

DECISION MAKERS BRIEFING



Locally and nationally, Scouting continues to deliver our 2014-18 Strategic Plan, Scouting for All. As a Movement, we are proud that we are growing, becoming more Youth Shaped and inclusive while making a positive impact in our communities.

The Scout Association (TSA) is now planning Scouting's future beyond 2018, thinking about our priorities, the work we wish to continue and any new areas where we can make a difference, all to answer the question: how can we improve the life chances of young people and better support our volunteers? We want as many members as possible to have the opportunity to contribute to this important process.

This briefing outlines our findings when politicians and funders were asked what they thought of Scouting, our threats and opportunities. It's part of a series of weekly briefings sharing the research and insights we have collected in shaping our next strategic plan, which you can find at scouts.org.uk/beyond2018.

METHODOLOGY

Between February and May 2017, ComRes (a national polling agency) surveyed 131 Members of Parliament from all four main political parties. Only the Conservative and Labour parties responded in large enough numbers to provide substantial feedback. This has been compared with results to similar questions in 2015 and 2014. In addition, twelve non-attributable interviews with MPs, civil servants, Ministers, and voluntary sector organisations were conducted by Evidential Consulting.

Note that all content refers to Westminster and UK wide decision makers. It does not attempt to inform perceptions from devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

SUMMARY

The Scout Association enjoys a positive reputation among MPs. Four out of five MPs associate TSA with engaging and supporting young people in their personal development, and seven out of ten see TSA as a worthy organisation to receive public funding, relevant in today's society and empowering young people within their local communities. When interviewed, most believed that TSA was achieving its current strategic objectives, though few were aware of the evidence base for this. Those in regular contact with the Chief Executive and wider leadership team were the most confident that TSA was growing and becoming more inclusive.

MPs' engagement with TSA remains relatively high, consistent with 2015. However, Labour MPs are twice as likely as their Conservative counterparts to say that they have never been in contact with The Scout Association.

The interviews revealed that the view of TSA from inside government was very positive. The Chief Executive and wider leadership team were considered highly effective, focused and straightforward. Occasionally, this came across as transactional and more informal discussion would be welcomed.

There is notable willingness among MPs to become increasingly engaged with TSA. The proportions of MPs who say they would be likely to take action to support TSA are considerably higher than those who report having previously engaged with TSA via each of the actions tested (such as media, attending programme nights, supporting community impact projects etc). Reflecting current engagement patterns, MPs from the Conservative Party are more likely than Labour MPs to say that they would engage with TSA via each action tested.

The view of Scouting from other parliamentarians and stakeholders was broadly positive, but several commented that they had limited or no contact with Scouts in recent years. Parliamentarians were particularly keen to have more contact with the Scouts and had suggestions for the best approaches.

Through polling, TSA's emerging strategic themes for beyond 2018 of social mobility, social integration, wellbeing, digital and intergenerational division were well-received by MPs. At least one out of three MPs say that each strategic theme is extremely important for young people. The majority of MPs believe that TSA has the ability to deliver against each of its strategic priorities and at least three quarters of MPs say that they would be willing to support TSA to achieve these. While Labour MPs are more likely to consider each strategic priority important for young people, Conservative MPs are more likely to say they believe TSA can deliver against these objectives and that they would support TSA in doing so.

In interviews, initial views of the future strategy were varied. Some, particularly within government, believed the overall approach was strong and signalled moving with the times. Others felt the approach was overly focused on the latest policy agendas. Of the five modern social challenges identified in TSA's strategic themes, there was most agreement on social integration, social mobility and wellbeing as being important. Several mentioned the dominance of digital as a huge issue in relation to their own families and therefore an important focus, while others felt this could be a sub-category of wellbeing. Addressing intergenerational divides was seen by some as a lower priority or a sub-category of social integration.

Several people thought Scouting's role in equipping young people for the changing nature of future employment was perhaps missing.

Those who were more critical of the strategic approach felt it did not capture enough of the core strengths of Scouting, of developing friendships, confidence and being outdoors. They felt that issues such as social mobility and social integration might resonate with policymakers but were unlikely to inspire young people or volunteers.

Additional views on TSA strengths by interviewees included Bear Grylls as a key asset for the organisation and a few mentioned other ambassadors. Several interviewees also mentioned recent press coverage

about adult volunteers. There was significant interest in hearing the views of young people involved in Scouts.

