



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ComRes was commissioned by the Youth United Foundation (YUF) to conduct a programme of research to contribute to the ongoing conversation around social mixing and social integration in the UK. YUF is a charity formed in 2012 by the eleven members of the Youth United Network: Army Cadets, Boys' Brigade, Fire Cadets, Girlguiding/Brownies, Girls' Brigade, Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, Police Cadets, RAF Air Cadets, Scouts, Sea Cadets and St John Ambulance. YUF's vision is that 'every young person who wants to join a uniformed organisation is able to do so'.

The objective for the research project was to understand the role that uniformed youth groups play in enabling social mixing and integration, and to identify areas where the organisation can learn and improve what it does, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. For the quantitative phase, ComRes conducted an online survey of 2,015 young people aged 11–18, including 569 uniformed young people. For the qualitative phase, ComRes conducted 52 interviews with uniformed young people, their parents and group volunteers, visiting each of the 11 member groups across 5 different locations: London (Waltham Forest, Hackney, Redbridge and Chingford), Peterborough, Leicester, Bradford and Blackburn.

The research is particularly timely given the publication over the last few years of several government reports highlighting the importance of social mixing and integration: the 2016 Casey Review, the 2017 Race Disparity Audit, and most recently, the 2018 Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper. It seeks to build on, and contribute to, the existing evidence from internal and external evaluations of uniformed youth programmes which have highlighted a range of positive outcomes for uniformed youth, including the development of soft skills, improved wellbeing and happiness, and increasing community participation.

This summary report captures the key findings and recommendations to be drawn from the report. The full report can be downloaded from the Youth United Foundation website, [yuf.org.uk](http://yuf.org.uk)

## Key findings

### **Uniformed youth groups are an effective way of encouraging young people to mix socially with those who are different from them.**

- Uniformed youth are between 6–23 percentage points more likely than non-uniformed youth to say that they spend time with people who are different from them.
- 84% of uniformed youth report that at least some of the members of their group are different from them in some way (i.e. they are part of a diverse group).
- Young people who attend uniformed youth groups are also more likely to recognise the importance of mixing with people who are different from them: 79% say this in comparison to 66% of non-uniformed youth.



- Trips and activities provide further opportunities for social mixing and social integration outside uniformed youth groups: 88% of uniformed youth report that they meet people through their group activities who are a different demographic to them.

**Uniformed youth groups not only facilitate social mixing, but also more positive social interactions, often over many years, helping to encourage social integration and social cohesion.**

- Uniformed young people are more likely than non-uniformed youth to say that the contact they have had with people that are different to them was positive: for example, they are over ten percentage points more likely to say this about their contact with people who are a different religion from them (55% vs 42%).
- Interviews with uniformed young people, their parents/guardians and adult volunteers also suggest that the environment of uniformed youth groups fosters positive interactions with others, particularly the small group sizes and individual attention from group leaders.
- The fact that uniformed youth attend their groups for a sustained period of time helps to foster strong relationships and allows social bonds to grow, showing that long-term involvement contributes to positive social mixing.

**Uniformed youth groups help to foster a sense of social responsibility and connection to British society and British values.**

- Uniformed youth are twice as likely as their non-uniformed counterparts to say they take part in social action at least once a week (58% vs 30%), and are also more likely to say that it is important for young people to tackle social issues (81% vs 73%).
- Uniformed youth, parents/guardians and volunteers report feeling that uniformed youth groups help to increase collaboration and young people's connection to British society, and that they foster the values felt to be a fundamental part of British citizenship such as freedom, tolerance and equality.
- Uniformed youth groups are felt to have a positive impact on the confidence and resilience of young people, and to foster a sense of belonging.

**Uniformed youth groups are in line with the national average for most demographics, but should continue to improve in areas where they are underrepresented.**

- Findings indicate that uniformed youth participation reaches across the boundaries of gender, faith and social class, suggesting that there is a gap between the perception and the reality of the type of young people that take part.
- Uniformed youth groups are particularly inclusive for young people with a mobility/mental health or disability challenge: 19% of uniformed young people report a health challenge, in comparison to 10% of non-uniformed youth.

