

Building brighter tomorrows

Our Scouts' Manifesto

scouts.org.uk/manifesto

#SkillsForLife

Scouts 



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Foreword – Creating positive change

I'm so inspired by this manifesto and the opportunities it creates for a new generation of changemakers.

As Scouts, we're part of the UK's largest youth movement. It's only right that we share what we've learned and call for the change we want to see. Scouts succeeds when young people share their views and help create positive change. That's why it's vital they get to speak up about what they're passionate about.

Now I want to encourage more young people to share their views and experiences with policymakers. Being a Scout is life changing. I want every young person to have the same chance I did. But this can only happen if we have enough adult volunteers. There are so many exciting opportunities ahead, including mandated volunteering hours, which would mean so many more volunteers could support us.



Ayesha Karim – UK Youth Lead



In 1907, our founder, Baden Powell, saw there were benefits to young people playing an active role in their communities and learning outdoor survival skills. These principles formed the basis of Scouts, the UK's largest youth movement.

Today, skills for life have never been more important. We believe that nurturing a love for the outdoors, and everything it offers, is crucial especially in a world centred around technology. We know our movement empowers young people to ask the big questions and stand up for what they believe in. We're proud that Scouts is at the beating heart of so many communities - one of the few ways young people and adult volunteers can actively give back to society.

Our Scouts' motto is 'Be Prepared', and that's exactly what this manifesto puts forward. We believe these policy suggestions, based on our values and principles, provide a roadmap to shaping the future development of every young person and adult volunteer in the UK. It's all about building a stronger society we can all be proud to contribute to.



Nisha Patel – UK Lead Volunteer for Perception



Executive summary

Supporting today's young people to build brighter tomorrows

Our ambition is for all young people to have easy access to a uniformed organisation, like Scouts, at the heart of their local community. These groups should provide a vital network of out-of-school and extra-curricular activities.

Scouts gives young people a safe place for regular activities, socialising with friends and having fun. We provide the space to learn skills for life (and work), while giving young people the tools they need to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Doing this requires investment, guidance, and recognition of the importance non-formal education plays, from early years, through school, and into employment. It's time for the role of after-school and extra-curricular activities to be recognised. Outdoor education, and learning beyond the classroom, need to be an integral part of government-led curriculum reviews.

That's why we're asking for a dedicated minister for young people, responsible for youth services and non-formal learning. This person would be a champion for joined-up policies and investment across government.

We want to see the scope of the National Youth Guarantee made broader and deeper, to facilitate regular weekly activities, adventure trips away from home, and increased volunteering opportunities.

It's time for the government to invest in volunteering and the voluntary sector. So, we call on them to recognise the important contributions of volunteers, by taking steps that make volunteering easier to fit alongside life and work.

To make sure no one is left behind, our recommendations include:

- **A pastoral premium for disadvantaged and under-represented young people, greater protection of community spaces.**
- **A rolling fund for renovation and repairs, the mobilisation of adult volunteers through rights to time off work.**
- **A new volunteering platform accredited by the government building on the success of The Big Help Out.**

We believe, through increased political literacy, social action, and support in building the healthy relationships they need to thrive, we can empower even more young people to become active citizens in their communities.

In this manifesto, we outline nine key policies and ask the government to help us by:

- **Creating opportunities for young people to take part and be heard.**
- **Empowering the next generation with skills for life.**
- **Recognising the real power of volunteering in our communities.**



What I go to Scouts for

For 117 years, Scouts has provided a co-educational, voluntary-led, space open to everyone, regardless of gender, race, or faith. Our mission is to engage and support young people in their personal development, empowering them to make a positive contribution to society.

With a current membership of over **436,000 young people supported by 143,000 adult volunteers**, Scouts plays a crucial role in young people's potential and helping them gain skills for life.

On average, young people in Scouts volunteer around three times more often than their peers.¹ By encouraging young people to play active roles, as **changemakers** across communities, we can build a **stronger society and brighter future**.

We do this by:

Improving mental and physical wellbeing

- Uniformed youth organisations, like Scouts, build resilience, reduce loneliness, and increase belonging.²
- Young people who had access to Scouts or Girlguiding are **15% less likely to suffer from anxiety or mood disorders in later life**.³
- Participating in Scouts is linked to better physical health. Research shows **those who went to Scouts are 35% more likely to have excellent general health at 50**.⁴

'One of my Cubs has stress and anxiety, and they're having problems at the moment. I asked if he ever got stressed coming to Cubs and he said, "No, it's my favourite place. I feel safe at Cubs!'"