Recommendations by ComRes and Evidential Consulting include:

■ **Advocacy**

Although there is strong support and positive perceptions regarding Scouting, there remains a gap among MPs between current engagement and willingness to engage. Capitalising on this interest by ensuring MPs are aware of the ways in which they can support TSA will be vital in increasing advocacy levels across Parliament.

Scouting needs to continually refresh perceived relevance to young people from all backgrounds. Selecting and deploying ambassadors effectively, communicating new developments directly to decision-makers, and amplifying the voice of young people involved in Scouts could help reinforce these efforts.

■ **Key messages**

Focusing communications on promoting social inclusion should be a priority for TSA. Engaging with MPs from the Labour Party in particular is needed to maximise TSA's profile and the support it receives.

■ **Key activities**

Improving data on local Scout groups could help generate key statistics and regular updates for MPs, councillors and local newspapers.

Scouting has almost unrivalled young person, parent, volunteer and alumni networks. These communities could provide further areas for public contact, perhaps by the use of digital platforms.

Staying in regular contact with key officials, particularly those outside government, could be achieved by reinstating non-policy specific public affairs activities.

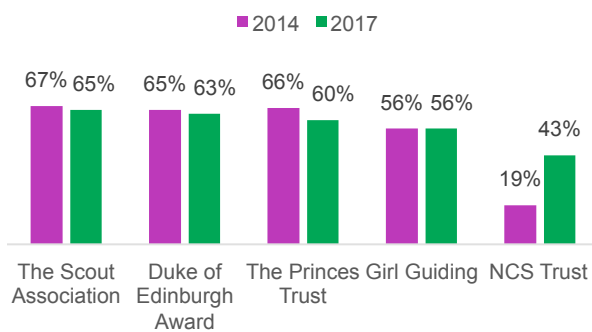
CURRENT PERCEPTIONS

We asked decision makers how aware of Scouting they currently were.

Familiarity

Compared to other similar organisations, The Scout Association continues to be the organisation with which both parties are most familiar. Labour and Conservative MPs are equally likely to say that they are familiar with TSA suggesting The Scout Association's communications are reaching the attention of politicians.

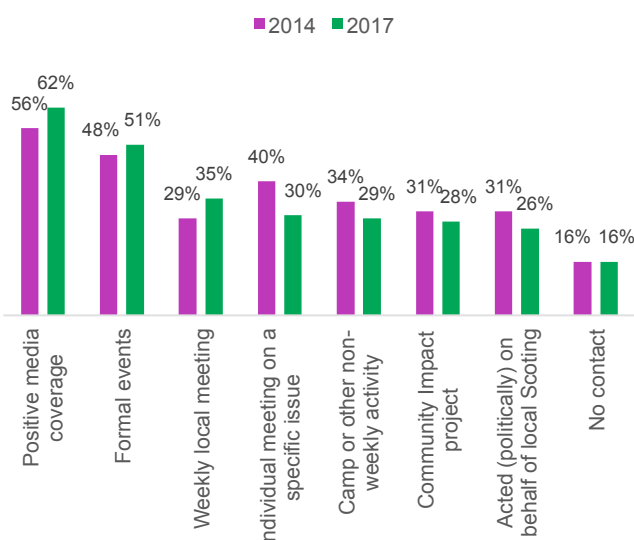
Familiarity with youth organisations



Engagement

MPs' reported engagement with TSA has remained broadly consistent with 2014 with a small increase in engagement with formal local events (48% in 2014,

Ways in which MPs have had contact with Scouting



51% in 2017) and attending a weekly local Scout Group meeting with young people (29% in 2014, 35% in 2017).

Conservative MPs appear to be twice as likely as Labour MPs to say they have attended a formal event associated with local scouting (70% v 36%) or a weekly local Scout Group meeting with young people (51% v 23%). One in five Labour MPs (19%) say they have never been in contact with The Scout Association, twice the proportion of Conservative MPs (9%).

