Scouts

THE SCOUTS EARLY YEARS PROJECT

- UPDATE REPORT -

JULY 2019

PREPARED BY

Prof Chris Pascal & Prof Tony Bertram
Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC)

The Scouts Early Years Project – Update Report – July 2019

This update report covers the first 3 months of the funded project and provides information relating to the progress of the project so far (against the agreed schedule) and some initial learning from the first phase of field work (with scout led delivery models) and collation of monitoring data. It should be noted than this early learning is not intended to be presented as research findings but as part of a feedback process to help ongoing reflection and refinement of the project delivery.

Executive Summary

The project is progressing largely on schedule but due to late identification of cohort 2 and 3 sites we have not yet made the first visits to these or completed all the expected interviews. The emerging findings at this stage are therefore derived from just the first of three visits to two cohort 1 study sites (observations and focus groups), the two study sites monitoring data and two interviews so should be treated with caution. Given these limitations, on the data collected to date, we can say:

1. Recruitment of children to these 2 groups was not difficult at all and primarily achieved through word of mouth and using the family and community networks developed for the older scouting groups.
2. The programme offered is appropriate for 4-6 year olds and fully inclusive for children with SEND.
3. The activities offered are largely adult directed and not very encouraging of children's initiative or choice but the children show deep engagement and involvement in the range of activities offered.
4. There is evidence that the programmes on both sites are already having a positive impact on these young children's development, particularly noted in the areas of personal, social and emotional development (character and dispositions) and in communication and language.
5. There are some reservations about other models of delivery than scout led, especially the family or parent led models, where there are not older scouting groups and volunteers with experience and time to draw upon. Often, the sustainability of the programme for younger children is being enabled through the support of the older scouting group volunteers.
6. Training is seen as a key issue for both preparing and retaining volunteers to lead the groups.
7. It is felt that age specific training needed to be further developed if the programme is to be rolled out.
8. The Scouting Movement needs to think about resources, training, pricing and administrative arrangements which are geared to the younger children.
9. There is very strong support for the development of early years scouting at both leader, volunteer and parent level.

Progress against schedule

The project schedule as agreed in March 2019 is updated below with green indicating completion of tasks and amber indicating an areas where the timetable has been delayed – notes have been provided to explain the one area of slippage which has occurred. Any activities completed which were not made explicit in the original schedule have been added in bold.

In summary, the project is largely on track but the delay in identifying fieldwork sites for cohorts 2 and 3 will have some timetabling impact on the Autumn term as more fieldwork visits will need to be planned in. Face-to-face interview scheduling is also delayed whilst we know which locations we will be visiting for cohorts 2 & 3. Cohort 1 fieldwork dates for visits 2 and 3 have already been confirmed.

By receiving monitoring data before the Summer holidays we have been able to collate this information earlier than scheduled and have provided some initial analysis within this report. The raw collated data has also been shared for Scouts colleagues to consider.

Date	Action	By whom	Milestones	Notes
March 2019	Contract awarded Inception meeting Payment schedule submitted Contract raised Begin to scope and agree data and methodology approaches	The Scouts The Scouts and CREC CREC The Scouts and CREC The Scouts and CREC	Contract agreed	
April 2019	Complete scoping and the data and methodology approaches are agreed Further refinement of tailored evaluation tools Telephone Review Meeting (end of month) Begin to identify contacts and collect consent forms for fieldwork	CREC CREC The Scouts and CREC The Scouts and CREC	Documents received by the Scouts Evaluation tools agreed Fieldwork programme is finalised Consent Forms Content Agreed	
May 2019	Further collection of consent forms	CREC	More detailed fieldwork timetable agreed	