UK Scout Leaders' Facebook Group, March 2022

Building skills for life and work

- Young people in Scouts display **more positive attitudes towards school** than their peers.⁵
- Scouts **gain the skills for life employers are looking for**, including leadership, communication, teamwork, and emotional resilience.
- Those who attended Scouts feel significantly **more prepared for entering work for the first time**.
- Engaging in extra-curricular activities, like Scouts, **improves the likelihood of securing employment later in life**.⁶

'Some of the greatest things we'll ever learn are achieved by pushing boundaries. Non-formal education creates an accessible and enjoyable atmosphere for young people to develop skills and qualities formal education often doesn't provide. It encourages personal development and creativity outside a classroom.'

Mollie, Scotland Youth Lead

Inclusive growth

In deprived areas, young people in Scouts are 15% more likely to try challenging activities and 11% more willing to try new things, compared to non-members. They show 7% stronger leadership skills and are 14% more independent. These young people are 10% more likely to respect and trust others, including those from backgrounds different to their own (Scout Experience Survey).

Providing opportunities and activities for all young people is integral to what we do. We work hard to make sure more and more young people, and volunteers can be part of Scouts. We're proud of the following facts:

- Since 2015, we've established over **1,250 groups in deprived areas**.
- With Squirrels, our new section, **30% of groups have opened in Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas 1-3** (the most disadvantaged communities).



- There are over **10,000 Muslim Scouts** (both young people and adult volunteers) in the UK.
- **14% of our members aged 4-17 identify as having a disability.** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) national average for 0-19 year olds (2021) is 7%.

However, we refuse to be complaisant. We need to go further to make sure Scouts is representative of the communities we serve. So, by 2025, we'll:

- Open sections in 500 additional areas of deprivation, compared to 2018.
- Increase the diversity of our adult volunteer population.
- Make sure we're providing the best support possible for all our young people, including more support for those those with disabilities and neurodivergence in their diversity.

Scouts for early years children

- The early years, before entering formal education, are a vital time for every child's development. Evidence shows **children who attend high quality early years' provision are more likely to demonstrate school-readiness**, having acquired the cognitive, linguistic, and self-regulation skills that provide the foundation for their future learning and development.¹²
- Taking part in effective early years provisions appears to have an impact throughout a person's life. In a cohort study that followed 1,398 children to 35 years of age, **early years intervention between the ages of 4 to 6 was significantly associated with a 48% higher rate of degree completion.**¹³
- Poverty in the early years plays a key role in predicting outcomes and attainment in later life. **Already by the age of three, children from poorer backgrounds could be on average, a year behind their more advantaged peers.**¹⁴
- In September 2021, Scouts launched Squirrels for 4 to 6 year olds. The programme is designed to help young children improve their emotional, communication and language skills, resilience, independence, and readiness for school. Squirrels also aims to help young people develop their self-control, problem-solving, ability to focus, confidence to try new things, and improve their interactions with other children.

- **Evaluations of Squirrels show 'even over a relatively short period of time, it's has had a positive and sometimes transformative impact on the children's development, especially in the areas of communication and language skills and life skills'.** It also 'impacts positively on the adult volunteers and parents with key outcomes including the development of life skills and parenting skills'.¹⁵
- **We now have 1,300 Squirrel Dreys serving more than 11,000 children. 30% of these groups are in IMD areas 1-3.**



What we need the government to help us do

Undoubtedly, there's cross-party support for the idea our young people need 'somewhere safe to go, something fun to do and someone trusted to talk to'. That's why the government introduced the National Youth Guarantee for out-of-school activities. It's designed to give all young people access to regular activities, residential trips for adventures away from home, and increased volunteering opportunities.

There's no denying the clear benefits of out-of-school and extra-curricular activities. Across the country, families and young people see the value of Scouts. With over **100,000 young people waiting to join our groups**, the time to act is now.

Time is of the essence. Childhood is short, and we can't keep the UK's young people waiting any longer.

To unlock this untapped potential, **we must recruit over 40,000 new volunteers**. Doing this will make sure we're able to continue providing empowering opportunities for young people.

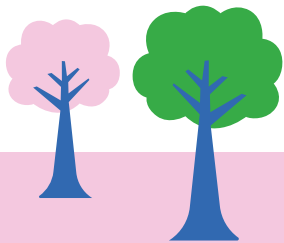
But it's not just Scouts we're looking to support. **We want brighter futures for all young people, from all backgrounds, whether they're in Scouts or not.** Now, more than ever, with young people experiencing the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, alongside a cost-of-living crisis, it's vital the government acts.