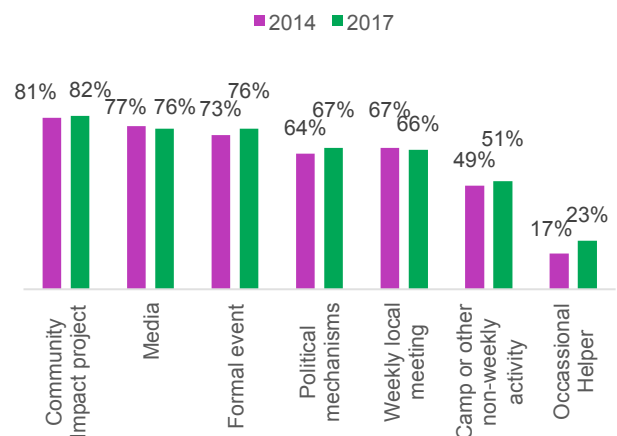
From the interviews, those within government in regular contact with the Scouts described high levels of engagement and effective working relationships. However TSA's approach occasionally came across as being too transactional and narrowly focussed on funding.

Interviewees who did not have as much recent contact with the Scouts were still positive, mentioning press coverage related to Bear Grylls but with limited awareness of other aspects.

Propensity to support

Four out of five MPs (82%) say they would be likely to attend or support a community impact project run by young people involved in The Scout Association. Three out of four say they would be likely to publically support one of TSA's objectives in print, broadcast or social media (76%) and attend a formal event associated with a local Scout Group (76%). This is broadly consistent with findings from 2014 and 2015.

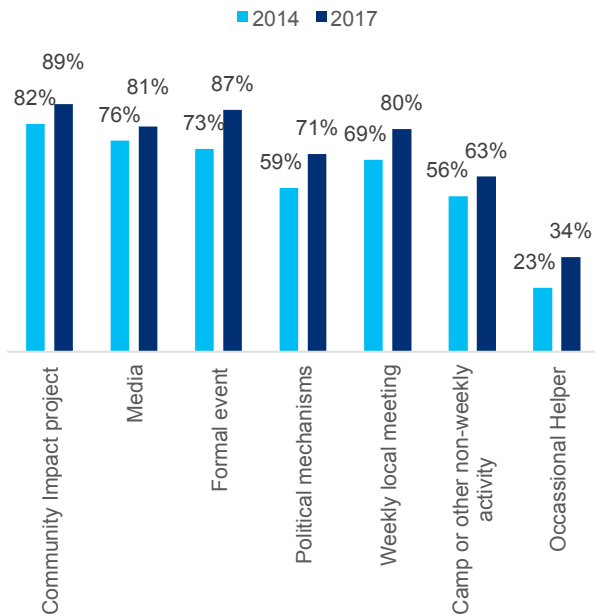
Activities where MPs would support Scouting



Most interviewees expressed an interest in hearing from young people involved in the Scouts. Some saw this as

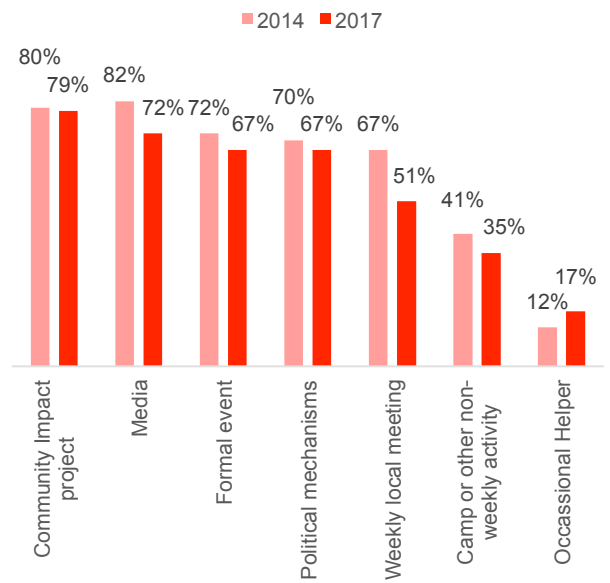
a potentially significant opportunity for the Scouts to have greater impact.

