

The logo for nfpSynergy, featuring the text 'nfpSynergy' in a sans-serif font. 'nfp' is in purple, 'Synergy' is in blue, and there is a circular icon to the right composed of purple and blue segments.

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# Typical young people...

## A study of what young people are really like today

Commissioned by The Scout Association

January 2007

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## 1. Executive summary

### Purpose of this research study

Much of the social dialogue about young people is focused on the behaviour of a minority of troubled young people. While this is understandable in some respects, there is a danger that these individuals are taken to be representative of all young people in Britain. This research study was commissioned to ensure the voices of young people are included in this debate and the findings provide us with a representative view of what young people think and feel.

- **Young people just want to have fun and family and friends... and make a difference**

The opportunity and ability to enjoy life (94%), to develop a strong set of values (93%) and to spend time in a supportive, loving environment (92%) are highest on young people's list of priorities and are what they value most. The importance of being financially independent and stable, and the sense of purpose and standard of living provided by having a good job are ranked 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. 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.

- **Family members are the most positive influencers of young people**

Young people express highly positive attitudes towards their family and believe they have a positive influence. Mum, dad and siblings are ranked as being the most positive influence. Young people are more cynical, or at least unconvinced, about the influence of celebrities on their lives and indeed feel that celebrities such as Pete Doherty are bad role models.

- **A special place is reserved for mums across the UK**

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. Both of these answers are considerably higher than the most admired celebrity personalities (Kylie Minogue and David Beckham). Family is seen as being the most positive influence on the life of the average young person.

- **Young people who are members of youth/sports clubs are better citizens**

Across a wide range of measures young people who participate in local youth or sports clubs could be judged as being better citizens. In terms of healthy lifestyles, feelings of emotional closeness with family members, parental relationship and the desire to make a difference in this world, members of youth or sports clubs express more positive attitudes and demonstrate better citizenship.

Members of youth/sports clubs are more likely to think highly of their family, to have parents who trust them, are involved in their schooling and more likely to talk about safe sex, alcohol and drugs. They are more likely to have a good relationship with other adults in their community.

Members of youth/sports clubs are less likely to drink or smoke, are more likely to exercise and to be concerned about being healthy, they are more inclined to believe that making a difference to this world is important and they are less likely to feel bored.

- **Young people want to be listened to**

The young people who participated in this research clearly communicated a desire to be heard – for adults to pay more attention and to give greater credence to what young people think, feel and have to say. Young people are asking to be taken seriously and not to be dismissed on the grounds of age alone.

- **Young people who are members of clubs feel valued and valuable**  
Young people who are members of local sports or youth clubs are resoundingly positive about their experiences. More than 8 in 10 participants get on well with the adults who run the groups, enjoy the activities they undertake, feel an important member of the club and enjoy the feeling of support they get from the other young people who are members.
- **Young people generally feel good about themselves**  
The overall picture that emerges is of balanced young people who have strong beliefs and values (79%) and who have a generally positive self-image and self-esteem (76% agree with the statement "*I like who I am*"). However, self-image and how young people feel about themselves can be complex and dynamic. The majority of young people also agree that they "*sometimes feel unimportant*".
- **Young people feel they are in control of their lives and feel resilient**  
Young people are almost unanimous in their belief that life can sometimes be unfair (85%). However, the majority feel that they have a lot of control over the things that happen to them and feel equipped to cope when they are faced with challenges. 67% of young people state that they are good at solving the problems that arise.
- **Young people trust their intuition and instincts to decide right from wrong**  
In judging between right and wrong most young people think independently and trust common sense or their own intuition (33% and 25% respectively = 58% combined) more than any other source.

## 2. Background

The Scout Association provides adventurous activities and personal development opportunities for 400,000 young people aged 6 – 25. Internationally, more than 28 million young people enjoy the benefits of Scouting across 216 countries and territories. 2007 is a landmark year for the organisation – it will mark the 100 year anniversary of the first Scout camp run by Robert Baden-Powell on Brownsea Island, Dorset.

In order to mark the launch of the centenary celebrations, The Scout Association decided to conduct a study of the experiences and perceptions of young people in the UK today. nfpSynergy, the research consultancy for the not for profit sector, was commissioned to conduct this research.

### Core questions of concern to this study included:

- **What is important to young people today and what are their priorities?**
- **How do young people feel about themselves and the world they live in?**
- **Who do young people respect and who influences their lives?**
- **What impact do extra-curricular activities have on their lives?**

## 3. Methodology and sample

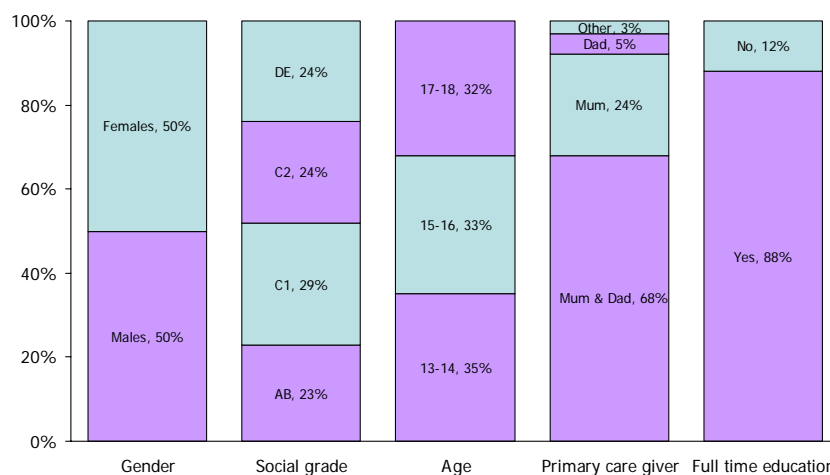
### 3.1 Original quantitative research

The first stage of this research study involved conducting original quantitative research to explore rigorously the perceptions of UK youth. In partnership with The Scout Association, nfpSynergy developed a questionnaire which was aimed at providing fresh insights into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of young people.

Research fieldwork was subcontracted to ResearchNow who conducted an online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,004 13 – 18 year olds. Fieldwork was conducted during August and September 2006. Chart 1 provides a detailed breakdown of this sample.

Chart: 1

### Gender, social grade and age profile



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

### 3.2 Original qualitative research

The second stage of research involved original qualitative interviews with young people who are members of The Scout Association. These interviews covered similar topics to the quantitative questionnaire but the qualitative methodology enabled a more in-depth discussion of these topics and allowed important ‘why’ questions to be asked.

The combined sample for the focus groups and individual in-depth interviews was more than 40 individuals and was divided into the following subgroups:

	11yrs	12yrs	13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	16yrs	18yrs
<b>Male</b>	6	4	7	5	2	2	1
<b>Female</b>	0	3	2	4	3	2	0

## 4. Introduction

Much of the social discourse around young people in Britain today focuses on the attitudes and behaviour of a “troubled” minority. Media content focused on anti-social behaviour, out of control teens, a cynical disconnected generation who are being raised “on the streets” or by a vacuous celebrity culture appears to be the norm. Preparatory desk research for this project revealed the following illustrations of this point:

- 71% of media stories about young people are negative while only 14% are positive and one in three articles about young people is about crime.<sup>1</sup>
- Young people were referred to as thugs 26 times and as yobs 21 times in a survey of 74 tabloid and broadsheet articles about young people and crime. Other descriptors included evil, lout, monsters, brutes, scum, menace, heartless, sick, menacing and inhuman.<sup>2</sup>
- Less than one in ten articles about young people actually quote young people or include their perspectives in the debate.<sup>3</sup>

As an extremely experienced youth group, The Scout Association decided to conduct research among young people – to ask for their perspectives on a range of important issues. Part of the objective for this research was to ensure that the voices of young people themselves were heard in this debate. This representative study of 13-18 year olds in the UK provides us with an insight into the perspective of the average young person.