Only together can we build a brighter future for the young people of the UK, and a stronger society for all.

Create opportunities for young people to take part and be heard.

Empower the next generation with skills for life.

Recognise the power of volunteering and communities.



Guarantee **opportunities**
for **all young people** to
enjoy the **outdoors**



Create opportunities for young people to take part and be heard

1. Political leadership

Young people are at the heart of our society. Their wellbeing and future are of utmost importance. It's the government's duty to actively engage them and demonstrate genuine care for their lives.

2023 data from the Children's Charities Coalition shows 73% of children in the UK don't feel listened to. 66% don't feel they've a say in political decision making.⁷

A dedicated minister will play a pivotal role in prioritising young people at the heart of government, making sure their voices are heard, and their needs addressed positively.

Delivery of services and support for young people will always need to span departments with issues impacting young people cover education and the health system, along with the worlds of work and justice. But giving the leadership of a national strategy to a single government minister for young people would break down departmental silos, leading to joined-up policies that invest in supporting young people's multiple needs.

Created as a ministerial post in the Department for Education, this role would include responsibilities for non-formal learning, through out-of-school and extra-curricular activities across early years and youth provision. **The minister would have an overriding focus on improving young people's wellbeing, their skills for life and work, and their mental and physical health.**

These elements of the minister for young people's role would sit alongside wider responsibilities for safeguarding, equalities, and protected characteristics, including special educational needs, disabilities, and care-experienced young people.

The role would bring together legislative levers, regulatory functions, and funding streams and bridge the gap between formal and non-statutory services in education, health, and social care.

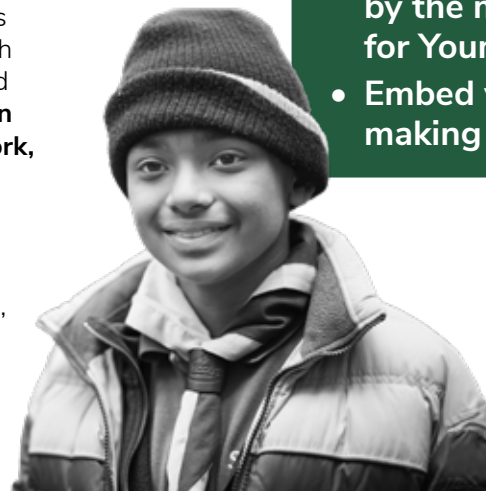
New Zealand has shown this approach can be achieved through their introduction of a minister for youth, alongside a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. **It's all about recognising the multifaceted nature of young people's wellbeing, by offering a comprehensive framework for central government policy development.** We can't emphasise enough the importance of working collaboratively, aligning policies and services right from the beginning.⁸

Crucially, our proposal makes clear what we want for, and expect of, our young people, with both ministerial accountability and the inclusion of young people in this vital process.

Our ask

Establish a dedicated minister for young people at the Department for Education.

- **Introduce a Minister for Young People, with responsibilities for youth services and non-formal learning.**
- **Form a cross-departmental committee, chaired by the minister, to deliver a National Strategy for Young People.**
- **Embed youth voice and consultations in policy making across the government.**



2. Remove financial barriers for those most in need

We're committed to empowering all young people, Scouts currently supports over 430,000 to discover and explore their unique talents and gain skills for life.

Our aim is to extend support to the additional 100,000 young people on waiting lists and beyond, with a focus on those who need it most. This includes families who don't know Scouts exists. These young people are equally deserving of the opportunities we offer.

The 2019 study from the Social Mobility Commission found there are still significant barriers to participation in extra-curricular activities for some young people.⁹ In low income households, these barriers include: high cost, a lack of confidence, and difficulty of access. At the moment, the local availability of youth facilities varies in different areas.

Rising living costs make it even harder for families to afford out-of-school and extra-curricular activities, including Scouts. In polling carried out in December 2022 by YouGov for Scouts, we found parents in high economic output areas were significantly more likely to say the cost of living crisis had no impact on their ability to send their children to activities. Meanwhile for families in areas of deprivation, **the cost of living crisis meant they were more likely withdraw their children from extra-curricular activities. Of the 35% of children who didn't take part in any activities, 43% were from the lowest socio-economic classifications.**¹⁰

We welcome the support of several government funds, such as the Uniformed Youth Fund, Adventures Away From Home Fund, and Generation Green, along with the Department for Education's help in setting up our Squirrels' provision. These funds have helped us provide new places, but they haven't always allowed us to remove barriers, at the point of entry, for families most in need.