Activities where Conservative MPs would support Scouting



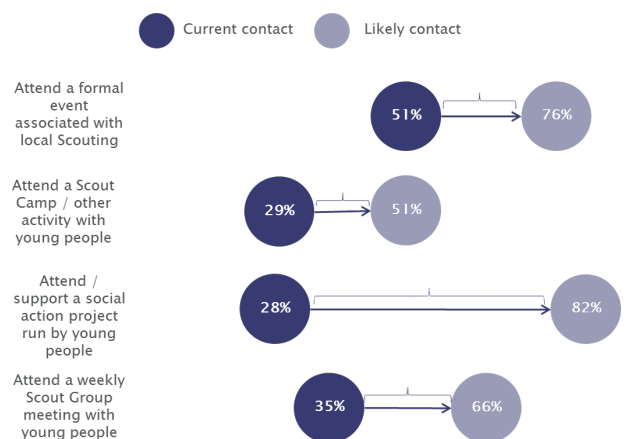
Conservative MPs are more likely than Labour MPs to say they would volunteer as an occasional helper with a local Scout Group (34% v 17%). The survey showed an increase in the proportion of Conservative MPs (from 64% in 2015, 80% in 2017) who say they are likely to attend one of the weekly Scout Group meetings compared to a reduction in Labour MPs stating this (from 70% in 2015 to 51% in 2017). This trend follows across all methods of engagement.

Activities where Labour MPs would support Scouting



The following data illustrates a clear gap between current and potential levels of engagement with TSA among MPs. For example, while just three out of ten (28%) MPs say they have attended or supported a social action project run by young people, eight out of ten (82%) say they would be likely to do this in order to support TSA. This presents a great opportunity for TSA to close the gap between current engagement and willingness to do so.

Current and potential engagement – MPs



SCOUTING FOR ALL

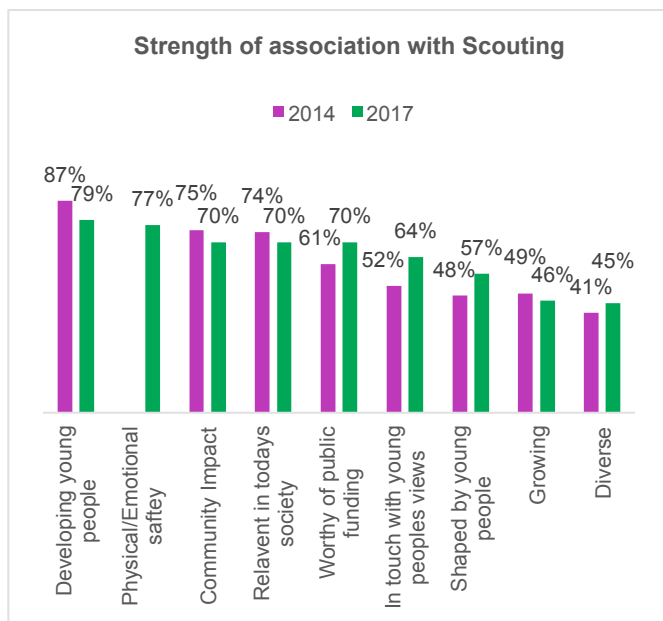
We tested how the objectives of the current 2014-18 strategic plan, Scouting for All, and a number of other attributes key to our reputation impacted with decision makers. We compared ourselves to Girl Guiding, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Princes Trust, NCS Trust, CityYear and vInspired.

Conservative MPs are more likely than Labour MPs to associate TSA with each of the traits, with the exception of delivery of work being shaped by young people in partnership with adults, where both parties fared equally.

It was notable that close partners' perceptions were largely based on personal interactions with senior staff and volunteers, while media engagement provided the most knowledge for MPs.

Strategic objectives

MPs are most likely to associate TSA with engaging and supporting young people in their personal development (79%) which is one half of our mission statement, rather than our four existing strategic objectives. Of the organisations compared, TSA was most associated with this attribute.



Community Impact

There was a high degree of association with empowering young people to take action that has a

positive impact in their communities (70%), although this is down from 75% in 2014 despite our A Million Hands activity. This attribute was most associated with the Duke of Edinburgh Award (72%) and our standing is equal to that of Girl Guiding.

The interviews showed opposing views between sector partners and civil servants. A sector partner commented that 'Love the A Million Hands campaign, we use this as an exemplar. It's youth-led, collaborative, works with other charities in meaningful ways. They've excelled here on impact.' However a civil servant comments that 'their activities have always had a community impact, but not sure how this has changed or improved... My personal recollection is of 'bob a job' from when younger. Not sure I see this has changed in son's experience.'

Growth

The proportion of MPs who associate TSA with growing in terms of the number of young people and adults involved in their work has slightly declined since 2014 (49% vs 46%). This attribute was most associated with the NCS Trust (52%).

Interviewees in regular contact with TSA recognised Scouting's success in this area, some having their perception of a decline challenged. A civil servant commented, 'I'd assumed they might have been declining, but actually my interaction with them has changed this impression. Now I think they're adapting well and sustaining themselves against the odds, given that leisure options for young people have changed so much in recent years... Their efforts to reach into new communities seem relatively successful.'