## 5. The priorities and influencers of UK youth

### Key findings:

- **Young people just want to have fun & family & friends**
- **Treating others the way you want to be treated is a high priority**
- **Young people care and want to make a difference in this world**
- **Youth group leaders have a stronger influence than the neighbourhood**
- **Family members are the most positive influences on young people**
- **A special place is reserved for mums across the UK**
- **Celebrities are not considered to be good role models**

Gleaning a greater understanding of the priorities and feelings of young people in the UK was a priority for this research project. We wanted to understand more about what young people feel to be important and therefore we prompted the sample with a range of measures and asked that they be rated by importance. Chart 2 provides us with an interesting picture of what the average young person aged 13 – 18 values most:

<sup>1</sup> *Young People and the Media*, Mori/Young People Now (2005)

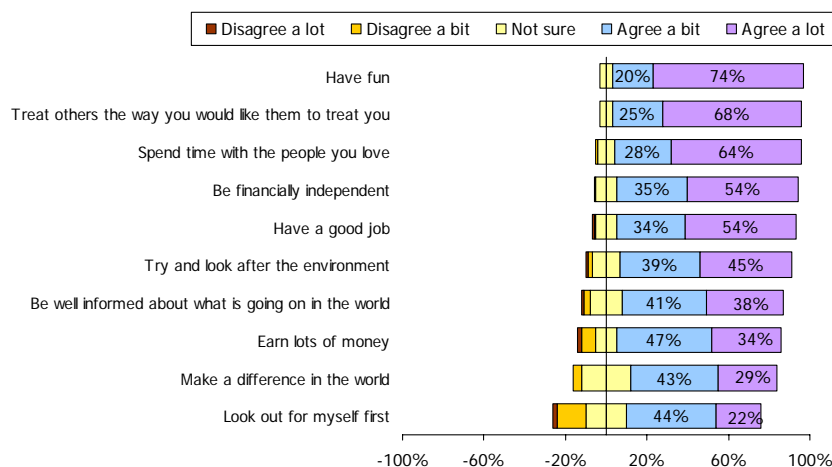
<sup>2</sup> *Shape the Debate Campaign* (2002 – 2003)

<sup>3</sup> *Young People and the Media*, Mori/Young People Now (2005)

Chart: 2

### Beliefs and values

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about beliefs and values"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

#### 5.1 Young people want to have fun & family & friends

Young people value most things they were asked about, from spending time with loved ones (94%) to earning lots of money (81%), which is perhaps a function of the society we live in (the 'have it all society', where the average citizen has higher and higher expectations as time goes by).

From a prompted list of 10 measures, having fun (94%) and spending time with people you love (92%) are in the top three highest ranked items. The ability to enjoy life and to spend time in a supportive, loving environment are highest amongst young people's priorities. The fact that the majority of the sample agree strongly with these measures provides a clear indication that these are firmly held beliefs.

#### 5.2 Treating others the way you want to be treated is a high priority

93% of young people aged 13-18 say that treating other people the way you would like to be treated is important, making this measure the second most important on this list, with only the desire to have fun being ranked as more important. In an age where young people are often portrayed as being selfish it is interesting to note that treating others the way you want to be treated is believed to be important by almost 30% more young people than the statement "look out for myself first".

#### 5.3 Young people care and want to make a difference in this world

Although ranked further down this list of priorities, this study finds clear evidence of an active social conscience - 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. Furthermore, more than 7 in 10 young people say that making a difference in this world is important. In an era where much of the social dialogue about young people suggests an apathetic, selfish generation, perhaps these findings, directly from the minds and keyboards of young people, encourage us to think again:

*"we are using up all our fossil fuels and destroying the ozone layer  
 and we are destroying the natural habitats for a lot of creatures  
 and are pushing them to the brink of extinction...  
 we need to stop using up all the electricity  
 and to reduce carbon emissions that are actually melting the ice caps.*

*I remember seeing once on the news that there is this steam powered bus coming out soon which runs on water and that would carry a lot more people and it would be a lot cleaner than the other buses"*

Male, aged 13

**Other priorities for young people**

The importance of being financially independent and the sense of purpose and standard of living provided by having a good job are ranked 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on this list of 10 items and are perhaps illustrative of the concept of developmental compression – the idea that children today are “getting older younger” and are perhaps taking on adult concerns at a younger age.

Finally, earning lots of money is important also – although slightly less important to girls (77%) than boys (85%) and less important to older respondents – those aged 17-18 year olds (75%) versus 13-16 year olds (83%).

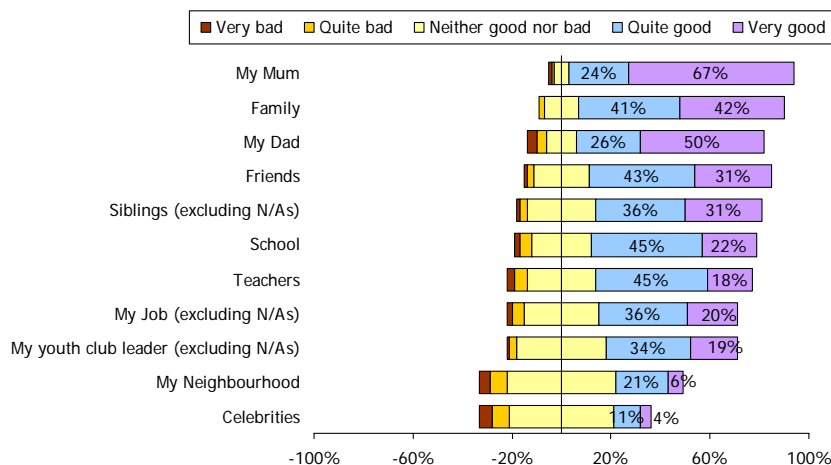
**5.4 Family members are the most positive influences on young people**

The next part of this study explored who influences young people and who young people respect. Chart 3 below illustrates the results of the question “what kind of influence have the following had on your life”, with young people being asked to rate from very positive to highly negative influence.

Chart: 3

**Influences**

“What kind of influence have the following had on your life?”



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

Young people express highly positive attitudes towards their family and believe they have had a positive influence on their lives. Mum, dad and siblings are ranked most positively. While many commentators suggest that family is a less relevant concept or that changes in the make-up of households across the UK have resulted in the “decline of the family” – there are no signs that the family is lacking importance in the lives of young people.