We understand any cost, including fees, equipment, and transport, can be a challenge for some families. **To make sure every young person can participate, we're urging the government to fund a pastoral premium, modelled on the pupil premium, targeted at young people who are recipients of Free School Meals or experiencing other disadvantages compared to their peers.** This aligns with the Social Mobility Commission's call for an extra-curricular activity bursary scheme.¹¹

This'll allow all young people, regardless of their financial situation, to have fun, and learn with us, or through doing other activities that are right for them.

Our ask

Fund a pastoral premium, removing financial barriers to out of school activities for those most in need.

- **Introduce a pupil premium equivalent for the young people most in need of support to take part in out-of-school activities.**
- **Remove access barriers by covering costs such as transport, kit, and equipment.**
- **Include an early years' entitlement for activities that enrich children's development before they start school.**



3. Access to the outdoors for all

'We're at our brightest and best when we're learning outdoors. Getting into nature not only helps us develop our skills but gives us a better appreciation of our place in the world.'

For years, Scouts has encouraged young people to get into the outdoors to help them become more active, engaged and connected citizens.

We believe every young person should get the opportunity access adventure and flourish in outdoor spaces. This is where I learned to step up, speak up, and where I got the encouragement to take the lead.'

Ryan, Scouts Youth Advocate

At Scouts, we believe in the transformative power of outdoor education. Every day, our volunteers connect young people with nature, fostering essential life skills like problem solving, resilience, and teamwork, while improving mental and physical health.¹⁶ Outdoor learning cultivates an environmental consciousness that's crucial for addressing climate change. **The forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) for learning outside the classroom, in the natural environment, is £4.32 for every £1 invested.**¹⁷ Eight in ten children say that being in nature makes them very happy and they want to spend more time outdoors.¹⁸ Sadly, the statistics on how many young people are accessing these benefits are bleak.

Young people in the UK are among the least active in Europe, with only 21% of children in England aged 5-15 years old meeting official targets for physical activity.¹⁹ A quarter of children leaving primary school are clinically obese.²⁰

This isn't surprising when we consider how challenging it can be for young people to access safe, outdoor space. An inquiry by the Levelling Up Committee that commenced in 2024 has heard 'public policy in England has failed to create places that support children's healthy development and wellbeing' with 'traffic-dominated neighbourhoods, low quality housing layouts, inadequate facilities, and poorly designed housing estates, along with a lack of parks and green spaces' being part of the issue.²¹

5% of children in England lack access to any outdoor space at all. In the most deprived areas, 8% never experience the natural environment. Visibly Minority Ethnic children are 20% less likely to explore green spaces each week, compared to their white, middle class peers.²²

Action is already being taken to combat this worrying trend. There've been positive legislative developments:

- The UK parliament is considering a private member's bill that mandates offering at least one outdoor education experience in both primary and secondary school years.
- In Wales, the introduction of the Outdoor Education Bill would establish a statutory duty for local authorities to make sure young people have access to residential outdoor education, removing financial barriers.
- In Scotland, a proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Educational) Bill was introduced in 2022.

These initiatives underscore a commitment to the inclusive outdoor learning experiences Scouts believes are essential for development. We continue to advocate for their universal availability.

Structured outdoor activities, such as Scouts, bridge the gap for young people, giving them access to outdoor spaces and learning opportunities in a safe environment. However, an unstable outdoor learning workforce, and a desperate need for investment into outdoor spaces and equipment, means we need to be supported if we're going to keep delivering these opportunities.



Our ask

Guarantee access to outdoor learning for all young people, as part of a permanent National Youth Guarantee.

- Support current bills in the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, and the Senedd, so all young people are guaranteed a residential outdoor experience as part of their education.
- Invest in outdoor learning centres and spaces within local authority areas for equitable access, as well as equipment hubs, particularly in areas of deprivation.
- Help organisations to develop both the voluntary and paid outdoor learning workforce.





Our volunteers deliver amazing low-cost activities

Empower the next generation with skills for life

4. Learning outside the classroom

'Living in a low IMD area, an unfortunate shared culture means that academic success is looked down upon. If more focus and recognition could be given towards non-formal and outdoor learning, this could make the difference for many young people as well as showing them there are other options'.