Youth Shaped

Association with delivery of our work being shaped by young people in partnership with adults was less strong (57%) although this has increased since 2014 (48%). We have the strongest association with this attribute of the organisations reviewed.

Inclusivity

MPs are least likely to associate TSA with having members, service users and volunteers as diverse (that is. in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic grade) as the community they represent (45%). The Princes Trust has the strongest association with this attribute (61%).

While half of Conservative MPs (52%) associate The Scout Association with being diverse, just three out of ten (31%) Labour MPs say they have this association.

In interviews, there was some recognition of efforts being made within inclusion. A parliamentarian commented, 'I think they're very good at trying to be inclusive, managing to set up groups in different communities. I'd be interested to know more about this, and particularly whether they're reaching disabled young people, ethnic minorities and so on.'

Physical and emotional safety

More than three-quarters of MPs associate TSA with engaging and supporting young people in their personal development (79%) and ensuring the physical and emotional safety of children involved with their organisation (for example through vetting of volunteers, training and reporting) (77%). We had the highest association with this attribute of all organisations reviewed.

Conservative MPs are more likely than Labour MPs to associate TSA with ensuring the physical and emotional safety of children involved with their organisation (84% v 66%). Labour MPs are less likely than Conservative MPs to associate this trait with all organisations reviewed.

In touch with young people

Two out of three MPs associate TSA with being in touch with the views and aspirations of young people today (64%), significantly more than the half (52%) that reported this in 2014. Of the organisations tested, this places us just behind Girl Guiding (68%) and The Prince's Trust (66%) and level with Duke of Edinburgh Award (64%).

Three out of four (73%) Conservative MPs associate TSA with being in touch with the views and aspirations of young people today, while just half (49%) of Labour MPs have this association. This is an area where the gap between the two main parties could be re-addressed.

Worthy of public funding

There remains good support for Scouting as being a worthy organisation to receive public funding to support our objectives (70%) and this has grown since 2014 (61%). Girl Guiding had the strongest association with this attribute (73%).

BEYOND 2018

There were five themes that emerged during the early consultation on a new strategic plan for Scouting between 2018-23. These were social integration, social mobility, wellbeing, digital and intergenerational divides. We tested these themes with decision makers along with their views on skills for life.

Overall, MPs see each of TSA's strategic priorities as highly important, achievable, and areas they would be willing to support.

Interacting with and understanding young people from different backgrounds (social integration) is seen as most important but least achievable for TSA among Conservative MPs.

Labour MPs are generally more likely to see strategic goals as important but less likely to think TSA have the ability to deliver.

Interviewees' views on the future strategy varied. The main split was between those who favoured the overall approach – identifying modern social challenges that Scouting could help young people to overcome – and those who did not. Broadly, those within government were in favour, whereas those outside government had reservations.

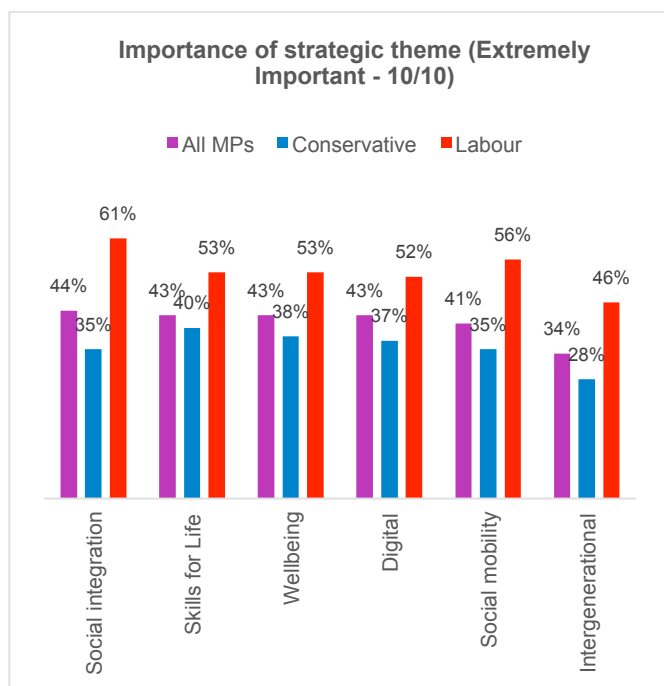
Most interviewees felt that the five challenges identified were pertinent. Those who supported the overall approach mainly questioned the level of priority given to addressing the different issues, namely, that digital was a sub-issue of wellbeing and intergenerational divide an issue of social integration. Several also mentioned a potential gap between career preparation and the changing nature of work.

