouting scored 17.0% higher on Leadership than non-scouts and they also scored 10.5% higher on Problem Solving than non-scouts. They can also provide access to networks and social opportunities that are valuable for future employability.

3.9. Supporting and creating opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in their communities helps them develop a strong sense of agency and belonging. In a recent comparison study, young people involved in Scouting scored 17.3% higher on belonging than non-scouts.

4. What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship? At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?

4.1. The evidence is clear that engaging young people in social action at an earlier age has a positive impact and results in a stronger sense of citizenship. Research published by think tank Demos shows that the 29% of young people currently participating in social action develop self-discipline, resilience and empathy by doing so. Furthermore, evidence from the CBI (See CBI First Steps report) shows that social action helps develop optimism, determination and emotional intelligence - skills which are key to employability.

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4.2. We know that teachers and schools do a fantastic job of teaching citizenship, and we firmly believe that where citizenship forms part of the curriculum it should be encouraged and supported.

4.3. Nevertheless, teachers currently fulfil a multitude of different roles; trying to build pupils’ subject knowledge; whilst also developing them as individuals.

4.4. Research from Demos also revealed that less than four in ten (39 per cent) of state school respondents agreed that their school provided enough opportunities for volunteering and social action compared with 70 per cent of fee-paying school respondents.

4.5. Schools and teachers should therefore not shoulder the entire burden of developing young people as active citizens, particularly schools which have insignificant resources or knowledge to provide meaningful citizenship education.

4.6. There is a crucial role for the third sector to play in supporting schools to deliver citizenship education. Partnership work is essential to achieving these shared outcomes for young people.

4.7. Such partnerships have proven to be hugely successfully not only in building young people’s understanding of citizenship but also helping them build vital character attributes.

4.8. In 2014 with funding from the Department of Education’s Character Education Grant fund, we piloted Character by Doing, a pilot programme designed with Demos, to deliver extra-curricular Scouting activities to 126 children aged 8-10 years old, in schools across England. Participating schools were selected on the basis of deprivation and a lack of similar activities in their wider community. The pilot provided teachers and parents with the tools to bridge the gap between formal and non-formal education, and boost children’s character capabilities such as empathy, grit and leadership.

4.9. The pilot’s evaluation report, ‘Learning by Doing’ conducted by Demos, concluded that non-formal learning activities, such as Scouting are an important way of delivering character education, and essential for young people in developing key character attributes.

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4.10. The ‘Learning by Doing’ report also demonstrated that teachers are keen to include more non-formal education in schools. In a representative survey of 800 teachers, 72 per cent agreed that non-formal education should be recognised in the national curriculum and 60 per cent thought that every pupil in the UK should have the opportunity to take part in activities like Scouting as part of their school routine³.

4.11. The Scottish inspection framework currently includes the recognition of pupil’s skills development, outside of formal school learning.

4.12. Since 2008, the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland advocates a holistic approach of the learning process, recognising the skills pupils can achieve through non-formal education, such as Scouting. For example, working with the Scottish Qualification Authority, students from the Queen Anne High School have secured formal recognition of the skills they had developed through a Scout expedition and were awarded the SQA Leadership award, a level 6 qualification on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. The 2013 school’s inspection report recognise the benefits of the partnership between Scouts and the school, recognising that the programme had supported pupils to develop into responsible citizens, effective contributors, confident individuals and successful learners.

4.13. Schools can use third sector partnerships to provide meaningful opportunities. This is particularly successful in Germany through the Schule Plus initiative. The programme is best described as a “unique social online-network connecting schools with external partners, who offer various external offers to enrich the schooling curriculum.” It is free of charge for schools and helps them to connect with a range of organisations, including from the third sector, to “enhance the learning of students”.

4.14. There is a real opportunity for the Committee to make bold recommendations that the government revisit its priority on Character Education, particularly the expansion and renewal of the Character Grant, Sugar Tax and the after-school activity funding, which the current Government discontinued.

