

youth**united**
foundation
Evidence Review 2017

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Background

As part of Collaboration Hub activities for 2016/17, Youth United Foundation ('the Foundation') agreed to review and summarise the research and evaluation that has been carried out or commissioned by individual Youth United members. This complements the evidence that we have gathered as a Network through collective research projects, including the recent evaluations of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund ('UYSAF'), which were published on 19th October 2016.

Purpose

The aim of this review is to give a clear picture of the current evidence-base for uniformed youth work in the UK. This in turn will support Youth United to develop a plan for our next collective research project(s). It will also support future fundraising efforts through both the Foundation and individual Network members.

Scope

The review covers the following information in relation to the long-term, regular provision for children and young people in member organisations (sometimes called 'cadet programmes'). This includes research and evaluation work relating to young people and/or the adult volunteers who support the programmes.¹

- **Impact** evaluations (independent or 'in-house')
- **Process** evaluations (independent or 'in-house')
- **Secondary** evidence that members draw upon to make the case for impact or to inform the design of programme(s). For example, evaluations of programmes delivered by international equivalents or of programmes that bear other similarities to Youth United groups (e.g. mentoring programmes)
- **Market research** (independently or 'in-house') that has been carried out to better understand the needs of and/or demand from young people or adult volunteers

Process

In October 2016, a call for evidence was sent out to nominated evaluation leads in each member organisation. The call requested members to submit all reports that fell into the categories outlined in the Scope above.

Summary of submissions

In total, 38 reports were submitted for review; 32 of these concern individual members and 6 reports were submitted that cover more than one Youth United member (collective research and evaluation projects that have been conducted without the involvement of the Foundation). Of these, 21 contain findings on impact, 23 on process, and 16 contain market research (many of the reports are mixed in content). These reports complement the 5 evaluations that have been carried out

¹ We did not collect information relating to other programmes delivered by members – e.g. short term training programmes for young people.

through the Foundation. The summary findings below do not reference every report submitted, but try to pick out key themes that are repeated or where we have more certainty over the results (due to the standard of evidence). A full, themed catalogue has been created for reference to support further reading.

The standard of evidence varies significantly across reports and should be carefully considered when drawing conclusions and making cases for our work. Where proper control groups have been used in impact evaluations, we can be more sure of the results (although they may not be perfect for other reasons). Many of the evaluations reviewed have only used data gathered from participants, without considering the counterfactual – what would have happened if the same (or similar) young people hadn't done the programme? In these cases, we can't be sure that the effects observed (e.g. increased confidence in young people) have happened as a result of the programme in question. To help navigate the reports in this regard, each one has been tagged with a 'Standard of Evidence', with an explanatory note in Appendix 1, below.

The findings of process evaluations and market research have not been given a 'Standard of Evidence' because this technical scale does not apply to that type of evidence. This does not mean that there aren't better or worse types of this research in this field, or that these reports are less important. Some of the most interesting findings for the Network will probably be contained in these sections, which give insights into programme design and the needs and interests of young people.

All reports in Appendix 1 have been numbered for ease of referencing.

Summary findings

Impact evidence

There is strong evidence that Youth United organisations have a positive impact on the **development of young people**. An independent trial (report #40) conducted by Family, Kids and Youth in 2015 found that, compared to a control group, young peoples' **life skills and character traits** are significantly enhanced as a result of participation in uniformed youth groups:

- Communication skills - 13% increase
- Creativity - 11% increase
- Sense of empathy - 10% increase
- Resilience - 9% increase

Whilst not completely robust (due to a small control group), these findings were further reinforced this year by research carried out by Durham University (report #43) that showed that young people participating in Youth United organisations in their schools also show statistically significant improvements in their soft skills (with a focus on self-confidence and teamwork). The method used by Durham – a randomised control trial – is the most robust quantitative test that a programme can be put through.

Whilst the Durham trial didn't show an impact on academic attainment, there is some evidence from other research to suggest that uniformed youth groups can contribute to **school-related outcomes**. In a recent survey, 66% of Sea Cadets who responded said that Sea Cadets **improved their**

attendance and engagement at school (report #20). Demos also found in 2015 that young people in Scouting were half as likely as young people in general to say that school was a waste of time (report #27). There is also evidence from the US that the Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps can contribute to higher school attendance and **graduation rates**, as well as **positive classroom behaviour** (report #5).