Scouts Youth Lead, Internal Policy Consultation

Scouts gives young people skills they simply can't get in the classroom. Our goal is to support young people as they develop skills for life and work. We want to empower even more young people, especially those facing challenges, to succeed in education and employment.

Scouts is proud to be there for young people all the way from their early years into primary and secondary school, before assisting them with transitions into further and higher education, and, finally, employment. At a time of increased concern around school attendance and engagement, combined with rising Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) figures, Scouts plays a key supportive role, particularly with disadvantaged young people and those from deprived areas.

Yet, all too often, the skills and attributes young people develop through Scouts, like teamwork, resilience, and confidence, go unrecognised compared to academic achievements. This needs to change, as these are exactly the skills employers need most.²³

By encouraging, acknowledging, and assessing skills acquired beyond the classroom, we better equip young people to engage in school and enhance their future employability. To address this issue, adopting a common language and framework would help acknowledge a wider range of skills. This would go beyond academic achievements and include essential skills and accomplishments outside the classroom – a more comprehensive, positive approach to developing the skills we need for our future workforce.

While out-of-school activities are primarily about socialising and having fun, they also create a sense of belonging and wellbeing that improves engagement. This means increased opportunities for learning both in and outside of the school day. It's all about nurturing curiosity and creativity, along with enhancing skills. Research shows extra-curricular activities give young people a versatile skills set ²⁴ that helps them feel better prepared for work.²⁵ **A pilot study, introducing Scouts' activities into a school, showed they improved young people's willingness to engage with the formal curriculum.**²⁶

Alongside any review of the curriculum and qualifications in schools and colleges, **it's vital we have a better understanding of the contributions made by non-formal learning through out-of-school and extra-curricular activities.**

Our ask

Increase recognition for essential skills learned outside of the classroom.

- **Adopt essential skills as a measurement of progress and accomplishments alongside academic achievement.**
- **Agree on an outcomes framework and measures that reward young people for skills developed outside the classroom.**

5. Building healthy relationships

'Scouts has created a healthy, supportive, community where I've been empowered to set boundaries and communicate clearly with my peers and adults. I've had the opportunity to create long-lasting friendships. We overcome challenges together.'

Freya, Scouts Youth Advocate

Our first priority is to make sure everyone at Scouts is safe, particularly our young people. We strive to create an environment where our out-of-school and extra-curricular activities not only promote skills development and fun, but also help form lifelong, healthy, relationships.

Scouts supports young people in their personal and social development. Through volunteering, trusted adults are there for our young people from primary to secondary school, throughout the teenage years, and beyond.

Uniformed organisations typically cater to young people from age 6, or even younger. Scouts' new section, Squirrels, is for 4 to 6 year olds. These early years are crucial. **During this time, emotional and physical development, along with progress in communication and language, provide the foundation to forming social relationships.**

Young people turn to friends and family for much of their advice and support. Positive relationships are the key to helping young people feel safe and supported as they grow.

Being in bad relationships can make them feel anxious, nervous, and like they can't make their own choices.²⁷ This can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and other ongoing health problems.²⁸

Challenges such as violence, bullying, social media, online safety concerns and disruptions in peer-to-peer relationships can contribute to feelings of insecurity.²⁹

Young women report that there's not enough being done to teach young people about appropriate behaviours in relationships. Almost two thirds (63%) want better education for everyone about consent and acceptable behaviours. 42% say they felt pressured into sexual activity they were uncomfortable with.³⁰ Young women are concerned about a rise in misogyny, with 45% of young men aged 16-24 having a positive view of self-described misogynist Andrew Tate, and 8 out of 10 young men aged 16-17 having consumed his content.³¹

Despite these challenges, we're optimistic about some positive changes already underway. The Online Safety Act 2023 is a significant step toward creating safer online spaces. There's also recognition of extra-curricular activities in guidance published by Ofsted for schools, and within the school curriculum for life skills and relationships. **However, relationship skills can't be learned exclusively at school, when (annually) 85% of a young person's waking hours take place outside of school.**³²

There's so much more to be done. It's time to invest in safe spaces, settings, and increased social prescribing (where people are referred to do activities that improve their health and wellbeing) for out-of-school activities, like Scouts. **It's vital we create a sense of belonging and community in young people, which'll help them achieve healthy relationships.**

Our ask

Invest in out-of-school activity providers, increasing their capacity to support young people in forming healthy relationships.