*“My parents give me the confidence to stand up for myself”*

Male, aged 18

*“My parents help me with life and my education.*

*When I have problems they listen to me and help me sort them out”*

Female, aged 12

### 5.5 Youth group leaders a stronger influence than neighbourhood

The majority of young people who participate in local sport or youth clubs say the leader of the group has been a good influence on their lives – 20% say a ‘very good’ influence and a further 34% say a ‘good’ influence. The influence of a youth club leader is perceived as most positive among males (57%), younger respondents and those from social grade AB households (62%).

*“I respect adults who are willing to help other people, like my parents, teachers to an extent as well, and Scout leaders who help when you’re having real problems”*

Male, aged 16

Teachers are ranked slightly higher than local sports/youth club leaders on the list of positive influences, although it must be said that young people are likely to spend considerably more time with teachers than youth club leaders.

It is interesting to note that a smaller proportion of young people feel their neighbourhood has been a positive influence on their lives – only 27% felt this to be the case – compared to higher proportions for youth group leaders, teachers etc.

### 5.6 A special place is reserved for mums across the UK

In particular, young people identify a special role for their mum, with 91% of UK youth stating that their mum has been a good influence on their lives. The second most positive influence was the combined impact of their whole family, according to 83% of respondents. Dads also score highly according to just over three quarters of the sample, although it is clear that mums are believed to be a positive influence by more young people in the UK today. Ratings of both parents are highest among 13-14 year olds and slightly decrease with age.

*“The biggest in influence on me would probably have to be my parents. I do genuinely respect them... they really help me if I have a problem, which is an important virtue in someone”*

Male, aged 16

*“My parents aren’t together and I don’t live with my dad... my mum influences me by encouraging me to work hard and to do well. My dad only really influences me to practise music”*

Female, aged 14

Analysis of the perceived positive influence of mums and dads illustrates some important social grade differences. Young people across all social grades rated their mum consistently high (average of 91%). However, a lower proportion of young people from social grades DE (68%) rated their dad as a positive influence.

Friends are also perceived to play an important influencing role – almost three quarters of young people feel that they are a positive influence. It is worth noting that girls were more likely to feel this is the case (80%) than boys (67%).

*“All my friends [are a positive influence] because they’re always there for you when you need them and they help you through things that you couldn’t do on your own and I’m not afraid to tell them stuff”*

Female, aged 14

**Parents, family, friends (and probably even the dog<sup>4</sup>) win out over celebrities as role models**

Young people are more cynical, or at least unconvinced, about the influence of celebrities on their lives. Only 15% of young people feel that celebrities have been a positive influence on their lives. These findings illustrate that the influence of celebrities on young people has been overstated. In fact, the average young person aged 13-18 is almost as likely to say they have been a negative (12%) rather than a positive influence, and 42% say celebrities have had neither a positive nor a negative impact.

*"... people that have come to fame through Big Brother, they just seem to have gone on television and do things that people do in their ordinary lives and suddenly they're famous and have record deals and most of them are completely stupid, so I think it's a bit sad that people look to these sort of people"*

Female, aged 16

Naturally, with every rule there are some exceptions and some respondents cited famous people that they felt were positive role models for their lives:

*"Nelson Mandela because he stuck up for what he was going for, even though he was put in prison many times. He carried on fighting for what he thought was right... Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, those kind of people..."*

Male, aged 14

*"Wayne Rooney. Because he's good at football and he fights for things he wants."*

Male, aged 11

In addition to understanding the perceived influencers of young people, this study also explored who young people admire and who they respect. The results from these questions highlight the special place which mums occupy amongst young people in the UK. Respondents were asked an open-ended question *"which adult in Britain today do you admire most?"* Therefore the responses below were totally unprompted.

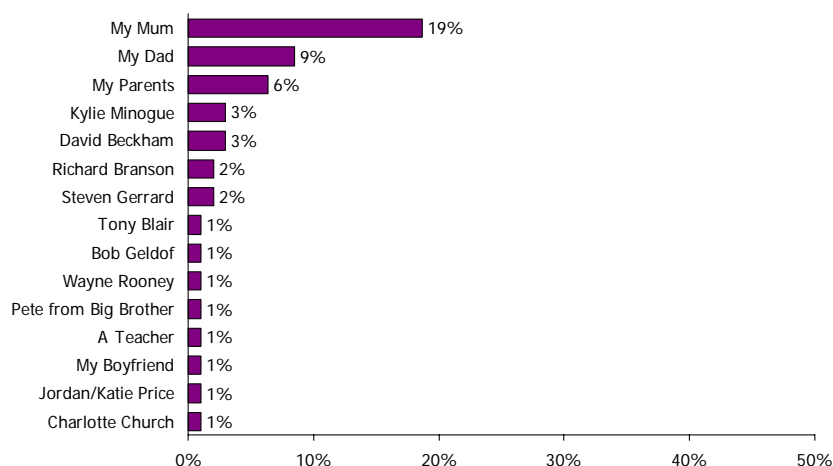
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<sup>4</sup> This is unsubstantiated by evidence from this survey

Chart: 4

### Britain's most admired

"Which adult in Britain today do you admire most?" unprompted



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

One in five young people spontaneously picked their mum as the adult they admire most in Britain today – a very significant result given the fact that respondents were not prompted with any options. The second answer, according to almost one in ten of the sample, was dad.

*"I really respect my mum, definitely, because she's just so amazing. She manages to cope, she has a full-time job at our school, she teaches so she's out of the house every morning at 7 then comes back at 5 but she still looks after me and my brother, she still puts dinner on the table and she also does Girl Guiding... and she always seems to put other people before her. Definitely, I really admire that about her... the way she just treats you. She just goes out of her way to make everybody happy and I really like that"*  
 Female, aged 16

*"I have total and utter respect for my dad and look up to him so much... he is such a good man, he works really hard and he really cares for me, so I know he'll look after me".*  
 Female, aged 16

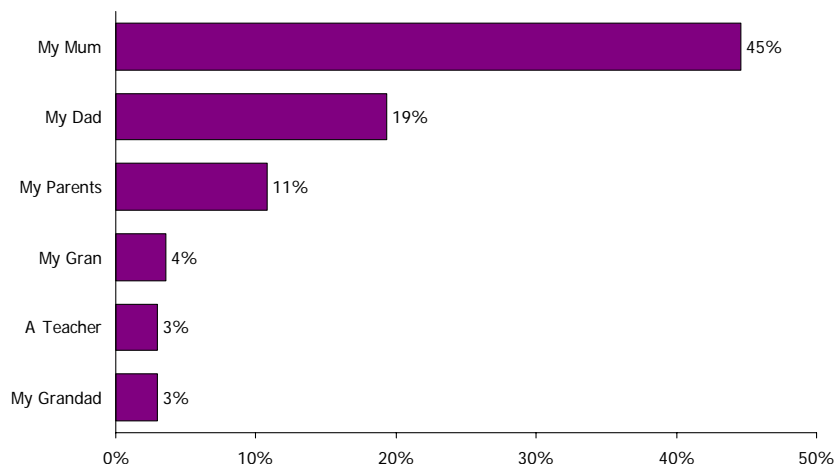
Both of these answers are considerably higher than the most admired celebrity personalities (Kylie Minogue and David Beckham). Perhaps we should not be surprised at the high levels of admiration for family members over celebrities given the results of the previous question, which demonstrated the positive influence these individuals have had on the lives of young people.