There is some evidence to suggest that uniformed youth activity can be **particularly impactful for 'disaffected' young people**. In 2010, researchers from the University of Southampton – investigating the societal impact of the military cadet forces – noted that there is, “convincing evidence that placing such young people into a structured, disciplined environment which demands close group work not only benefits the young people involved but is also cost-effective and provides a **social return on investment** [through projected reduced offending rates for example],” (report #34). Building on the theme of financial returns, a 1999 study, ‘Benefits to the RAF of the Air Cadet organisation’ (report #17), estimated that delivery of the RAF cadet programme saved the RAF £11M per year. These savings came from reduced costs for the RAF in the fields of recruitment, communications and training.

Impact assessments of Scouting and Girlguiding have often emphasised the **physical and mental health benefits** to young people. A recently published study by the University of Edinburgh (report #36), “...found evidence that participation in the Guides and Scouts in youth has a positive association with mental health some 40 years later in life. Crucially, the effect appeared particularly strong for children growing up in low social position households...”

Beyond the benefits for young people, Youth United has also started to collect evidence of the **benefits of uniformed youth groups to their wider communities**. An independent evaluation of UYSAF (report #41) – carried out by Ipsos MORI in 2016 – suggests that when a uniformed youth group is operating in a community, people feel a **greater sense of pride** in their area and are **more likely to volunteer** themselves.

Process findings

From the submitted reports, there are a lot of detailed insights into issues such as programme design and volunteer training that will be of interest to programme staff in all member organisations. Below is a brief summary of some of the common themes.

Two reports, from Girlguiding and the Boys’ Brigade, **review the delivery models used under UYSAF** and so are especially relevant to the Network and Foundation. Development Workers from the Boys’ Brigade emphasised that the sustainability of new units was likely to vary and that **more needed to be done to ensure that the best sustainability support is put in place for all new units** (report #6). Integrating new units into existing regional structures is seen as key here, but these structures need to be well-informed and to have their own capacity built up in order to effectively support new units. These comments should be taken in the context of some generally positive sustainability overall. Our sustainability review for 2016 has shown that, of the units that have received funding from Youth United Foundation three years ago or more, 87% are still open. The Development Workers in the Boys’ Brigade review also emphasised the **valuable role of social action in “energising” new groups**.

The Girlguiding review of UYSAF (report #11) repeatedly highlights the Development Worker model as an effective way of launching units, recruiting and training adult volunteers and recruiting young

people. This reinforces the key message from Ecorys's evaluations of the Social Inclusion Programme (SIP) and the 'YOU Matter' programme that was delivered in London before the Foundation existed (reports #39 and #33 respectively). The Girlguiding report also suggests that **a new, "younger and less affluent" demographic of volunteer has been engaged through UYSAF** (although they haven't collected the demographic data to prove this). This report also highlights the **need for better data collection and sharing**, particularly of demographic data on young participants. This is a theme that has also emerged from Youth United Foundation's recent review of the mapping tool.

As a collective, we have also reviewed the efficacy of the UYSAF models. Ipsos MORI's process evaluation of UYSAF2 (report #42) examines the challenges and **good practice in engaging young people who are particularly hard to reach**, including young offenders and those with physical disabilities and special educational needs. This research suggests that Youth United groups can be accessible and valuable to very hard-to-reach young people. There is clear demand from young people with a range of challenging needs for the opportunities offered up by our members. But our members know that they sometimes need to adapt their offer to make it accessible to all.

In 2015, the **Army Cadets carried out a thorough review of their syllabus for young people and training programme for adult leaders** (reports #1 to #5). This review suggested that the current syllabus, particularly the opportunities for leadership, was popular with young people and adult volunteers. It was suggested however, that the syllabus was slightly overloaded with complex content, and that some adult volunteers struggled with delivery as a result. The **capability of adult volunteers** was identified by young people as the most important factor in determining whether they remained engaged. The need for a simpler curriculum and improved training and resources for adult volunteers, is echoed by the Boys' Brigade in their internal review of UYSAF. Having said this, the value of adult volunteers is not underestimated in any of the research. In fact, the 'Evaluation of the Impact of Volunteering in the Uniformed Organisations in N Ireland' (report #35) estimates that **for every £1 invested in volunteers, a uniformed group gets an average of £25 back** through the value of the work that they do.