Others, mainly those outside government, had more reservations about the overall approach. Several felt that it did not bring to life some of the core strengths of the Scouting movement. A Conservative MP commented that 'we can overcomplicate things. Let kids be kids- there's nothing here about play, bullying, supporting each other and other people... It's too prescriptive. What's really good about Scouts is it sets a moral guide, a code of conduct, of being good to others. Keep it simple.' Another commented 'Big things missing are leadership and character, teamwork. These are the most important things that Scouting does, whatever

else is going on.’ A civil servant highlighted a gap in that ‘service could be brought out more. These are five ways Scouting can benefit young people themselves, but they should be more explicit about developing mission and service and benefit to serving others. This is central to what they’re doing.’

Importance

For each priority, Labour MPs are more likely than Conservative MPs to say that it is extremely important for young people. This suggests that by focusing on these priorities, TSA could engage with and gain support from Labour MPs.



A third (35%) of Conservative MPs say they think it is extremely important that young people interact with and understand young people from different backgrounds (social integration), while six out of ten (61%) Labour MPs rate this as extremely important.

While almost half of Labour MPs (46%) think socialising and sharing experiences with people from different generations (intergenerational) as extremely important, just over a quarter (28%) of Conservative MPs state the same.

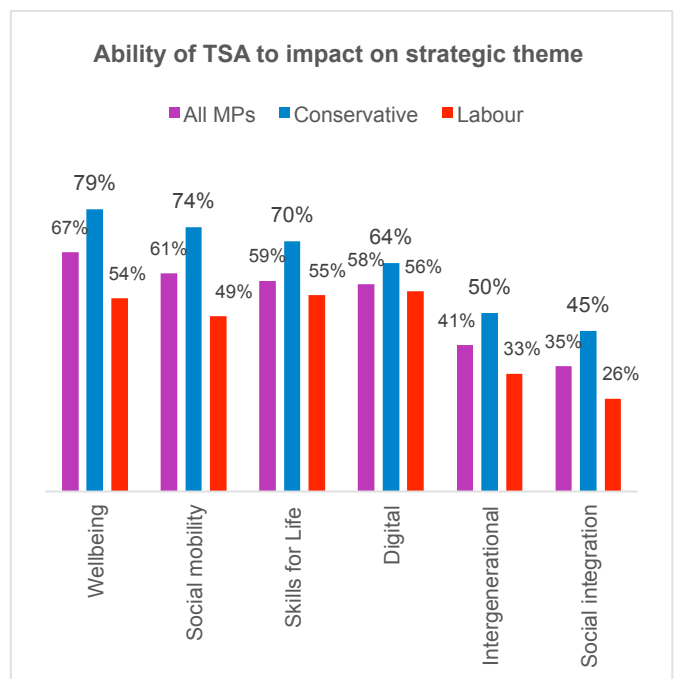
Scouting’s ability to impact on strategic themes

The majority of MPs think that TSA has the ability to positively impact on all of the strategic themes. Conservative MPs are more likely than Labour MPs to say they think TSA has the ability to help young people

in the UK across all of the areas to a great extent. This suggests that while Conservatives see these themes as less important, they believe they are more achievable.

MPs most believed that TSA has the ability to help young people in the UK improve their wellbeing, to have the opportunity to take part in activities outside of school that build their self-reliance, physical and mental wellbeing and happiness to a great extent.

However, while the vast majority (91%) of MPs say they think TSA has the ability to help young people in the UK to interact and understand young people from different backgrounds (social integration) to some extent, just a third (35%) report this to a great extent as represented in the graph below.

