

Growth Report

This report has been created using the verbatim responses of adults and young people who attended the 2016 #YouShape event in Doncaster, completed an online survey or commented through social media during #YouShape week.

What is growth?

Growth means increasing the number of youth members of Scouting (up to the age of 25) and also the number of adult volunteers, as measured by the annual census.

Is growth even important?

Growth is important in Scouting: the more we grow, the more young people can experience life changing opportunities. A growing movement makes young people more enthusiastic, as they feel they are part of something big and exciting.

What are the main barriers to growth?

- Lack of affordable and appropriate venues
- Lack of adult volunteers
- Unsuitable people in certain roles
- Negative attitudes of some existing leaders

What is needed in order to help Scouting grow?

- Improving the quality of local Scouting through high quality Programmes
- Ensuring the training of leaders is of as high a quality as the Programme we seek to create
- Improving communication between sections and with other local Groups
 - This would aid with equipment sharing and more social opportunities
- Promoting flexible volunteering, and communicating to potential volunteers that there are roles available other than at a sectional level.
- Working to improve the public perception of scouting
- Supporting and encouraging young leaders to become adult leaders
- Ensuring that every member is "proud to Scout"

It is important to remember that we shouldn't just be trying to grow for growth's sake. By creating better support and increasing publicity to demonstrate what Scouting can offer, Scouting will naturally grow. We as Scouts recognise that "Scouting is an awesome, amazing adventure, full of friendships, family and fun, which gives everlasting memories" (Table 19). We need to provide the support network to offer everyone this chance.

How do we increase the numbers of young people progressing through the Movement into Network and management/leadership positions?

Network Transition

One of the issues around retaining members in the move from Explorers to Network is the perception that Network is a 'drinking club', leading to the daunting prospect of moving up into the section. Participants agreed that as members turn 18 at different stages, many wait for their peers in order to join together and during this time some people leave. A solution, we heard repeatedly, was to provide linking events and projects that make this transition easier due to pre-formed relationships. Links between all sections were mentioned to improve transitions throughout and ensure everyone can see the next sections and beyond.

Outcome: Provide linking projects and events between Network units and all other youth sections with specific focus on the Explorer/Network transition.

Network Programme

A lack of understanding of what is available locally was noted as a barrier in a number of areas. More promotion of what Networks are doing and the projects available to members would be beneficial to combat this. In combination with this, there should be an easy joining process that is made accessible to all members. The quality of the Programme is also key to encouraging members to get involved in projects: ensure members are generating high quality projects that will inspire new members.

Outcome: Promote the projects offered by Networks and provide a clear and easy way to get involved. It is hoped that the new Network platform will help make this happen.

Network Structure

With the age range for Network coinciding with those attending University, many people said they found it difficult to feel part of a Network section when splitting their time between two locations. The new Network platform will hopefully eradicate some of these issues by providing opportunities for this section on a national scale. SSAGO was also spoken about as a provision that should be promoted more and used to its full potential to increase membership; participants spoke about the fact that they felt that not enough support is given.

The appointment of an active, efficient and inspiring Network Commissioner was said to be key for encouraging members to join a successful Network. Any structure must also allow for it to be a Youth Shaped section by allowing members to shape and develop their own projects. The support of District Scout Network Commissioners is also key to ensure the retention of Network members.

Outcome: Appoint active, efficient and inspiring Network Commissioners.

Leadership/management

Promotion of opportunities

One member said: "As a Network member it was hard to know what I needed to fill in and who to talk to in order to get a warrant and join a local Network." This was a theme amongst many discussions. Providing members leaving Explorers with clear information about all their opportunities going forward (for example, leadership, management and Network) - both locally and further afield - would allow individuals to find the most suitable opportunities for them.

Outcome: Provide members leaving Explorers with information about all of the opportunities open to them going forward.

Support and Training

This was said to be key in the transition of youth members in to leadership or management roles. Some of the issues raised were around the theme of the pressure of taking on an adult role. Each group's responses were heavily themed by the need for support, encouragement and training in order to fulfil this role successfully. Suggestions included having Young Leaders' training or having an assigned mentor, as an introduction to the training process. This will help to ensure that members are not overwhelmed by what they have taken on and that they feel valued in their role.

Outcome: Provide support and training tailored towards young people entering leadership and management roles.

How do we attract adults outside Scouting into management and leadership positions in Scouting?

- More clearly advertise the wide variety of roles available, on a variety of different platforms - including word-of-mouth in the local community.
- Help current volunteers understand, embrace and accept the concept of flexible volunteering.
- Either provide more support for local Scouting, or work towards having a more unified national approach and presence at university 'Fresher's Fairs'.
- Provide support and guidance in how to run initiatives that give adults outside of Scouting the opportunity to engage in the Programme – through family camps and events, parent rotas, leader 'bring a friend' nights (just like we do with young people), etc.
- Groups need to get to know parents better and identify their skills. Leaders can then match these skills to specific roles and play to the strengths and motivations of that parent. Likewise, volunteering can be promoted to staff at local businesses, where the skills the staff will learn from undertaking a volunteering role has a clear benefit for that business.
- We need to be better at promoting the benefits of Scouting to adults – including the skills you can learn and put on your CV, opportunities such as the DofE award, and the social side. Recruitment should concentrate on those looking to improve their CVs.
- Work with SSAGO and universities to promote opportunities.
- Scouting nationally and locally needs to focus on improving the Programme for 18-25 year olds through Scout Network, to retain Explorers and entice new members in.
- One barrier to entry identified was how we appear to the outside. We need to be friendly and open to new/prospective adults, address the issues of 'cliques' and politics, and talk in a non-technical way (without acronyms).
- Training and support needs to provide new volunteers with the right knowledge and experience so that they feel confident and supported. This can be achieved through the development of packs that guide them through the process, adopting a 'show them, don't just tell them' approach to modules, and ensuring that we don't load volunteers up with too much work too soon.
- A national media drive that is able to be rolled out locally, which focuses on changing the perceptions of Scouting in the UK by sharing positive stories and makes Scouting more visible in the local community (by tying in with Community Impact Initiatives).
- More support for local media drives and advertisement.
- Make adults aware of different roles available that they may not necessarily first consider- especially for retired people or those that hold specific skills.
- Promote the opportunity for structured, positive and fun training structure – no experience needed and free!

For more information or to discuss this report further please contact youth.shaped@scouts.org.uk