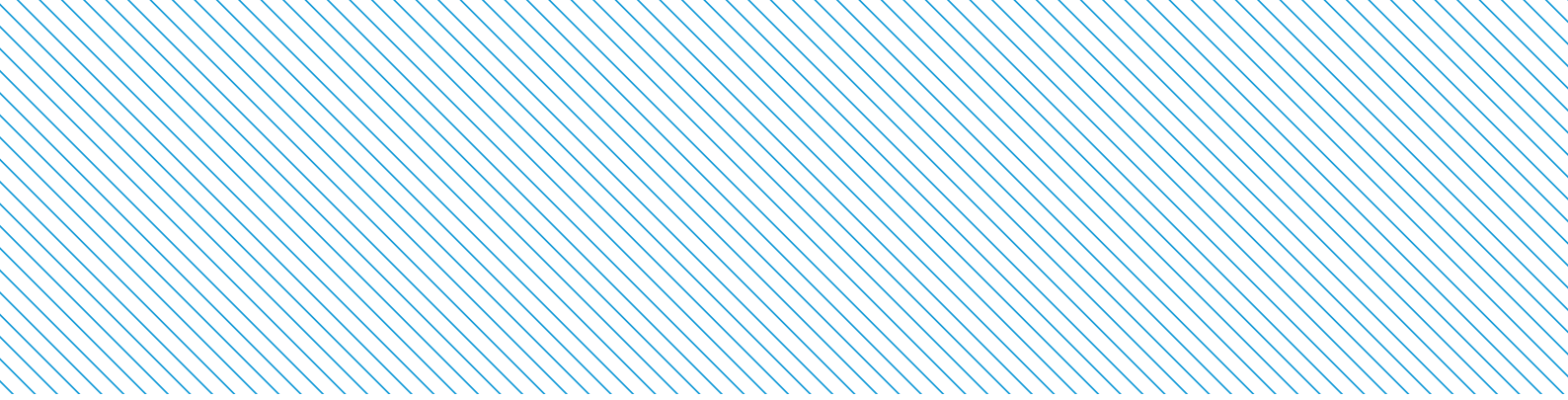
- The demographic profile of uniformed youth reflects the profile of young people nationally in many ways: the ethnic background of uniformed youth does not differ significantly from the average, they are similarly likely to be from a non-Christian faith and similarly likely to receive free school meals.
- However, uniformed youth are more likely to live in an urban area, such as Greater London, likely reflecting the fact that units in these areas are able to be accessed by a greater number of people.
- There is also a slight gender bias evident, with uniformed youth slightly more likely to be male, when compared to the national average gender balance.

## Recommendations

Uniformed youth groups have a significant role to play in encouraging social mixing and integration amongst young people from different backgrounds, as evidenced by this research. With continued investment in their capacity to actively encourage a diverse, inclusive environment, these groups have the potential to extend their impact even further. Our research has generated seven recommendations around how to support this.

- 1. Continue to encourage social mixing and social integration through YUF's development model:** it is clear that uniformed youth groups facilitate social mixing. If this is to be a priority for the growth of uniformed youth provision, it will be important for YUF to lead a conversation with Network members on how the YUF development model can help to achieve further reach, delivery at scale and impact.
- 2. Give stakeholders a stake in shaping the Foundation's work:** young people, their parents/guardians and volunteers are those that best understand their own social integration needs. Continuing to give these stakeholders the opportunity to share their views and to influence the Foundation's work – such as via the Foundation's Youth Panel – will help Youth United to identify innovative ways to facilitate meaningful and positive social interactions.
- 3. Continue to support the increased diversity of both young people and volunteers:** encouraging the involvement of underrepresented social groups both as members and volunteers would help to extend the impact of uniformed youth on social mixing and integration. This might include offering greater flexibility in expectations or commitments, enhancing training in social inclusion or sharing examples of good practice across the Network.
- 4. Continue to fund disadvantaged areas to ensure young people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to join uniformed youth groups:** the Youth United Foundation's targeted funding strategy has already helped to increase the number of group units located in deprived areas, however, funding is essential to continue this expansion and to ensure that existing groups are supported to evolve in this respect.

- 5. Continue to build up an evidence base about the participation of uniformed youth:** this research establishes a foundation in understanding the profile and mixing in uniformed youth groups. However, there is potential to build on this to gain a more granular view of uniformed youth participation and to repeat this research in future to measure changes over time.
- 6. Tailor support to each group:** each of the Network Members has a distinct culture and ethos, and each individual group operates within a specific local context. It will be important to understand the different opportunities for social mixing in each of the Network Member groups, as well as within different locations. Collaborating on this development with strategic partners working in the youth sector – such as The Mix, Experian/Mosaic or the iWill campaign – might provide a useful means through which to provide tailored support to young people and adult volunteers.
- 7. Develop a communications and marketing strategy to encourage young people to join:** this research suggests that uniformed youth groups could do more to promote themselves to young people as a preferred activity. YUF should consider how a communications and marketing strategy and campaign could be developed in order to raise the profile and encourage membership of uniformed youth groups.



**YUF'S NETWORK OF ORGANISATIONS:**