5. Do voluntary citizenship programmes such as the National Citizen Service do a good job of creating active citizens? Are they the right length? Should they be compulsory, and if so, when? Should they include a greater political element? Should they involve a more public citizenship ceremony? Are they good value for money? What other routes exist for creating active citizens

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5.1. We believe that NCS is a positive addition to the current list of citizenship programmes available to young people. It produces positive outcomes in young people, has the right ambitions, is well led and reaches young people who may not have had any prior experience of social action. We have examples of young people in Scouting who have taken part in NCS reflecting how positive an experience it was.

5.2. Scouting is very comparable to NCS in terms of stated outcomes and activities used to reach those outcomes. Where the two programmes differentiate is in volume of contact, length of involvement and intensity, in that Scouting has a much higher volume of contact, over a longer period of time but in a less intense way.

5.3. The Scout Association has eleven Programme Objectives across five domains (namely physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual. These objectives explicitly cover the NCS stated outcomes of teamwork, communication and leadership skills, transition to adulthood and engagement with the community.

5.4. Considering that the majority of sections within Scouting will have young people from three or more different schools, and that they regularly mix with young people on a District, County, national or international level through Scouting, we also facilitate the last of NCS stated outcomes, social mixing.

5.5. In terms of how these outcomes are reached, NCS uses a mixture of residential (two weeks) and a local community project (60 hours). Scouting uses a balanced programme that spans practical, character and employability skills through programme evenings (weekly during term time), regular camps and residential (weekends, often around once every two months, and school holidays) and with social action projects embedded across our award scheme. All of these activities involve care and supervision by fully trained adults.

5.6. Considering the substantial cost associated with running NCS compared to other civic engagement programmes like Scouting, it is essential that NCS funding also go towards supporting less expensive programs with similar outcomes.

5.7. We are delighted to be working in partnership with the NCS Trust to test different NCS models that will allow us to deliver NCS whilst bolstering our own, complimentary, capacity.

6. How can society support civic engagement? What responsibility should central government, devolved and local governments, third sector organisations and the individual have for encouraging civic engagement? What can Government and Parliament do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement?
Building a cross-departmental approach

6.1. Government and Parliament can best aide this by providing the framework and the support required to help deliver programmes. This includes core funding, common efficient impact measurement, brokering partnerships with formal education, in both delivery and use of facilities, and supportive policies on volunteering and employment.

6.2. There needs to be a real cross government department focus on youth policy that identifies new streams of funding, such as utilising dormant assets, and building sustainability in the programmes required.

6.3. Providing organisations with core funding is an essential part of building sustainability in projects. Core funding allows organisations to experiment with new funding models, foster new partnerships, and develop new approaches of delivery, whilst being agile and responsive to the needs of young people.

6.4. We would also suggest the committee urge government to provide incentives for schools to allow community use of space out of school hours which is focussed on active citizenship. With the cost and availability of community facilities rising in recent years, schools can provided much needed space for the delivery of social civic engagement programmes.

6.5. TSA is entirely volunteer-led with support from a small number of paid staff. Scouting for young people relies on the efforts of over 150,000 adult volunteers in both front-line and support roles. Currently nearly 51,000 young people are on waiting lists to take part in Scouting because we lack the adults to run local Groups.

6.6. We are not alone and recruitment and retention of volunteers challenges organisations throughout the UK of all sizes and interests. Our experience is that many of the barriers to volunteering are not to do with legislation or motivation, but more simple factors such as time and the willingness of employers to accommodate volunteer commitments.

6.7. Although employers agree on the positive impact of volunteering on their business, with 94% recognising that volunteering can add to personal skill sets, the reality for Scout volunteers is very different, with many employers reacting negatively to their involvement.
6.8. Employers should be encouraged to take volunteerism into account in performance reviews. In fact, 50 percent of companies on Points of Light’s 2014 Civic 50 list include community engagement work in performance reviews for at least some employees.