	Monitoring evaluation forms completed Fieldwork **Initial Project Presentation to Scouts Board**		2x Pilots visited (1st visit) and data collected (cohort 1)	12th May 2019
June 2019	Fieldwork	CREC	2 x Pilots visited (1st visit) and data collected (cohort 2) **Interview1/8 completed**	Awaiting details of Cohort 2 sites – this will now have to be completed in early Autumn. J Berryman, NI Squirrels
July 2019	Review of progress and project learning	The Scouts and CREC		Progress report and early project learning shared 11/7/2019
September 2019	Fieldwork First tranche of monitoring data collected	CREC CREC	4 x Pilots visited (2nd visit) and data collected (cohort 1 & 2) 2 x Pilots visited (1st visit) and data collected (cohort 3) Monitoring data collated	Cohort 1 dates agreed for 2nd visit. Awaiting details for locations of cohort 2 & cohort 3 pilots Cohort 1 (spring/summer Term) monitoring data collated and initial analysis shared in July
October 2019	Review of progress & Project learning	CREC and scouts		
November 2019	Fieldwork	CREC	Interviews with other cohort representatives 2 x Pilots visited (2nd visit) and	

			data collected (cohort 3)	
December 2019	Fieldwork	CREC	4 x Pilots visited (3rd visit) and data collected (cohort 1 & 2)	Cohort 1 dates agreed
January 2020	Fieldwork completion

Second tranche of monitoring data collected

Review of progress & Project learning

Data analysis and assessment

Draft Report complete | CREC | 2 x Pilots visited (3rd visit) and data collected (cohort 3)

Monitoring data collated.

Data analysis and assessment undertaken and completed

Draft Report submitted | |
| Early February 2020 | Draft report feedback | CREC & Scouts | Progress reviewed | |
| End February 2020 | Report redrafted and submitted | CREC | Final Report, summary document complete and agreed Presentation scheduled | |

Project learning to date

From the fieldwork completed to date and the collation of the initial monitoring data, we are able to offer the following early learning form the project (set out against the 8 project aims):

NB: (Initials in text: WFG = Wallsend Focus Group; SFG = Southampton Focus Group; NII = Northern Ireland Interviews)

Impact:

- **Can the Scouts evidence a positive impact on the development of young children related to their Theory of Change?**

The focus groups provided strong evidence that the scouting programme offered to the young children in these 2 scout led groups was already having a positive impact on their development. This was particularly noted in the areas of personal, social and emotional development (character and dispositions) and in communication and language. This is revealed in the statements below:

> *WFG: We offer kids opportunity to meet a different set of kids, make new friends. Confidence and Resilience – getting over initial scaredness – taking some risks – exploration and just weirdly different such as smelling seaweed in a bag to get them talking. It's out of the comfort zone for some. We try to trust them, to give them responsibility.*

> *SFG: The kids learn about ethos of scouting, uniforms, badges, ceremonies, skills for life, independence, helping each other, identity and belonging.*

> *NII: They make a big difference but especially in concentration, independence, competence, confidence, relating to each other, turn taking, exercise and healthy outdoor living – life skills which are introduced gently overtime- they don't think they are learning- and develop an appreciation of the nature and diversity of a big community like Scouting to which they belong.*

> *NII: And they learning from interactions with each other – they're using and learning the meaning of different words in different contexts. They are astonishingly different when they leave at 6 years to when they come in at 4 years.*

> *WFG: I was a real cynic about these young ones – no way – but it has been absolutely brilliant. We've seen a transformation in just a few weeks.*

The learning and development of the children is in line with the Scouts Theory of Change in that the impact is due to the high motivation of those people involved and the careful planning and preparation for the programme by those involved in developing the groups and running the sessions.

- **Can the provision help the Scouts to reach areas of deprivation and demographics underrepresented in Scouting?**

Monitoring data from Cohort 1 shows that 1 in 5 children attending these Hedgehog sessions are from households with no adult in full time employment; 16% of all children attending were eligible for pupil premium funding.

About 1 in 3 children identified as non-white. The largest ethnic group after 'white' was 'asian' 23%. It should be noted however that each pilot site was quite mono-cultural and the ethnic and religious make-up in particular is sensitive to where pilot sites were identified and therefore it might be dangerous to compare cohorts because of the small sample size and targeted nature of geographic locations.

