

Trends in volunteering

Historically scouting has relied upon a substantial number of long term and deeply committed 'career volunteers'. These are people that have typically been involved with scouting for many years and are the backbone of our success, many have been members of the movement as children. However, in recent years many external commentators have identified that organisations that rely on long-term or regular volunteers, and particularly those operating a membership model of volunteering, are going to have to rethink the way they designed volunteering opportunities in order to survive.

Section based roles

From research it is clear that nearly 90% of the adult volunteers recruited into our section-based roles (section leaders, assistant section leaders and section assistants), come from two key sources.

Between 40-45% of new volunteers come from the parents of current youth members (or in some cases prospective youth members).

In this regard the research also identified that section rotas are a particularly effective method of getting family members initially involved in scouting, whilst residential events such as camps, were identified as offering critical 'tipping points' in converting informal, limited involvement into a more formalised, committed association.

A further 40-45% of new adult volunteers 'come through the movement'. This typically being explorer scout young leaders who take on an adult appointment when they reach their eighteenth birthday. Both the external research and anecdotal evidence from within scouting indicates that the volunteers from this source often develop a lifelong commitment to the organisation, becoming the key volunteers upon which scouting has historically depended.

The remaining 10-20% of new volunteers in section-based roles come from a wide variety of sources including people simply interested in volunteering in the youth sector or seeking youth work experience to boost their C.V.

It should however be noted that a very significant number of this final 10-20% of new volunteers have had some previous involvement or connection with scouting. In many cases they are former youth members (albeit many years ago); are the friends or relatives of existing adult volunteers; have links with an associated community body (such as a church or other sponsoring authority) or have had some other contact with scouting such as through membership of Girl Guiding UK or the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Critically, the research shows that, one third of those people with some form of connection with scouting would consider volunteering for the organisation.

These internal findings are strongly supported by the external research which shows that volunteers are often those that have been touched by the organisation and that involvement with a voluntary organisation as a child significantly increases the likelihood of re-engaging with that organisation as an adult volunteer.

This clearly shows us that our main efforts (at all levels), need to focus on promoting the benefits of volunteering with scouting to the families and friends of our youth members and to people that were previously youth members.

A few more facts about volunteering trends in the UK...

5%	of volunteers responded to a media appeal
45-54	is the age group that is most likely to volunteer
60%	of the population claim to feel under time pressure in their everyday lives
Commitment	is the word most commonly associated with volunteering
Someone asked	is the most common reason people volunteer
53%	of people would spend money to save time
29%	of people volunteer to improve things or help others
4 Hours	is the average amount of time a volunteer is prepared to give a week
48%	of the adult population in the UK have volunteered at least 1 hour in the last year!
Men & women	volunteer differently