The respect for mum and dad (but particularly mum) is evident when we asked a slightly amended version of this question – "which adult from your own life do you most admire?". Again the answers to this question were spontaneous/unprompted.

Chart: 5

### Role model from own life

"Which adult from your own life do you admire most?" unprompted



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

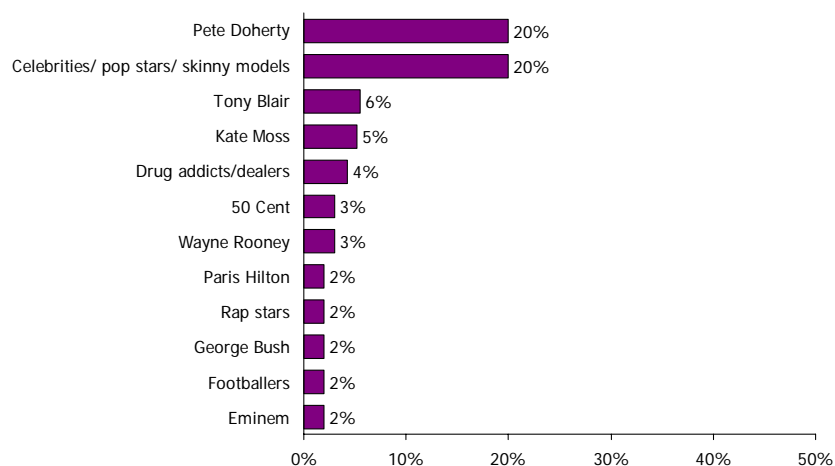
### 5.7 Celebrities are not considered to be role models

We then asked young people to consider which adults are bad role models for young people. One in five respondents spontaneously cited Pete Doherty as an individual who is setting an example which should not be copied. A similar proportion felt that celebrities, footballers and popstars generally set bad examples for young people. These findings are likely to have been influenced by media coverage about the lives that celebrities lead.

Chart: 6

### Bad role models

"Who do you think is a bad role model for young people?" unprompted



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

The qualitative research fieldwork was highly consistent with these findings and young people expressed many fears about the impact of young people copying the behaviour of celebrities, or imitating them:

*"Pete Doherty [is a bad role model]"*

*because he is drugged up and he is just such a mess...  
he has really ruined his life because he takes drugs"*

Male, aged 13

*"I think celebrities can be awful role models, especially for young people,  
you see people who are stick thin, not that there's anything wrong if you're naturally stick thin  
but you see people saying 'I'm a size six and I'm on a diet'.*

*That makes me so angry to see that being publicised to young people  
because I think that's an awful, awful image"*

Female, aged 16

*"Paris Hilton because she makes people stereotype about dumb blondes."*

Female, aged 14

## 6. How young people in the UK feel about themselves

### Key Findings:

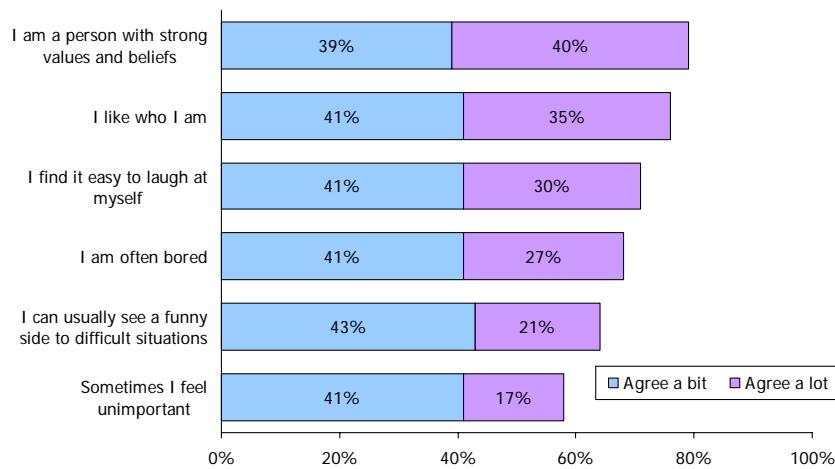
- **Young people feel good about themselves**
- **But young people still get bored**
- **Young people feel they are in control of their lives and feel resilient**
- **Young people trust their intuition and instincts to make the right decisions**
- **Young people want to be listened to**

Any exploration of the perceptions of young people would be remiss not to include the subject of how young people feel about themselves. This factor is important in contributing to how young people feel about the world in general and is likely to influence behaviour and how they respond to the situations they are faced with.

Chart: 7

### Self perceptions

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

#### 6.1 Young people mostly feel good about themselves

This nationally representative sample was asked a range of questions aimed at identifying how young people feel about themselves and the results paint a picture of confident, balanced young people. Almost 8 in 10 young people believe they have strong values and beliefs which underpin their thoughts and actions. It is worth noting that this sense of values increases with age, with 81% of 17-18 year olds agreeing with the statement "I am a person with strong values and beliefs", compared to 74% of 13-14 year olds.

*"I have lots of strong beliefs and values.  
 I believe that our democratic society is a sham.  
 I believe that the bible is a sham.  
 I believe that America as a power should not be where it is.  
 I believe that half the people around me just say things, some terrible things,  
 without thinking about them.  
 I mean, what do Tony Blair and George Bush know? They just hurt people.  
 I believe we are making some progress in life but not enough progress"*  
 Female, aged 15

*"I think most young people have strong beliefs and values  
 but they don't always speak up for them"*  
 Female, aged 14

Furthermore, a high proportion of young people have a positive self-image, with more than three quarters of 13-18 year olds agreeing with the statement "I like who I am". These measures are consistently high across all age groups in this study and across all social grades.

*"I like that I live a balanced life.  
 I balance going to school, going out with friends, I do enough exercise.  
 I'm generally nice to people but I still can say what I feel.  
 I get along well with most people.  
 I like helping out at Beaver Scouts and I get involved in [drama] shows at school"*  
 Female, aged 15

*"I don't want to change anything. I'm happy with me, with my personality"*  
Female, aged 15

*"I like that I'm getting on well at school, that I'm doing my GCSE's early.  
I like that I'm in Scouts and that I'm going for the Duke of Edinburgh awards.  
And I like that I'm taller than most people my age"*  
Male, aged 14

In addition, UK youth can also see the lighter or funnier side of life. 71% of young people aged 13-18 say they find it easy to laugh at themselves and 64% state that they are able to see the funny side of difficult situations (both of these measures are correlated with social grade – those in social grades C2DE are less likely to agree than those in ABC1).

However, self-image and how young people feel about themselves can be complex and dynamic. The majority of young people aged 13-18 agree that they *"sometimes feel unimportant"*.

*"Being ignored or not in control or able to influence things can make you feel unimportant...  
especially when these things have a big impact on your life.  
It's like this at school and choosing subjects.  
And not being able to vote.  
They think kids don't know about politics but not all adults know about politics either.  
They should lower the voting age – it's not just adults who are affected by politics"*  
Female, aged 14

*"When a few kids do something bad and get into trouble  
they seem to lump all young people together as the same – as bad people.  
But when an adult does something bad they say that it's only that adult that is bad"*  
Female, aged 14

## **6.2 But young people still get bored**

Nevertheless, many young people say they often feel bored (68%), perhaps expressing the sentiment that they do not have access to enough interesting activities. Feelings of boredom are most common among 13-14 year olds and decrease with age. These findings highlight the importance of youth/sports clubs in the lives of young people – particularly those in the middle teen years.