45% children had no previous family connections to Scouts, meaning over half of participants were

recruited through previous contact.

The two scout led focus groups and interviews indicated that recruitment of children to these 2 scout led groups was not difficult at all and was primarily achieved through word of mouth and using the family and community networks developed for the older scouting groups. It was felt that there was a large unmet demand for the sessions in their local communities. Interestingly, in both sessions there was also strong inclusion of children with SEND. Being located in community venues, especially where a Beaver group existed, with established links into the families was clearly a major benefit, as the statements below reveal.

> ***WFG:*** *Make more use of our existing families to reach others in community. Hedgehogs are the waiting list for Beavers. In lower income areas they are more likely to have community centres like this one – they are really accommodating here. Also they have a 'grow to eat' programme, the kids have loved that. We are about pulling the kids in from the street and get your parents on board. See the kids as individuals – make personal connections.*

> ***SFG****: 4 and 5 year olds from this estate which is in the bottom 10% in terms of deprivation indices were mostly recruited from our Beaver waiting list, siblings and extended friends and from 5 different schools and preschools. We now have a waiting list – there's a gap in opportunity at this age to get them out of the house.*

> ***WFG:*** *We've really recruited Hedgehogs from the waiting list for Beavers, many are siblings. These kids are from at least three different schools so it's good for their social learning that they get to make friends with other groups outside their normal school friends.*

> ***WFG:*** *There's a gap around 4 years in terms of what's available and affordable. This is perfect for X- (SEN Child).*

> ***WFG:*** *We are inclusive. My child has mild SEND, we have girls and boys but the communities here are white working class. You just don't see multi-ethnic groups around here, but we are open to all and we keep subs as low as we can. We welcome all and we are positively inclusive. We are prepared to deal with incontinence too.*

> ***NII:*** *We recruit mostly by word of mouth and friends. Early Years brings in many parent volunteers – reaches into local community perhaps more deeply than the older Scouts. Volunteers too with Send children especially. Leader recruitment is harder in rural areas as potential young leaders move to universities in cities. All groups are very easy with SEND – very much so- we are inclusive and we are supportive of them in our regular programme- parents want them to be part of 'normality'. Other children at that age are totally accepting.*

Programme Quality:
- Is the programme consistent with an age appropriate interpretation of the Scout's Theory of Change?

- Is the programme consistent with existing sector/expert understanding of early years activities/development for this age range?

The focus group evidence indicates that the programme being offered to the young children in both scout led groups was of quality and well designed to suit the age of the children. It was also felt strongly by those involved that the younger children were well able to access a scouting programme and engage actively and with great benefit with the programme intentions and activities. The programme activities were largely adult led, with clear codes of behaviour and discipline maintained, but not rigidly. The adults worked hard to fully involve every one of the children in dialogue and engage with them in play based, active learning opportunities.

> *WFG: The children's live lives are dominated by digital technology – this Hedgehog group is especially needed – it just gets them out – uses their brain differently – it's play learning, exploratory – yet there are rules and discipline – put your hands up to be quiet. Also it's about who are we? Identity and belonging.*

> *WFG: Some structure and routines – some basics – more eyes needed – training them in how to manage risk. The lack of common sense in many kids is because they are not allowed to make decisions, explore – we offer controlled exploration- we give them more choices usually but with hot fat tonight it was obviously more difficult.*

> *SFG: We can put in extra games etc., we're flexible with the curriculum, respond to their interests and don't always stick rigidly to the plan – we can contextualise to situation – timings not quite right – too long – we make changes – and differentiate – it's a wide developmental age difference 4 to 6 years, we have enough adults to individualise. Today we had to be inside because of the weather. We challenge the idea that you mustn't get the uniform dirty.*

> *NII: Learning in a different way – they come to Squirrels because they want to come. They play and do fun. Sometimes we just go with the flow – nothing is set in stone – we can follow the child's interests.*