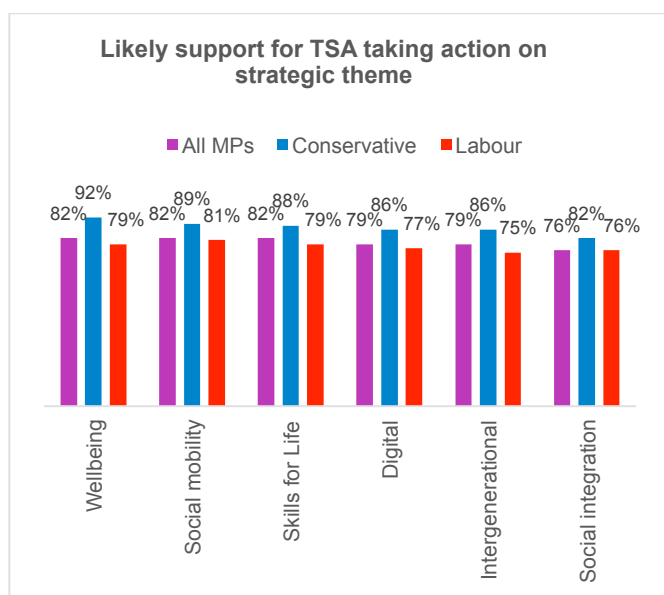


Three-quarters (74%) of Conservative MPs say they think TSA has the ability, to a great extent, to help young people in the UK to take part in activities, learn skills and mix with others in a way that increases their aspirations and chances of having a better life (social mobility), while just half (49%) of Labour MPs say the same.

Eight out of ten (79%) Conservative MPs say they think TSA has the ability to help young people have the opportunity to take part in activities outside of school that build their self-reliance, physical and mental wellbeing and happiness (wellbeing) to a great extent, however just over half (54%) of Labour MPs say the same.

Likely support

The majority of MPs say they would be likely to support TSA to help young people in the UK across each of its strategic priorities. Differences in levels of support are negligible, but notionally TSA giving young people the opportunity to take part in activities outside of school that build their self-resilience, physical and mental wellbeing and happiness (wellbeing) would receive most support (82%) and balancing young people's time between screen-time and outdoor activities (digital) would receive least, although still high at 76%)



CONCLUSION

Contact

The Scout Association is viewed positively among MPs; as being relevant in today's society, supporting young people in their personal development, empowering them in their communities and a worthy recipient of public funding. However, TSA needs to capitalise on the interest shown in the survey to promote willingness to engage, and increase awareness within Parliament.

Staying in touch with key officials could be achieved through general public affairs activities. Hosting small scale events in parliament by utilising ambassadors, for example, could attract MPs to come for a brief update at their convenience. An example of an organisation that uses this approach is NCVO.

TSA policy work already appears highly effective. To build on this, staying in more regular casual contact with

key officials could increase the Scouts' insights and influence. Civil service officials are often wary of reaching out until they have something specific to raise, or an invitation to extend – but are always grateful to be 'kept in the loop' about external developments.

Ambassadors and youth voice

The Scout Association needs to continually refresh relevance to young people from all backgrounds. Selecting and deploying ambassadors can help change perceptions, such as Bear Grylls' adventurous image. The 'Points of Light' award to a Muslim Scout was cited by a number of interviewees as an example. Finding ways to amplify the voice of young people more widely could help reinforce these efforts.

Engagement with the Labour Party

Engaging with MPs from the Labour Party in particular will be key in maximising TSA's profile and the support it receives in Parliament. Labour MPs are twice as likely to say that they have never been in contact with the organisation and are at least ten percentage points less likely than their Conservative counterparts to say that they would be willing to actively support TSA in their role as an MP. Exploring the barriers to engagement through the qualitative interviews with Labour MPs will be key in understanding what - if anything - is dissuading Labour MPs from active engagement with the organisation.

Inclusion and social integration

TSA's strategic priorities are seen as highly important for young people where at least one in three MPs say that each strategic priority is extremely important (10/10) for young people, and worth noting that this is more pronounced among Labour MPs. The majority of MPs interviewed believe that TSA has the ability to achieve each of its strategic priorities, and say that they would be willing to support TSA to do so. Focusing communications on promoting social inclusion should be a particular priority. While more than two in five MPs say that enabling young people to interact with and understand those from different backgrounds is extremely important for young people (including more than half of Labour MPs), this is the area MPs are least likely to believe that TSA has the ability to support young people. Illustrating impact in this area will be key in building confidence in TSA's ability to support young people and may have particular benefit of building confidence among Labour MPs for whom this is a particular priority.

Local engagement

Regular updates, preferably by email, at local level aimed at MPs, councillors and local newspapers, will increase awareness of local scout activities and events.

Improving TSA's data on local Scout Groups, so that it can generate key insights and updates at a local level (for local MPs, councillors, journalists, foundations and others) and facilitate visits will be important to improving local engagement with local government, media and funders.