The Army Cadet review also **looked for evidence of what works in other programmes, including Scouting, the Air Cadets and the Police Cadets** (report #2). From Scouting, the **age-grouping by section** was seen as an effective model; the **Virtual Learning Environment** of the Air Cadets was highlighted as an effective way of covering content that couldn't be covered face-to-face; and the fact that being a Police Cadet directly contributes to a **young person's ability to get a career in the Police** is highlighted as a key way of "ensuring that significant numbers of highly motivated and capable young people who have decided on a career in law enforcement are attracted to Police Cadets".

The 'Cadets and the Capital' report (report #29) from 2012 explores the importance of **relationships and social capital** in motivating young people to join and stay in the Volunteer Police Cadets. This theme of relationships comes up again in Demos's 'Character by Doing' research (report #28), in which teachers report improved relationships with their pupils after taking on the role of Scout Leader.

Market research

The Scouts and Guides in particular have carried out quite a bit of market research with young people. This research has been used to inform programme and brand design.

Girlguiding's annual 'Girls' Attitudes Survey' gives a snapshot of girls' feelings on a wide range of issues. The 2016 survey (report #10) raises **serious concerns on issues relating to gender inequality, sexism and personal safety**. It also highlights, however, a **strong sense of aspiration and leadership** amongst young women, with 63% of girls surveyed wanting "to be a leader in their chosen job".

The 2007 report, 'Typical young people...A study of what young people are really like today' (report #22), suggests that the opportunity and ability to **enjoy life**, to develop a **strong set of values** and to spend time in a **supportive, loving environment** are highest on young people's list of priorities and are what they value most. This study finds further **evidence of an active social conscience** and in particular a desire to make a difference; 84% of UK youth state that looking after the environment is important and almost 79% feel it is important to be well informed about what is going on in the world. This interest in social and environmental change is backed up by 'The Future of Scouting' report (report #24), which demonstrates a clear demand from Scouts for social action opportunities and was an important precursor to the 'Million Hands' campaign.

Interestingly, family members are reported to be the most positive influencers of young people who are more cynical about the influence of celebrities. One in five young people spontaneously picked their **mum as the adult they admire most in Britain today**. In second place, with the support of almost one in ten of the sample, was dad.

Gaps in the evidence

This review shows that there is strong evidence that uniformed youth groups contribute towards a range of positive outcomes for young people; particularly in the realms of soft skills, character traits, health and well-being. Further research on these themes should only be conducted to **improve the standard of evidence** (the two control trials to date have been positive but floored) or to add detail to our understanding of these outcomes through high quality qualitative work.

Outcomes relating to formal education are less well understood. There is definitely scope here to look properly at academic attainment and/or other **school-related outcomes** such as attendance and behaviour.

We have only begun to understand **the impact that young people have through their social action**. Whilst it is tempting therefore to invest more in research in this field, this should be done with caution. Common metrics are very hard to come by in this area, so future research would need to be very carefully designed if it is to genuinely add to our understanding.

On the **process** side, three clear themes emerge as worthy of further research. Firstly, it feels worthwhile to explore in some detail the **sustainability** of the new units that have been set up through SIP and UYSAF. Understanding the barriers and best practice in this field would help all members to ensure that every new unit is given the best possible chance of survival after Development Workers leave. Secondly, there is scope to **build upon the learning from the UYSAF2** evaluation. A next phase of research could explore how best to take these early lessons and translate them into standard practice across the organisations. Thirdly, the **role of adult volunteers**

feels worthy of further exploration. For example, it may be interesting to explore whether volunteer leaders have a particular impact on young people *because* they are volunteers. It may also be interesting to explore the (changing?) demographics of volunteers along with the best **ways to engage new adults**.

Appendix 1: Publications by organisation

NB: The 'Standard of Evidence' referred to in each case below gives an indication of YUF's level of confidence in the results, with a higher standard corresponding to a higher level of confidence. These standards only apply to impact evaluations. For more information, see Nesta's 'Standards of Evidence' (2013)².