> *WFG: Yes we always do that as the end activity – bring the parents in – 'homework' but not homework. We feel free to be flexible in what we do and change if need be. We don't look to Scouting for guidance but more to EYFS which we contextualise to our circumstances.*

> *WFG: We involve parents. We have Facebook groups and a page for parents and leaders they can post responses to 'homework' like bird identification tonight.*

> *NII: We don't send home notes or homework – just a self-contained package. We all wear a uniform- gives them an identity and there are badges – 'smile badges'- they mirror the badges of the older children. And we take part in the parades.*

- **Is the programme appropriate for 4-6 year olds, or is a different age range more appropriate/possible?**

The interviews and focus groups in both locations indicate that the programme was felt to be appropriate for 4-6 year olds and fully inclusive for children with SEND. There was an ability to be flexible so to accommodate the different ages and needs of the children, and the leaders and volunteers were confident enough to adapt their programme to individual children and the needs of the group. They did

often use the scouting guidelines for sessions but adapted them to their needs and local situation and usually brought in additional material and resources. The programme in both cases had a clear structure and variation to provide interest and meet a wide range of the children's desires and needs, as the statements below indicate.

> *NII: We like to get a balance into the programme – structure gives confidence and safety, so some comfortable routines – there will be physical activity and stretching the imagination- and spaces in the programme just to chill and consider – what they do is theirs.*

> *NII: We usually open with a games activity, eg relay races in teams, then craft, learning to use scissors or baking etc., and then stories often linked throughout with a theme. Sometimes a theme is a one off and sometimes they last weeks. It has to be pacey to keep their attention span, keep them focused. One activity slides into the next.*

> *NII: Different ages require different activities – coping with difference within group – 6 year olds require different stimulation – there can be a wide range of differentiation – we break into smaller groups to manage that or even individuation. Knowing when you have to make a change – watching and understanding your children's needs/abilities.*

> *NII: Being flexible not to rigid – we have a three year set of programmes but you don't have to follow it to rigidly as we need to be responsive.*

The observation data from our visits to both sites also indicates that the sessions offered a range of developmentally appropriate activities, usually both indoors and outdoors, and analysis of these data reveals the following features of the programmes.

Zone of Initiative: This feature assesses the amount of free initiative or choice offered to children in the sessions.
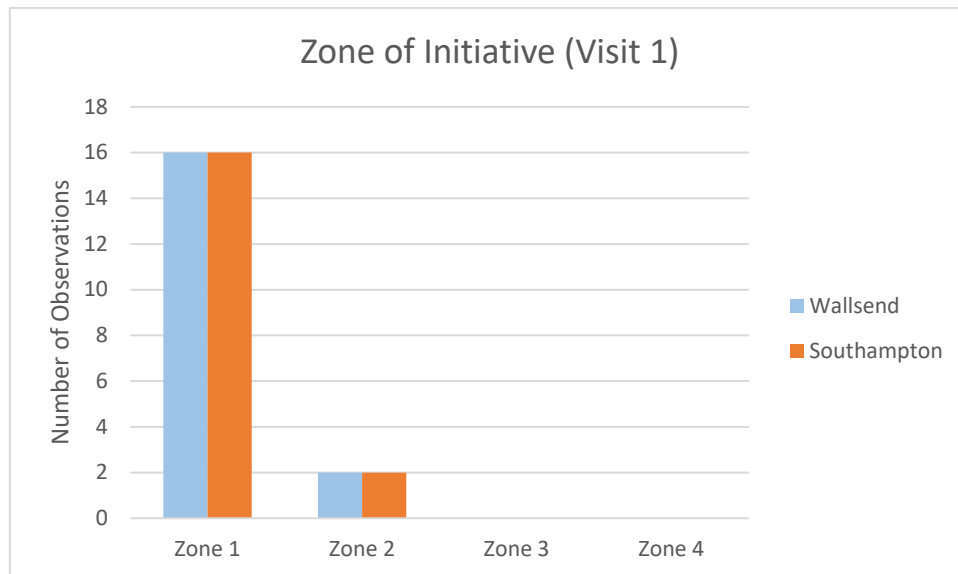
Zone 1 - No choice for the child. He/ she is obliged to do the activity

Zone 2 - There is a limited choice between specified activities

Zone 3 - Some activities are excluded

Zone 4 - Child has freedom of choice

In both groups, the observation data shows that children were adult directed for most of the session, with little time for free initiative.