Utilising networks

Young people, parent, volunteer and alumni networks could be used as advocates for Scouting. Individuals could recount how their Scouting experiences made a positive impact on their future. As one interviewee said, 'The Scouts was the biggest thing in my life when I was 10.' That individual is now in a position of considerable policy influence. [Teach for America](#) is an organisation that has intentionally developed its networks in this way.

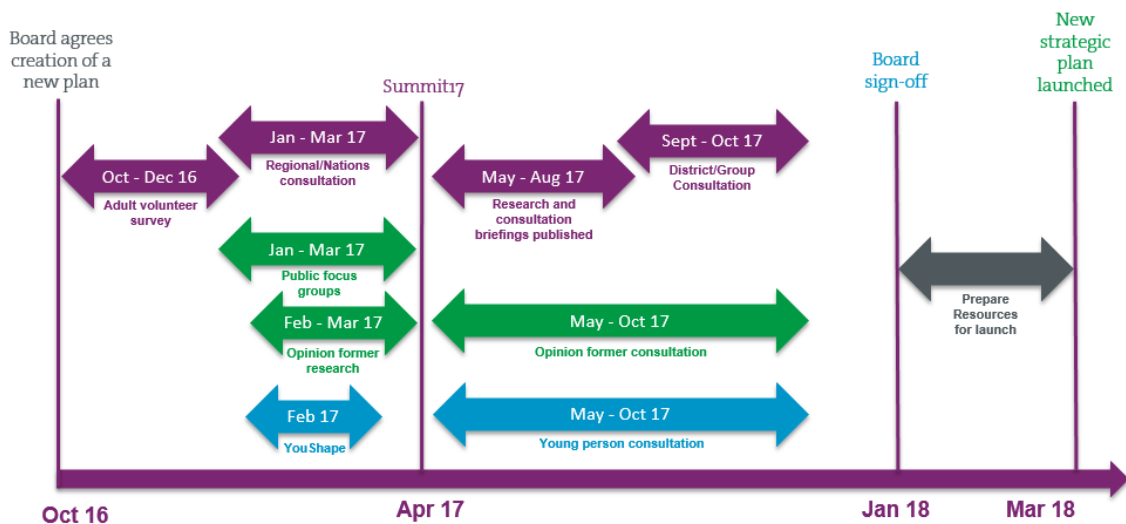
This piece is part of a series of contributions intended to stimulate discussion and debate as we create a new strategic plan for Scouting between 2018-2023. You can find all resources at scouts.org.uk/beyond2018

In early August 2017, we will release a toolkit to support consultation on a District and Group level, with views being fed back nationally. Make sure you've made time at a County or District level to take part in September or October 2017.

BEYOND 2018

To inform the decisions made for Scouting's future beyond 2018, we have asked for views from volunteers, young people, opinion formers and the general public. Over the next two months we will be publishing the reports from this research and consultation to help stimulate conversations in the Movement about the future.

Beyond 2018 | Consultation timeline



Schedule for publication of briefings and resources

The following briefings will be published in April – July on scouts.org.uk/Beyond2018 and circulated to members through Scouting+. These will summarise key insights from the research and consultation to date and are intended to stimulate discussion and debate.

- Briefing 1 – Summit17
- Briefing 2 – #YouShape Beyond 2018
- Briefing 3 – Perceptions of Scouting
- Briefing 4 – Volunteer survey
- Briefing 5 – Regional/Nations consultation
- Briefing 6 – Opinion former research
- Briefing 7 – Impact of Scouting on young people

In August, we will publish resources to be used at District and Group level for consultation with volunteers on the next strategic plan, with a method to feedback views nationally.

In September and October, volunteers are encouraged to feedback their views on the draft strategic plan through County/District level meetings or events.

The Board will discuss a final draft of the next strategic plan based on volunteer feedback in January and will aim to launch the new plan in spring 2018.

Future conversation resources – Summit17 in a box

To help support the consultation on the next plan, the toolkit will include resources to help you run your own Summit17 event if you wish to or to have a conversation as part of a meeting or event you may already have scheduled. These resources will include presentations, suggested session plans and activities as well as how to submit your feedback.

Make sure you've made time at a County or District level for volunteers to take part in discussions from September to October on the future of Scouting and what we as a Movement should prioritise in the next five years.