- **Recognition of extra-curricular activities in guidance with schools in personal and social development.**
- **Co-design healthy relationship programmes, with organisations like Scouts and Girlguiding.**
- **Increased use of social prescribing to community groups, like Scouts, for building healthy relationships.**



6. Supporting young people to become active citizens

Scouts learn skills and values that help them become active, engaged citizens and changemakers in their communities.

We believe in their potential to make a positive impact in society, so we're taking steps to help them even more.

A recent survey by Opinium showed that **only 22% of young people in the UK think the government considers their needs.**³³

This highlights an opportunity to do more with good citizenship education. We want more young people to feel confident and willing to contribute to their society.

Citizenship education is key. It helps young people feel more confident and have a say in their daily lives, communities, and wider society. Yet just 1 in 7 schools has a trained citizenship teacher and, where the subject is reported to be taught, it accounts for just 1.5% of learning hours.³⁴ This translates to low voter turnout when young people leave school. **In 2019, 47% of those aged 18-25 voted in the general election. This compares to 74% of over 65s.**³⁵

It isn't enough for young people to know how the democratic system works. They need the tools to become active engaged citizens. Social action, working together to solve the problems in our communities, has clear benefits:

- **62% of people think social action helps them connect better with their community.**
- **43% feel more empowered in their community.**
- **39% see it as a positive influence on school culture.**³⁶

At Scouts, teaching social action skills is embedded into our programme and central to our A Million Hands partnerships ³⁷ with organisations such as Save the Children, British Red Cross and the Work Wildlife Foundation. **An estimated 30% of Scouts participate in community projects every term, and from January to November 2023, we sold 29,010 community impact badges. This translates to over 182,000 hours of community service in just one year!**

Building on this success, we propose to integrate citizenship education into a toolkit for social action. This means giving young people both the knowledge and the tools to be active and engaged citizens.

That's why we're asking the government to support fair and non-partisan political education. Every young person should have access to this learning, coupled with a social action toolkit. Together, this'll empower young people to understand their rights and actively shape their own future.

Our ask

Empower young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens.

- **Strengthen political literacy and education delivered in schools and youth groups, including Scouts.**
- **Facilitate the creation of social action projects for all young people, so they can make an impact in their local communities.**



Cover the costs for
those who need it most



Recognise the power of volunteering and communities

7. Reward and recognition for volunteers

Volunteers nurture essential life skills and deliver meaningful experiences to young people in Scouts. Their dedication makes everything we do possible.

Recruiting, recognising, rewarding, and retaining these volunteers is not only critical for Scouts, it's also crucial to maintaining a healthy voluntary ecosystem.

However, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Time Well Spent report highlights concerning trends.

- **Volunteer participation decreased by 6% – only 16% volunteered in 2021/2022.**
- **The likelihood of volunteers continuing their service also went down from 80% to 77% in 2022.**³⁸

Our goal is to shape volunteering into a flexible, fulfilling, and personally rewarding experience, acknowledged by the wider community for its powerful impact. By achieving this, we'll attract new volunteers and retain the incredible individuals who drive and deliver Scouts.

Currently, 14% of individuals don't volunteer because they're unaware of existing possibilities.³⁹ We recognise the importance of making potential volunteers aware of available opportunities. The Big Help Out, a national day to raise awareness of volunteering, gives people a chance to experience volunteering and make a difference in their communities. It was co-developed by Scouts and a coalition of voluntary organisations to meet this need.

But we need help to go further. **The government should develop a volunteering strategy with practitioners who understand how to grow quality volunteering opportunities.**

We're talking about a strategy that proactively promotes volunteering, making it simpler for individuals to contribute their time and skills.

The appetite is there. Of the 7.2 million people who took part in the first year of The Big Help Out, 12% said they're more likely to volunteer as a result.⁴⁰

The strategy should include a target to recruit 100,000 volunteers for youth organisations. This'd help to clear the waiting lists for uniformed youth organisations. **To achieve this, we're calling for a nationally accredited and recognised volunteering platform, supported by the government.**

This platform would serve as a central hub, enabling individuals to easily discover, and sign up for, volunteering opportunities in their communities. It'd also enable volunteers to log hours, and show their lifelong volunteering commitment, which they can be rewarded for.

The platform would have the dual purposes of gathering data on volunteering and allowing the government to demonstrate the value volunteering gives the economy and society more widely.