7. **What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support? Can you identify any threats to these values, which affect the citizenship of, for instance, women or various minority groups? If so, how can their citizenship be strengthened?**

7.1. As an organisation TSA have established shared values that we promote to all our members and young people. These values underpin the fundamentals of Scouting and set out the expectations of everyone involved.

7.2. These values are:

7.2.1. Integrity - We act with integrity; we are honest, trustworthy and loyal.
7.2.2. Respect - We have self-respect and respect for others.
7.2.3. Care - We support others and take care of the world in which we live.
7.2.4. Belief - We explore our faiths, beliefs and attitudes.
7.2.5. Cooperation - We make a positive difference; we cooperate with others and make friends.

7.3. Our values are a unifying force within the Scouting community, giving young people a sense of purpose and a feeling that they are a part of a much bigger community connected by a shared way of thinking.

7.4. They also help to foster positive character traits within our young people. Young people involved in Scouting scored 15.6% higher on Responsibility and trustworthiness than non-scouts.

8. **Why do so many communities and groups feel “left behind”? Are there any specific factors which act as barriers to active citizenship faced by different communities or groups - white, BME, young, old, rural, urban? How might these barriers be overcome?**

**Facilitating opportunities for social mixing**

8.1. There is increasing evidence that structured and institutional segregation is on the rise – particularly amongst young people. Findings from the Social Integration Commission proved that young people under 17 years old have 53% fewer interactions with other ethnicities than would be expected if there was no social segregation⁴.

8.2. It is this social segregation which fuels mistrust between communities and promotes further segregation amongst the younger generations.

8.3. There are already real costs to our economy and society of not taking sufficient action to promote social integration. According to a study by the Independent Social Integration Commission, this lack of social integration is costing the British economy £6bn a year and failure to tackle the issue threatens to create a nation of segregated schools, thwarted careers and gated communities.

8.4. We believe that Scout Groups have an important and unique role to play in facilitating social mixing and providing opportunities for young people and adults to build friendships based on common interests rather than differences.

8.5. Dame Louise Casey’s review of Opportunity and Social Integration recognised this, and drew particular attention to the potential of Scouting and other uniform groups in improving positive social interactions between young people.

8.6. Furthermore in 2014 Amir Cheema, a Muslim national Scout volunteer won the Points of Light award, for his role in bringing young people from different backgrounds together through the use of Scouting. Mr Cheema was praised by former Prime Minister David Cameron, for improving community cohesion in his role as a Group Scout leader.

8.7. In keeping with our strategic goal of bringing Scouting to more deprived communities, we have been setting up groups in most deprived areas of Sheffield. One of the groups chosen was based at Owler Brook Primary School in Page Hall. The Page Hall was chosen because of tensions since the arrival of large numbers of Slovakian Roma families.

8.8. In setting up the group we identified several cultural barriers to civic participation from the Roma community including:

8.8.1. Mistrust and a distorted understanding of “outsiders”. The community’s long standing history of discrimination and persecution meant that there was an initial lack of trust from the community towards TSA volunteers. Local TSA groups were able to tackle this through networking and building links with partners already working within the community.

8.8.2. Familial responsibilities and obligations. Roma are a very family centred ethnic group and some children and young people may have never spent a
night away from home without parents/carers – this could be due to financial restrictions in addition to traditional family rules but it also meant that the residential element of Scouting had the potential to cause anxiety and stress. To combat this TSA volunteers were encouraged to invite elders from the family to join the young people at the residential.

8.9. The new Scout group provided a much needed safe space for different communities in Sheffield to get together and explore the commonalities of their identity, and understand their differences.

8.10. We are driven by the belief Scouting can be used to help facilitate social mixing and help young people from marginalised communities become pivotal members of their local communities. However we need support from government and supportive infrastructure to expand our activities into the communities which need it the most.

8.11. Without government funding from the Youth United Fund and the supportive local infrastructure which existed (Owler Brook Primary School and local volunteers), we would not have been able to achieve our outcomes in Page Hall.

8.12. We strongly urge government to utilise money from dormant assets to support programmes such as Scouting boost social integration across the most segregated communities in the UK.