#	Publication title	Evaluation design
Army Cadet Force		
1	ACF and CCFA – Deliverable 1 – Cadet Syllabus Framework (TQ Education and Training, June 2015)	A process evaluation of the Army Cadet training syllabus and progression system, with recommendations for development. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
2	ACF and CCFA – Deliverable 4 – Benchmarking & Best Practice Study (TQ Education and Training, July 2015)	Market research with key stakeholders on training aides. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
3	ACF and CCFA – Deliverable 5 – Train the Trainer Solutions Study (TQ Education and Training, July 2015)	Market research with key stakeholders on instructor training, development, and train the trainer courses. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
4	ACF and CCFA – Deliverable 2 – Stakeholder Consultation (TQ Education and Training, August 2015)	Market research with key stakeholders on a revised syllabus framework. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
5	ACF and CCFA – Deliverable 3 – Benchmarking & Best Practice Study (TQ Education and Training, August 2015)	A comparative study of 'similar' organisations including The Scout Association and Volunteer Police Cadets. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
Boys' Brigade		
6	Development Worker Meeting Notes (Boys' Brigade, June 2016)	A staff review meeting of UYSAF. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
Girlguiding		
7	Impact report 2012-2013 (Girlguiding, 2013)	A combined report on the impact of Girlguiding, market research on girls' attitudes and experiences, and key activities from the year. Standard of Evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc survey and case studies).
8	Impact report 2015 (Girlguiding, 2016)	A combined report on the impact of Girlguiding and key activities from the year. Standard of Evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc survey and case studies).

² http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards_of_evidence.pdf

9	Exploring the impact of Girlguiding among alumni (BMG Research, 2015)	A mixed methods evaluation of the impact that Girlguiding has had on adult women. Standard of Evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc surveys).
10	Girls' Attitudes Survey 2016 (Girlguiding, 2016)	Market research with girls on a wide range of issues. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
11	Review of Girlguiding Development Work Model used in the UYSAF Project (Independent consultants, 2016)	A process evaluation of Girlguiding's UYSAF-funded work, including some analysis of other members' delivery models. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
12	Being our best: Girlguiding's plan for 2020 (Girlguiding, 2016)	Includes market research with volunteers, parents, supporters, staff and girls. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
Fire Cadets		
13	RESPECT: a personal development programme for young people at risk of social exclusion: Final Report (Ward, Thurston & Alford, October 2009)	A process evaluation of a targeted programme run by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service with partners. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
14	The Future of Community Fire Cadets (London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, 2013)	A process evaluation to assess the role of the Community Fires Cadets programme within the Fire Service's wider youth engagement programmes. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
15	Evaluation of Fire Cadets Scheme (London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, 2015)	A process evaluation to determine whether using a volunteer model for delivery is viable. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
16	Quality, Outcome Evaluation v. Oct 2016 (Fire Cadets, 2016)	A draft outputs and outcomes framework to support monitoring and evaluation of the Fire Cadets programme. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
RAF Air Cadets		
17	Benefits to the RAF of the Air Cadet organisation (Command Scientific Support Branch, July 1999)	An evaluation of the impact of the Air Cadets programme focussing on benefits to the RAF. Standard of Evidence: Level 2 (some before and after data).
18	2009 ATC Cadet Survey data (RAF Air Cadets, 2009)	Summary data from market research (including demographics) with Air Cadets. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
19	2009 ATC Staff Survey data (RAF Air Cadets, 2009)	Summary data from market research (including demographics) with programme staff. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
Sea Cadets		