This platform would create a universal volunteering culture that meets the needs of our volunteers, making sure they feel appreciated and empowered to continue making a positive impact on the lives of young people.

Our ask

Create a national strategy and volunteering platform accredited by the government.

- **Lead the development of a central hub to easily discover and sign up for volunteering opportunities in local communities.**
- **Enable volunteers to log hours, in order to track their lifelong volunteering commitment which they can then be accredited for.**
- **Introduce meaningful rewards for volunteers such as free or reduced travel and access to local cultural sites or days out in partnership with supporter organisations.**



2024 research from 'Shaping the Future of Volunteering', a coalition of some of the UK's leading charities, shows how beneficial volunteering is for the individual, as well as the communities they support:

- A survey of 28,494 volunteers at 10 major charities found 80% reported improved wellbeing.
- 69% said they benefited from gaining new skills and knowledge through the training they received.
- The survey found, while volunteering, 89% felt comfortable being themselves, could express their opinions freely, and felt listened to.⁴¹

'At the moment, many volunteers would like to devote more time to Scouts, but can't due to work commitments. If employers actively encouraged their employees to volunteer, it would attract new volunteers and existing volunteers would be able to provide more of their time to Scouts.'

UK Youth Lead, Internal Policy Consultation



8. Time off for volunteering

Without the dedication of our incredible volunteers, Scouts wouldn't be the community it is today. **Our volunteers contribute more than 50 million hours of voluntary work each year to keep their local groups running.** On average, they've volunteered 16 hours a month, for 12 years – that's twice the wider volunteering population. However, the COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges, including a decline in the number of volunteers nationwide. As a result, Scouts experienced a 10% drop in volunteer numbers.

One significant barrier, for 48% of individuals contemplating volunteering, is the lack of flexibility and work commitments.⁴² Additionally, 63% of employed people in the UK currently don't receive days off from work for volunteering.⁴³ **It's vital that flexibility is introduced, to encourage more people to give their time to good causes.**

To address this and emphasise the importance of a balanced work-life-volunteer dynamic, **we propose the introduction of a policy that grants employees the right to request up to 35 hours, per year, for volunteer leave.** This matches the allowance of many charity organisations, as well as some Civil Service departments.

Our policy aims to increase flexibility around volunteers' work commitments, allowing them to volunteer at times that fit with their schedules.

Focusing on hours, not days, encourages long term volunteering and makes it easier for organisations to retain volunteers and operate in a sustainable way.

Using volunteer leave, employees could opt to leave work to support the National Youth Guarantee for out-of-school activities. We recognise people have different motivations, and time isn't the only barrier to volunteering. However, we believe focusing on time off for volunteering is crucial to reversing the decline we've outlined.

By dedicating one hour each week a volunteer could, for example, contribute to their local Squirrel Drey. **This simple yet impactful, change could translate into leading 35 sessions over the course of the year (almost the full school calendar), creating a positive and sustainable impact on Scouts' provision.**

Our ask

Legislate so that employees have the right to request 35 hours of volunteering leave every year.

- **Introduce an employment bill that gives the right for employees to request 35 hours of volunteering leave annually from their employers.**
- **Allow leave to be taken in hours rather than days.**



9. Protection of community spaces

'With access to a youth club, a lonely child can make new friends. With access to outdoor centres, inner city teenagers can discover a love for nature. With access to sports clubs, struggling young people can unwind from school by getting their heads in the game.

Every young person deserves the right to access and enjoy these powerful experiences, without needing to worry about cost, or how long the bus ride home takes. Young people deserve spaces that are local, accessible, and affordable.'

Ben, Scouts Youth Advocate

We want everyone to have easy access to a uniformed organisation in their community. It's so important to have these places and spaces at the heart of a community. They reduce social isolation⁴⁴, boost wellbeing and foster togetherness. **Safe spaces, community hubs and non-formal learning environments, including Scouts, are crucial to maintaining mental and physical health.**

The sad truth is, communities without proper investment in these spaces face poor health outcomes, with one in four people facing long-term illnesses.⁴⁵ The areas without community spaces tend to struggle with limited social infrastructure⁴⁶, restricted access to out-of-school and extra-curricular activities⁴⁷ and a scarcity of voluntary or community sector organisations.⁴⁸

In recent years, local Scout Groups have navigated energy bills doubling (or tripling), and rents soaring. Some are being forced to buy the land where their meeting place is located to keep the premises. These are immense pressures on groups, often with very few reserves, who are also trying not to raise prices for young people and families.