Grouping: This feature assesses how the organisational grouping of the children during the activities. The evidence shows that in both groups the children were generally not working as an individual or in pairs during the session, activity was group based, either whole or small groups.

Grouping (Visit 1)
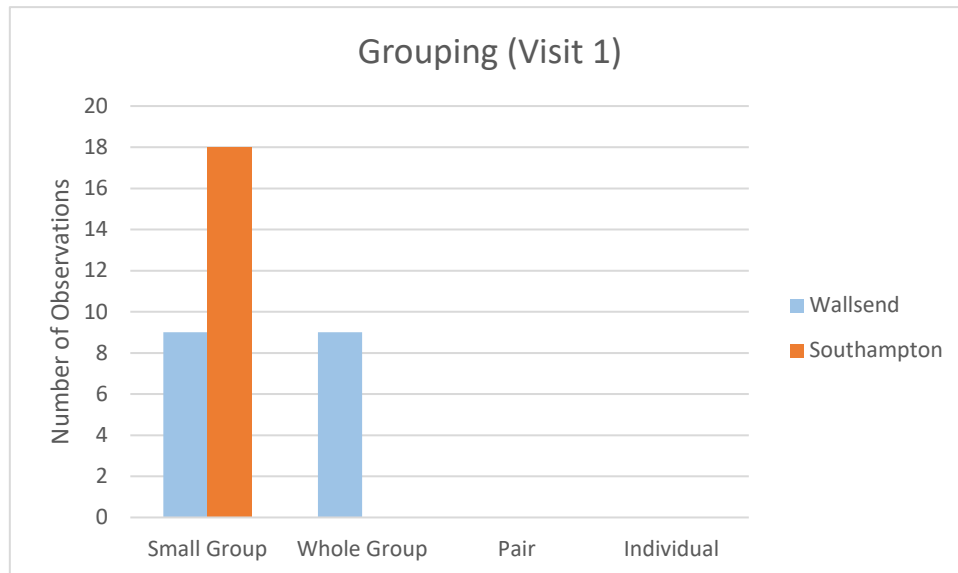
Learning Experiences: This feature assesses the rage of learning experiences offered to children during the sessions, as based on the early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. This divides learning experiences into 7 domains:

        Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED)
        Physical Development (PD)
        Communication and Language (CL)
        Literacy (L)
        Mathematics (M)
        Understanding the World (UOW)
   Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

PSED, CL and CL are seen as the prime areas of learning from birth to five years in the EYFS curriculum framework. The evidence shows that in both groups there was a strong emphasis on Communication and Language (CL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) in the learning experiences offered during the sessions.
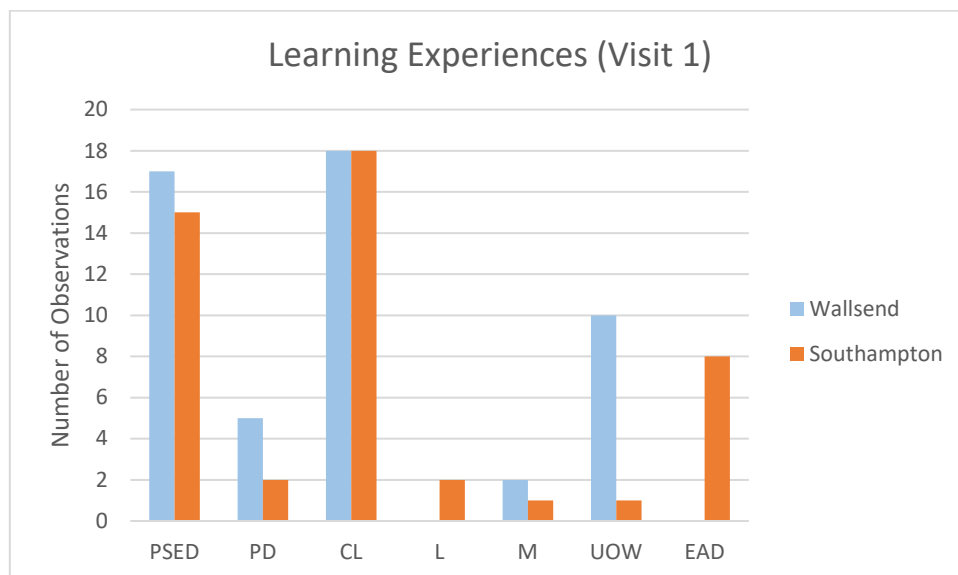
Interactions: This feature assesses the type of interactions between the adults and children in the groups during the sessions. The interaction can be either verbal or non-verbal. Over the observed period, the dominant form of interaction is identified:

TC ↔ A	Balanced interaction between Target Child and Adult
TC ↔ C	Balanced interaction between Target Child and Child
TC → A	Target Child interacts with Adult
TC → C	Target Child interacts with another Child
TC → GC	Target Child interacts with a group of Children
A → TC	Adult interacts with Target Child
C → TC	A Child interacts with Target Child
→ TC ←	Target Child talks to self
TC	No interaction
GC → TC	Group of Children to Target Child
A → GC	Adult interacting with a Group of Children
A ↔ GC	Balanced interaction between Adult and Group of Children
TC ↔ GC	Balanced interaction between Target Child and group of Children

The evidence reveals that in both groups there was a dominance of adult led dialogue within the large or small group activities within which each child was encouraged to, and did, contribute. There was an encouragement for all children to listen, take turns and speak.

Interaction (Visit 1)

12
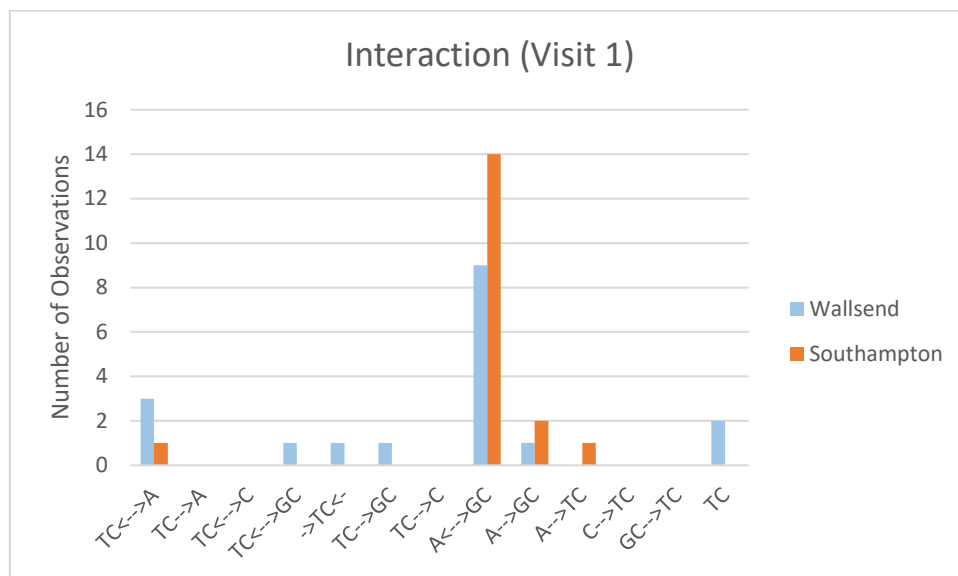
Child Involvement Levels: Measures of Child Involvement assess the intensity of response or engagement of the child to the experiences offered. In high quality sessions, the levels of Child Involvement will be high (a mean of 3.5-4.5) which suggests that the learning opportunities offered are appropriately pitched for the age and interest of the group of children and deep level learning is occurring. In both groups we observed the children displayed a very high level of involvement in the activities offered. The mean Child Involvement level in both groups was 4.06, which means children were intensely involved for most of the session, indicating that deep level learning took place, and looking at range of learning experiences offered, it suggests that this was likely to be in the areas of Communication and Language (CL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED). This accords with the evidence from the focus groups.
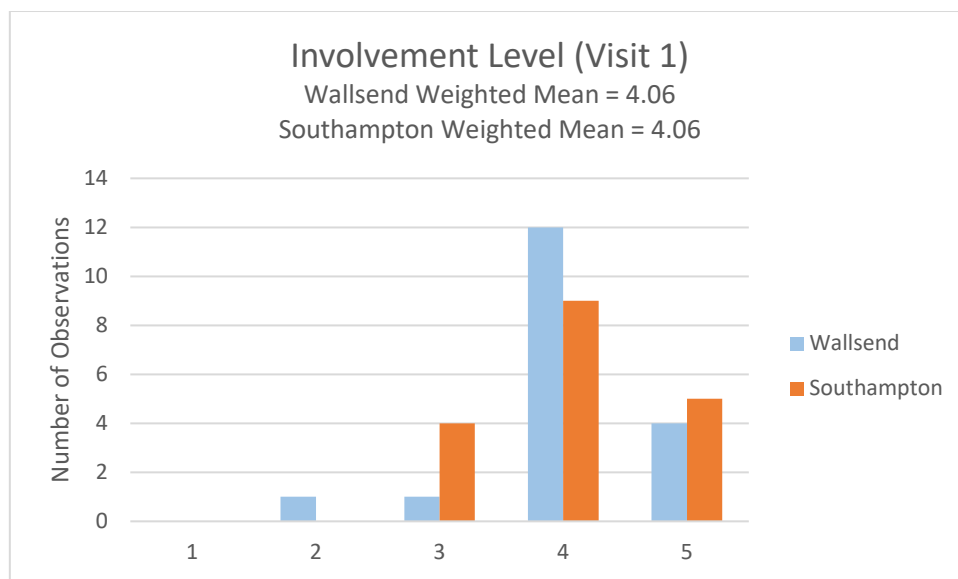
Feasibility:

- **Can the Scouts attract and retain (after their child moves on) new adult volunteers, and not undermine existing provision?**

The evidence from the focus groups and interviews reveals an awareness of what attracts adult volunteers and what is needed to retain them once their child moves on. The volunteers all expressed a strong satisfaction and deep enjoyment from working with these younger children and seeing their development and growth through participating in the scouting movement as shown in the statements below.

WFG: The satisfaction of seeing children do new things and grow in confidence and competence – that they are learning new skills.

WFG: Doing something for kids and the community – personal satisfaction – and it's a de-stresser. It's my Tuesday night. I look forward to it. I love knowledge about outdoors and nature and passing it on. Young children think differently – it's just amazing the things they say and ask. I'm a kid too. There's real satisfaction.

SFG: It's joyful – friendships- we adults make friends – it's social and very big in the community – real impact – we had 120 people at the last AGM. Confidence, voice – they may go to preschool but this is different. Open fire cooking, making flints, breath of fresh air, adventure and they learn about consequences and cause and effect.

NII: EY volunteers say 'I get more out of it than children do'. It's very rewarding – a feel good factor for the adults. For some it helps career path – adds to their CV- especially if they are thinking of teaching. Often they come to us pre-university and then they come back afterwards. Some parents say they want to put something back into their communities.

However, there were some reservations about other models of delivery, especially the family or parent led models where there are not older scouting groups and volunteers with experience and time to draw upon. Often, the sustainability of the programme for younger children was being enabled through the support of the older scouting group volunteers.