The next section of this study explores general attitudinal questions, young peoples' feelings of resilience and their ability to cope with the diverse situations that they are faced with.

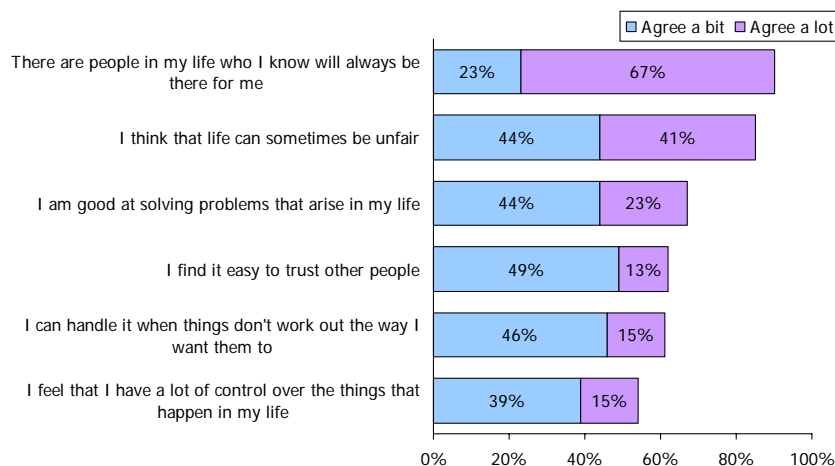
## **6.3 Young people feel they are in control of their lives and feel resilient**

Young people are almost unanimous in their belief that life can sometimes be unfair – with 85% agreeing with this statement. Having said that, the majority of young people state that they have a lot of control over the things that happen to them and also feel equipped to cope when faced with challenges.

Chart: 8

### Control over life

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

Two out of every three young people (67%) state that they are good at solving the problems that arise and 61% feel they can deal with situations that do not work out as they would like.

*"Yes I can do what I want to an extent... OK I can't stay out all night... but I can choose what I do in school, what subjects I study for GCSE, where I go for lunch"*  
 Male, aged 14

*"I don't take it badly [when things don't work out the way I would like] I know that I can't get everything I want and so I just accept it"*  
 Female, aged 12

These feelings of being in control and able to cope with life increase with age – with 74% of 17-18 year olds agreeing with this statement compared to 62% of 13-14 year olds. However, social background also plays a role – a higher proportion of young people from social grade AB households say they are good at problem solving compared to those from C2DE households.

Perhaps this evidence of strong feelings of control and resilience are influenced by feelings of trust and whether young people have a sense that there is unconditional support available to them. 9 in 10 young people feel confident that they have people in their life that will always be there for them. This measure is stable across all social grades. Furthermore, the majority of young people find it easy to trust other people (72% of young people from social grades AB feel they can trust people compared to 58% of those from social grades DE).

The picture that emerges from these results is therefore of resilient young people who are realistic enough to understand that life may not always work out the way they would like, but who also feel confident in their ability to cope with challenges.

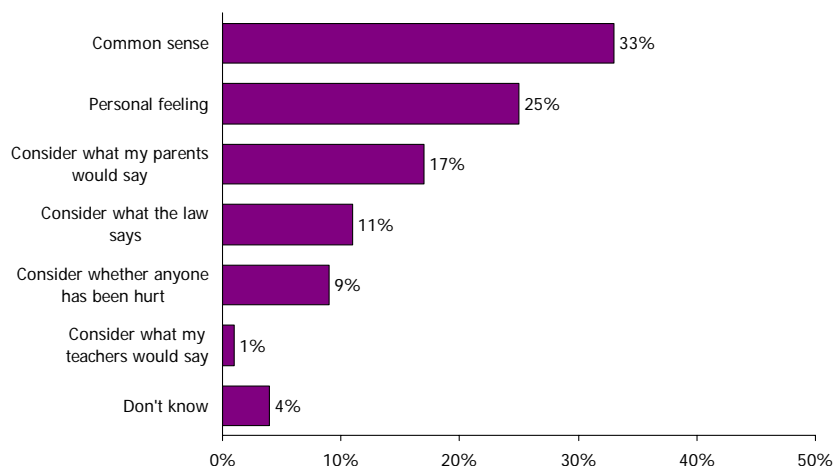
#### 6.4 Young people trust their instincts to know right from wrong

This study also provides evidence that young people trust their own judgement when it comes to making decisions about moral actions – whether it is right or wrong to behave in a certain way.

Chart: 9

## Morality

"What is the best way to determine if an action is moral (right or wrong)? Please select only one answer" prompted



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

*"Your emotions tell you if something is right or wrong.  
 When you do something bad you feel guilty about it, you feel bad and you want to take it back"*  
 Male, aged 18

In judging right or wrong most young people think independently and rely on their common sense or intuition (33% and 25% respectively) more than the opinions of others or the law (11%). 17% of young people stated that considering what their parents said would be important in determining this. Young people appear to trust themselves to know right from wrong and to use their intuition and personal common sense (which have no doubt been influenced by social norms) to make decisions.

### 6.5 Young people want to be listened to

During this research study young people clearly communicated a desire to be heard - for adults to pay more attention and to give greater credence to what young people have to say. In a sense young people are asking to be taken seriously and not to be dismissed on the grounds of age alone:

*"I hate adults who take advantage of their age  
 and ignore really good ideas from young people"*  
 Female, aged 12

*"Some adults think that young people don't know anything because they are young.  
 I hate it when you express a view and you get told 'no, you're wrong, I'm older, I know better'.  
 But age and knowledge are different things.  
 You could be a 45 year old and have only read up about something for half an hour of your life.  
 And you could be a 12 year old and have spent most of your life reading about a subject.  
 You shouldn't have to wait until you're an adult to have a say"*  
 Female, aged 15

*"Ignoring children is bad for the child.  
 It makes them feel left out and they are more likely to do bad things"*  
 Male, aged 14

## 7. Extracurricular activities and their influence on the lives of young people

### Key Findings:

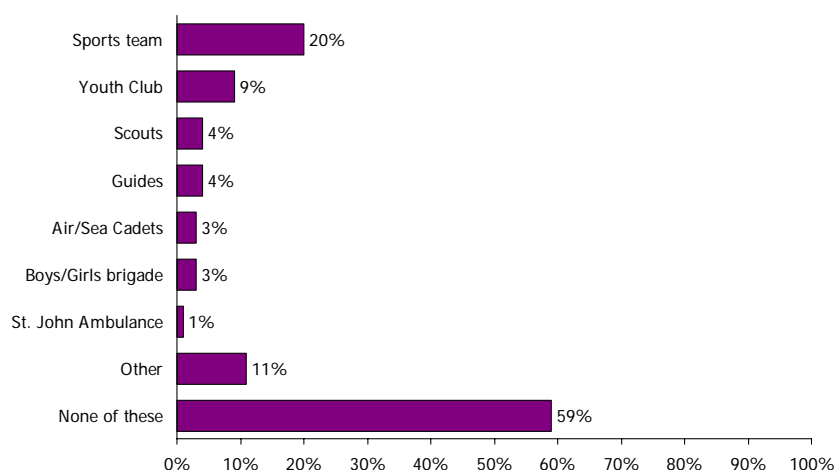
- 4 in 10 young people are members of local sports or youth clubs
- Young people who are members of clubs feel valued and valuable and are also more self-confident
- Young people who take part in local youth or sports clubs are better citizens who are less likely to feel bored, less likely to be bullied and more likely to want to make a difference in the world
- They are also more likely to have good relationships with their parents, feel a part of and help out in their local community and to feel that they can make a useful difference to their community
- And they are more likely to feel they can talk to their parents about difficulties they face, to feel that their family will always be there for them and that their parents trust them to make important decisions

The next stage of this study explored young people's participation in local youth/sports clubs and what they feel they receive from this participation.