Buildings that have served their communities for decades are in desperate need of refurbishment to make sure they're safe, sustainable and serve the needs of today's young people. **A lack of high quality venues is a major barrier for growing volunteer-based organisations, like Scouts, particularly in underserved communities, and rural or coastal areas.**⁴⁹

Progress has been achieved with the introduction of the Youth Investment Fund by the government in 2019. But there are youth spaces in urgent need of investment across the country, not just in the government's 'levelling up areas'. These are costs that community groups are unable to cover. **We need more permanent measures and funding mechanisms to be put in place for community spaces and assets.**

Under recent statutory guidance⁵⁰, local authorities now have a responsibility to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure time activities in their area. **As part of a joined-up approach, we want to see this guidance reinforced by measures to protect spaces run in the community interest, like Scouts, as local assets.** No group should be made to leave such spaces without suitable, affordable, alternative arrangements in place.

Directing funds to where they're most needed and understanding the impact investment achieves, relies on data sharing between local authorities and voluntary sector organisations. We're keen to use models similar to 'Access Sport' to unlock local investment. It provides a sustainable and regenerative model with the potential to leverage match funding.

Our ask

Introduce protection for youth spaces as community assets and invest in renovations and repairs.

- **Establish a rolling fund for renovations and repairs of spaces used by youth groups.**
- **Introduce protection for groups with a community interest, so they can't be made to leave spaces before alternative arrangements are made.**



Support working people with time off to volunteer

Summary of recommendations

1. Establish a dedicated Minister for Young People at the Department for Education.

- Introduce a Minister for Young People, with responsibilities for youth services and non-formal learning.
- Form a cross-departmental committee chaired by the minister to deliver a National Strategy for Young People.
- Embed youth voices and consultation in policy making across the government.

This policy ask is backed by:



2. Fund a pastoral premium, removing financial barriers to out of school activities for those most in need.

- Introduce a pupil premium equivalent for the young people most in need of support to take part in out-of-school activities.
- Remove access barriers by covering costs such as transport, kit, and equipment.
- Include an early years' entitlement for activities that enrich children's development before they start school.

This policy ask is backed by:



3. Guarantee access to outdoor learning for all young people, as part of a permanent National Youth Guarantee.

- Support current bills in the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd so all young people are guaranteed an outdoor experience as part of their education.
- Invest in outdoor learning centres and spaces within local authority areas for equitable access, as well as equipment hubs, particularly in areas of deprivation.
- Help organisations to develop both the voluntary and paid outdoor learning workforce.

This policy ask is backed by:



4. Increase recognition for essential skills learned outside of the classroom.

- Adopt essential skills as a measurement of progress and accomplishments alongside academic achievement.
- Agree on an outcomes framework and measures that reward young people for skills developed outside the classroom.

This policy ask is backed by:



5. Invest in out-of-school activity providers, increasing their capacity to support young people in forming healthy relationships.

- Recognition of extra-curricular activities in guidance with schools in personal and social development.
- Co-design healthy relationship programmes with organisations like Scouts and Girlguiding.
- Increased use of social prescribing to community groups like Scouts for building healthy relationships.

This policy ask is backed by:



6. Empower young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens.

- Strengthen political literacy and education delivered in schools and youth groups, including Scouts.
- Facilitate the creation of social action projects for all young people so they can make an impact in their local communities.

This policy ask is backed by:



7. Create a national strategy and volunteering platform accredited by the government.

- Lead the development of a central hub to easily discover and sign up for volunteering opportunities in local communities.
- Enable volunteers to log hours, in order to track their lifelong volunteering commitment which they can then be accredited for.
- Introduce meaningful rewards for volunteers such as free or reduced travel and access to local cultural sites or days out in partnership with supporter organisations.

8. Legislate so that employees have the right to request 35 hours of volunteering leave every year.

- Introduce an employment bill that gives the right for employees to request 35 hours of volunteering leave annually from their employers.
- Allow leave to be taken in hours rather than days.

This policy ask is backed by:



9. Introduce protection for youth spaces as community assets and invest in renovation and repairs.

- Establish a rolling fund for renovation and repairs of spaces used by youth groups.
- Introduce protection for groups with a community interest, so they can't be made to leave spaces without alternative arrangements being made.

This policy ask is backed by:



Organisations that endorse the whole manifesto



UK YOUTH

Woodcraft Folk
Education for Social Change since 1925



YMCA



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Be a...



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