WFG: We redistribute to cover it. It's been slower to start the 'family led' model. We also wanted to learn how to do it ourselves first, then can transfer our skills. And it depends on demand. This venue and facility works really well for us but they are not everywhere and it's probably not taken up by those who most need it. There are some costs of course but it is real value. Attendance here has been really good even in the snow. In the community and on the door step.

SFG: One volunteer Leader is a Cub Scout Leader who has two children this age and also works in Early Years, another is hoping to adopt and wanted to demonstrate experience to Social Services – he arranged with his company to work at home on Wednesdays so he is always available. We have parents on the committee who are active. Parent volunteers tend to move on when children move up to cubs. We have a policy though that parent doesn't work one to one with own child.

NII: Leaders stay on, mostly, Volunteers often want only to be with their child – very practical reasons – some go through to volunteer with Beavers.

Training was also seen as a key issue for both preparing and retaining volunteers to lead the groups. It was felt that age specific training needed to be further developed if the programme was to be rolled out.

SFG: We have Wood badges but not at this age specific level – I think training is important for the Scout led model. The parental model will have difficulties.

NII: We are close to the ground, we listen to their needs and try to address them. Much is similar to Beaver training but new modules aimed at younger children – throughout Province – adapted the Wood badge - it's hands on and practitioner training – especially safe guarding with youngest – some things can be the same but some need to be age specific – change in ratios, for example.

- **Is there support and understanding within the Scout movement (both for roles likely to be involved directly in Early Years delivery, but also wider)?**

The focus groups and interviews indicate very strong support for the development of early years scouting at both leader, volunteer and parent level revealing a strong demand and belief that this demand should be responded to positively, as the statements reveal. However, a note of caution was expressed about where these younger children might move on to if there was not a group of older scouts in the community for them to graduate to.

> *WFG: Can we do Scouting in the Early Years – yes, yes!*

> *WFG: I believe this is very sustainable.*

> *SFG: At District level we have waiting lists of parents. There's a colony of 30 Beavers. We can provide quality assurance at District level the organisation is there. The deputy District Commissioner visits all regularly.*

> *NII: Beginning early years is a good initiative – it seems a very natural thing to do – a wonderful enriching experience before Beavers. Some children are prepared for schools with the structure. Bigger picture. Different access – different life skills, let them grow, safe haven for some.*

> *NII: Scouts who are most successful could be problem– what happens afterwards? We have Beavers and belong to a bigger picture – but what happens at 6 years if there is not a group to move on to? What about admin, CPR etc. It's something different to school. We charge less than the English groups and so we reach the more disadvantaged but we are also mixed.*

Hooking the new groups into local District networks, with wider resources and more expertise was also seen as important for ensuring quality control and support was there if a group or individual leader struggled, as the statements below indicate.

> *NII: Regional representatives – they visit Dreys talk with Leaders and check quality. We are small enough in NI for us to know are Leaders – we're close knit community – we can support those who have issues and concerns. We pick things up. Even in England you could break up into regions and districts Scout groups. We are all embedded in the Scout district groups – nobody is isolated or out on a limb.*

> *NII: To look ahead we need to continue having a route through to the bigger picture, continuity, progression – or make links to older groups and you need District level support.*

- **Can the Scouts appropriately resource and administer Early Years provision on a national (staffing, processes, programme development etc.) or local (line management requirements, local training delivery, places to meet etc.) level, being explicitly conscious of likely success in areas of deprivation and underrepresented demographics in Scouting?**

There was some evidence from the focus groups and interviews that the Scouting Movement does need to think about resources, training, pricing and administrative arrangements which are geared to the younger children. However, they groups were using existing resources and administrative support to ensure the groups were functioning efficiently.

WFG: We make sure we use the technology Online Scout Manager https://www.onlinescoutmanager.co.uk/ – the system covers maybe 90% of our admissions.

WFG: From the beginning we wanted to be self-sufficient and ensure that all money was spent on the children's activities but we do feel that because parents make a contribution they value it more than if it was absolutely free. Some sessions have cost as little as 79p per child.

SFG: We need training to work with the younger child. One of us has training with the Beaver age but this is not enough.