Chart: 10

### Members of sports/youth club

"Are you a member of a local sports or youth club?"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

#### 7.1 4 in 10 young people are members of local youth or sports clubs

40% of 13-18 year olds are a member of a local sports or youth club, while 59% state that they are not a member of a local sports or youth club. There is a slight gender difference in these findings with a higher proportion of girls (64%) not participating than boys (53%). It is also important to note that there is higher non-participation from young people in lower social grade

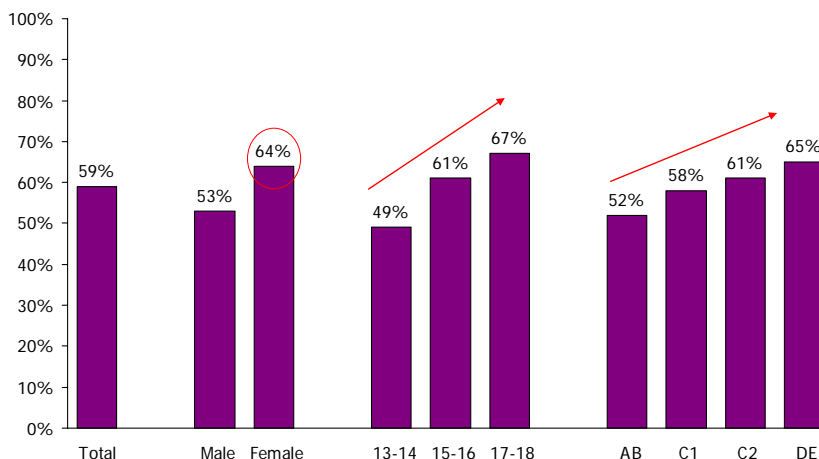
households – with 65% of those from DE households not participating compared to 52% of those from AB households.

This finding is consistent with recent research conducted by nfpSynergy for Save the Children UK which found that young people in lower income households are missing out on opportunities to participate in after school clubs due to the additional costs associated with membership e.g. uniforms, equipment, membership costs etc.<sup>5</sup>

Chart: 11

### Not members of sports/youth club

\*Are you a member of a local sports or youth club?\* Those answering "None of these"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

The majority of the sample in full-time education have participated in school sports teams, 38% in music, 38% in drama, 28% in youth committees, 28% in student elections, 27% in a student union, 27% in event organising and 21% in art. Girls are somewhat more likely to participate in music, art, drama and youth committees, while boys are more likely to participate in sport. 21% of those in full-time education say they have not participated in any of the above. Of course, not all participants were taking part in activities which fit with traditional stereotypes:

*"I'm doing a play at the moment. It's 'Treasure Island' and I'm one of the soldiers...so it's quite fun... You have to dress up... I like the thrill of being on stage in front of everyone and I just like how you can go into a role and act"*  
Female, aged 15

*"I like painting, arts and DT sort of hobbies, is what I like to do. I play a few computer games...I do origami I like design and technology, designing things with wood"*  
Male, aged 15

*"I love music and cricket is fun too. I like composing music on my computer, that's why I'm doing Music Technology at school"*  
Male, aged 18

*"I play the guitar and I like sports. I play basketball... and rugby."*

<sup>5</sup> Making Ends Meet – A study of low income families, Save the Children UK/nfpSynergy (2006)

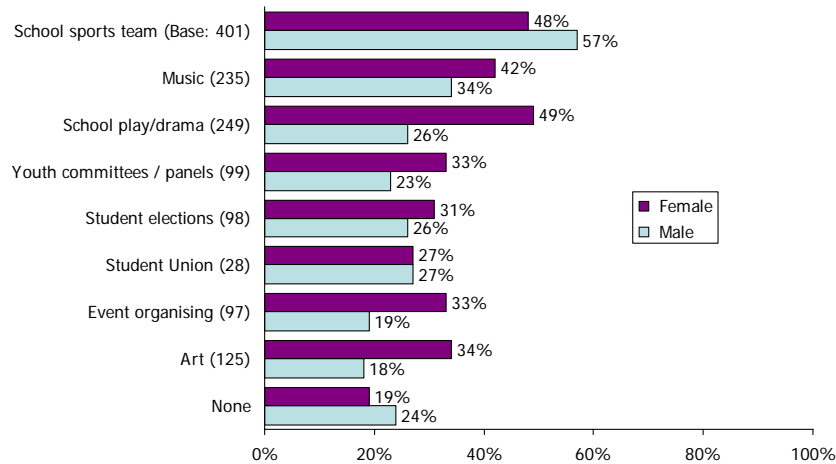
*It's not everyday girls get the chance to play rugby  
but I'm good at it and I think girls are better at rugby than boys"*  
Female, aged 15

Furthermore, young people who participate in local sports or youth clubs are more likely to have participated in all activities provided by their schools compared to those who are not members of local youth or sport clubs.

Chart: 12

### Participation in extracurricular activities available

"Which of the activities are you/have you been involved in?"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: All those in fulltime education (887) among 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

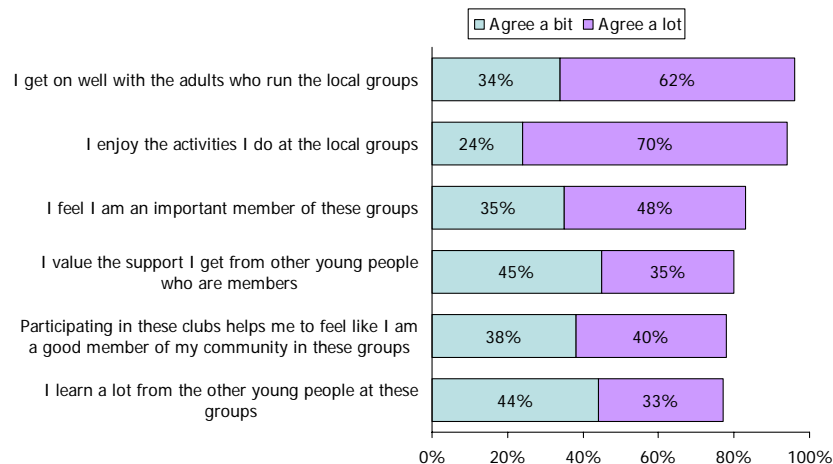
## 7.2 Young people who are members of clubs feel valued, valuable and confident

Young people express predominantly positive perspectives on their experiences of being a member of local sports or youth clubs and feel these activities have had a very beneficial impact on their lives.