20	MSSC Annual Review (MSSC, November 2016)	A combined report on the impact of Sea Cadets and key activities from the year. Standard of Evidence: Level 1/2 (methods not explained).
21	UYSAF2 report (Sea Cadets, forthcoming)	A review of the Sea Cadets' UYSAF2-funded work in East London. Standard of Evidence: TBC.
The Scout Association		
22	Typical young people... A study of what young people are really like today (nfpSynergy, 2007)	A quantitative survey of a representative sample of UK young people supported by qualitative interviews asking general questions as to how they think and feel. Standard of evidence: N/A.
23	Impact Assessment Evaluation of The Scout Association (Public and Corporate Economic Consultants, February 2011)	A mixed methods evaluation of the impact of Scouting on young people, volunteers and the community. Standard of evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc survey).
24	The Future of Scouting: Social Action Research (Livity, December 2013)	A mixed methods piece of market research into Scouts' attitudes and beliefs around social action. Standard of evidence: N/A.
25	Scouts: Research projects completed with nfpSynergy (nfpSynergy, 2013)	A summary of 10 research projects covering findings on impact, process and market research.
26	Scouting for Skills (Demos, 2014)	A qualitative impact evaluation looking at skills development from Scouting, including some process findings. Standard of evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc with no comparison).
27	Learning by Doing (Demos, 2015)	A mixed method study into whether non-formal learning is sufficiently embedded into the British education system. Standard of evidence: N/A
28	Character by Doing (Demos, 2015)	A mixed methods evaluation of the Character by Doing programme – piloting Cub activities in schools. Standard of evidence: Level 2/3 (a small comparison group was used).
Volunteer Police Cadets		
29	Cadets and the Capital (Melissa Pepper, January 2012)	A mixed method study of the Metropolitan Police Service Volunteer Police Cadets, exploring motivations for engagement. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
30	Equality Impact Assessment (Hampshire Constabulary, October 2014)	An assessment of the VPC programme against the Equality Act 2010. Standard of Evidence: N/A.

31	Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYV) Evaluation Report (Catch the Light, November 2014)	A mixed process and impact evaluation of the PSYV scheme. Standard of Evidence: Level 2 (pre and post surveys).
32	A critical evaluation into the impact that the Volunteer Police Cadet scheme plays in relation to the development of the cadets (Emma Crowther, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2015)	A mixed method study of the Greater Manchester Police Service Volunteer Police Cadets exploring impact in terms of skills development and police perceptions. Standard of Evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc survey).
Non-YUF collective research projects		
33	Evaluation of YOU Matter (Ecorys and NfER, May 2014)	A mixed methods evaluation of the YOU Matter programme – an expansion of 9 Youth United organisations across London. Standard of evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc survey).
34	The Societal Impact of Cadet Forces (University of Southampton, November 2010)	A literature review and survey to explore the impact of military cadet forces. Standard of evidence: Level 2/3 (some control groups in lit review studies).
35	Evaluation of the Impact of Volunteering in the Uniformed Organisations in N Ireland (Volunteer Now, March 2014)	An impact evaluation of 6 uniformed youth groups in Northern Ireland, including a financial analysis of the value of volunteering. Standard of evidence: Level 1 (post hoc surveys).
36	Be(ing) prepared: Guide and Scout participation, childhood social position and mental health at age 50 – a prospective birth cohort study (University of Edinburgh, November 2016)	Impact research using the 1958 birth cohort National Child Development Study, testing whether Scouts/Girlguiding attendance was associated with mental health. Standard of evidence: Level 2/3 (large scale cohort study and controlling for some relevant variables).
37	Social impact of CCFA (Northampton University, forthcoming)	TBC
38	DfE The Cadet Experience: Understanding Cadet Outcomes (Ecorys, forthcoming)	TBC
YUF collective research projects		
39	Evaluation of the Supporting Inclusion Programme (Ecorys, November 2014)	A process evaluation that examined the delivery models of Network Members under SIP. Standard of Evidence: N/A.

40	Evaluation of the Social Action Journey Fund (Family, Kids and Youth, September 2015)	An impact evaluation that used qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the impact of participation on young people, with the use of a control group. Some process evaluation was also carried out. Standard Of Evidence: Level 2/3 (whilst a control group was used, the groups were not randomised).
41	Evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund 1 (Ipsos MORI, October 2016)	An impact evaluation that examined the impact that youth social action has on the local community, through surveys administered by local units. Standard of Evidence: Level 1 (post-hoc surveys only).
42	Evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund 2 (Ipsos MORI, October 2016)	A process evaluation that is examining the challenges and good practice in engaging young people who are particularly hard to reach. Standard of Evidence: N/A.
43	Evaluation of the EEF Schools Programme (Durham University, July 2016)	A randomised control trial of the impact of uniformed youth activity in schools, with a focus on academic attainment and soft skills development. Standard of Evidence: Level 3.