Chart: 13

### Attitudes towards clubs

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about the sports/youth club you attend most regularly"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: All those who are members of sports/youth clubs (414) among 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

Young people who are members of local sports or youth clubs are unanimously positive about their experiences. More than 8 in 10 participants get on well with the adults who run the groups, enjoy the activities they undertake, feel an important member of the club and enjoy the feeling of support they get from the other young people who are members. Furthermore, more than three quarters of members say that taking part helps them to feel like a good member of their community and that they learn a lot from the other young members.

The qualitative research supported these findings:

*"You get a really good feeling from being in Scouts, it's kind of 'I did this' If you're scared at the beginning, like I am scared of heights or whatever, you think I've actually done it, and yes it's fun"*

Male, aged 14

*"The Scouts is full of opportunities and fun, we just get together and just have a laugh"*

Female, aged 16

*"When I am part of a formal group I feel a member of a club. It makes me feel more responsible....being dedicated to the club and turning up every week..."*

Male, aged 13

*"I think the Scout Association is good for promoting self-confidence and for getting people involved with the activities... even the shy quiet ones have got to stand up and do their bit..."*

Male, aged 16

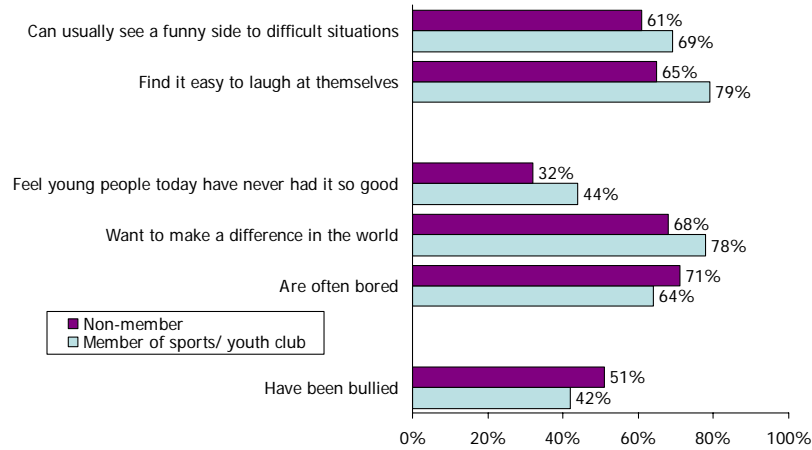
### **7.3 Young people who take part in local youth/sports clubs are less likely to feel bored or to be bullied and more likely to want to make a difference**

These qualitative quotes clearly demonstrate that the beneficial impact of taking part in such groups is not lost on the young participants. This point becomes even more concrete when we analyse the findings of the quantitative survey by those who are members of a local youth or sports club and those who are not. We find that across measures including feelings of boredom, healthy lifestyles, feelings of emotional closeness with family members, parental relationship, bullying and the desire to make a difference in this world, members of youth or sports clubs express more positive attitudes and demonstrate better citizenship.

Chart: 14

## Comparing members of sport/youth clubs and non members

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements" Those answering "Agree a bit/a lot"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

*"In Scouts I get away from home...there's nothing to do around here [home] but when you go away with the Scouts, they always have activities planned for you and your day's full."*  
Female, aged 14

*"Scouts...is definitely more relaxed [than school] because with SATS coming up school is getting a bit more tense."*  
Male, aged 13

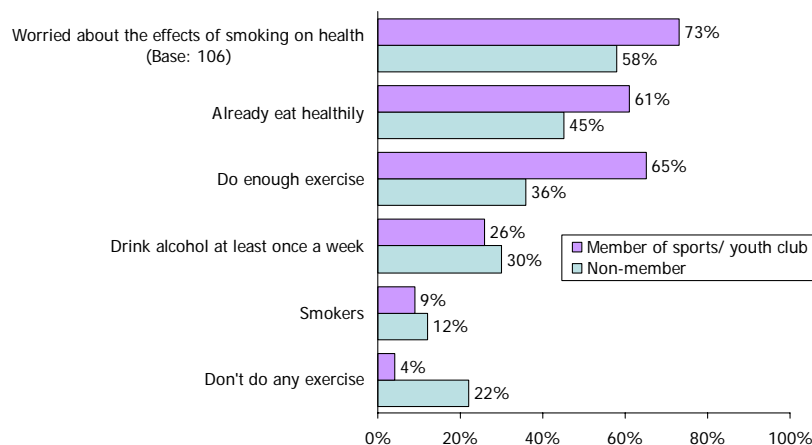
*"When I was young I was bullied but after joining the Scouts I felt stronger and part of a community. Nobody would bully me within the Scouts community"*  
Male, aged 15

*"...when you're out with your friends you've not got a direction but you've always got a direction with Scouts and you know what you're doing and its really cool and you're just having fun but you've got somewhere to go and you've got something to do..."*  
Female, aged 15

### 7.4 Young people who take part in local youth or sports clubs are healthier

Chart: 15

#### Sport/youth club members are more concerned about their health



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

Across a range of measures including healthy attitudes and behaviour young people who are members of local sports/youth clubs are healthier. This point is particularly clear when we look at the proportion of the sample who feel they get enough exercise – members of local sports/youth clubs are almost twice as likely to feel that they get enough exercise. Furthermore, 61% of members are concerned about eating healthily compared to 45% of non-members. In addition to demonstrating behaviours aimed at promoting healthy minds and bodies, young people who are members of local sports/youth clubs are also less likely to be engaging in unhealthy behaviours including smoking and drinking alcohol. Therefore, across a range of measures young people who are members of local sports/youth clubs are healthier.

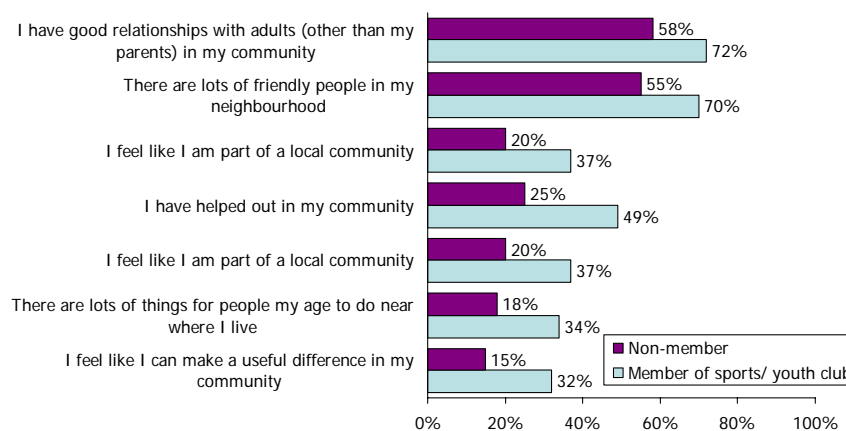
### 7.5 They are also more likely to have good relationships with their parents, feel a part of and help out in their local community and to feel that they can make a difference

Further analysis of the perspectives of young people who are members of youth/sports clubs compared to non-members reveal important differences in attitudes towards their neighbourhood and community, as illustrated in Chart 16:

Chart: 16

## Community involvement

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements" Those answering "Agree a bit/a lot"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

*"When I joined Scouts I was really quiet but my confidence has just gone through the roof since I've been with the Scouts because I've done so many different things and I've been placed in situations where I've had to make friends with people, otherwise I'm not going to enjoy myself. I can talk to people far more easily now than I could have done if I hadn't have done Scouts. I'm far more confident. I can talk to people on the street and stuff"*  
 Female, aged 16

*"I helped out [at my local Scout group] and I got to work with all the children and have fun with them and it's really good to see them learning and growing and developing and I think it makes a difference...it was nice to give something back"*  
 Female, aged 15

*"Some of the activities we do make you think and work together a bit more and it makes you listen to them [other people] more and it's nice when people listen to you."*  
 Female, aged 15

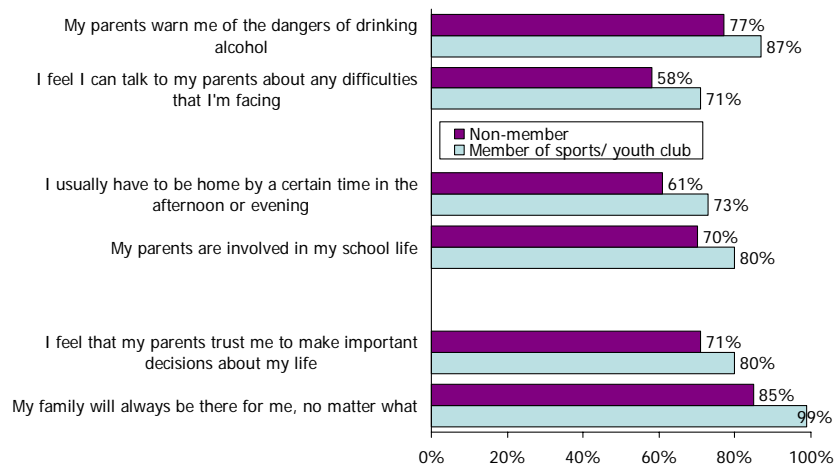
### 7.6 And are more likely to feel they can talk to their parents about difficulties, that their family will always be there for them and that their parents trust them

Finally, young people who are members of local youth/sports clubs are more likely to express positive attitudes towards their family life and relationship with their parents:

Chart: 17

### Family relationships

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements" Those answering "Agree a bit/a lot"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
 Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

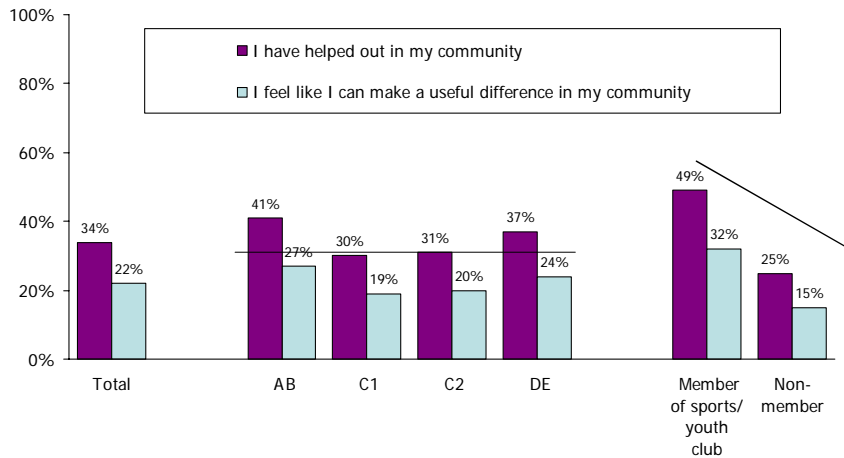
Members of youth and sports clubs can be considered to be better citizens. However, since we know that young people from social grade AB households are more likely to be a member of these groups it is important to ask if these differences are simply just a function of social background? Charts 18 and 19, however, show these differences cannot simply be explained by social grade – in some cases the differences between members and non-members of local youth/sports clubs are either even more pronounced than social grade differences, while in others they are very different to social grade patterns. The differences we observe therefore cannot be explained by social grade alone.

For example, young people were asked if they had helped out in their community and whether they feel it is possible to make a useful difference in their community. While there are some differences depending on their household social grade, these differences are not actually in a linear pattern and therefore cannot be explained by social background alone.

Chart: 18

### Community participation

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your neighbourhood." Those answering "Agree a bit/a lot"



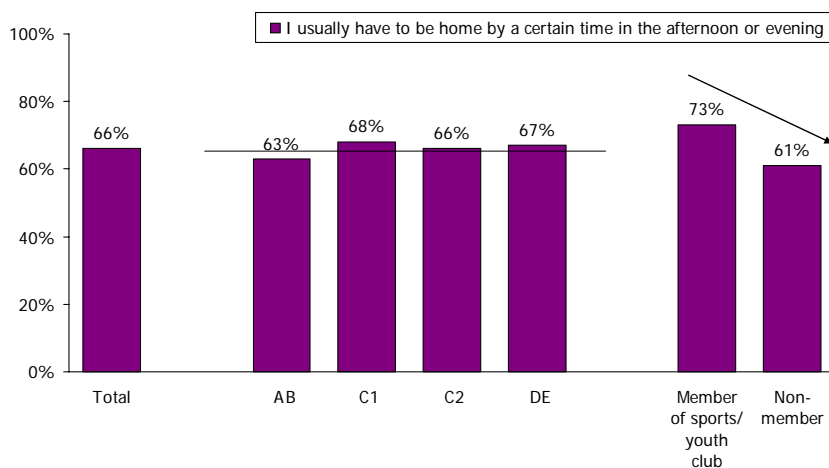
Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

Furthermore, there are significant differences between members of youth/sports clubs and non-members in terms of having an agreed curfew or time to be home in the evening. However, when we analyse this statement by social grade we observe a relatively flat pattern and therefore can be confident that social grade is not what is driving the differences we observe. These charts (18 & 19) are included in this report to provide an illustration that the differences in perspectives of young people are not simply a function of different social backgrounds.

Chart: 19

### Having a curfew

"Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements" Those answering "Agree a bit/a lot"



Source: The Scout Association/nfpSynergy, 2006  
Base: 1,004 respondents 13-18, UK

It is also worth noting that while 34% of young people say they have helped out in their community only 22% feel they can make a useful difference in their community. Perhaps more young people would get involved if they could participate in fun activities that they feel would genuinely make a difference. It suggests young people need to be encouraged to get involved and

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once involved need to be given feedback on how their assistance is useful and the impact the programmes in which they are participating are having.

## **8. In conclusion**

We do not pretend that the results of this research demonstrate anything revolutionary. Indeed they only show what the average young person already knows. Parents and families matter. Friends and a loving home matter. Young people have strong beliefs and a desire to make the world a better place – but that does not stop them wanting to have fun. Indeed, what this research shows above all else is the massive injustice that we do when we portray young people using negative stereotypes: as violent, drunk, delinquent, or uncaring.

Our research also gives us clues about how we can make young people an even more powerful force for good. If we want to work on making the tiny minority of troubled young people more like the vast majority then we must put as much focus on parents as on police, as much investment in clubs as in communities and as much interest in siblings as in schools.