THE SCOUTS EARLY YEARS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT
MARCH 2020

Scouts

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Centre for
Research in
Early
Childhood

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Scouts Theory of Change and the stated activities and outcomes for children are included for reference as an annex to this report.

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FOREWORD

The report which follows is an independent assessment by the **Centre for Research in Early Childhood** (CREC) which has an international reputation for undertaking reviews and evaluations in the early years.

When we started our early years pilots in January 2019, we knew that we needed an independent expert eye to help us understand what was working, what was not and ultimately, if early years provision in Scouting was desirable or even possible. Over 15 months, the CREC team has followed the pilots, collected data, interviewed stakeholders and tracked our work with the committed rigour and insight of early childhood specialist researchers.

The final report is an unambiguous endorsement for early years Scouting. According to CREC:

> "*Participation in the Early Years Scout Programme, even over a relatively short period of time, has had a positive and sometimes transformative impact on the children's development, especially in the areas of communication and language skills and life skills. The Programme has also impacted positively on the adult volunteers and parents with key outcomes including the development of life skills and parenting skills*".

CREC also provides very encouraging feedback in other critically important areas; for example, the recruitment of adult volunteers, the feasibility and viability of the models, and the developmental suitability of the programme for 4- and 5-year olds.

While this good news is welcome, even more important is the spotlight that CREC shines on areas that need to be developed or improved. For example, while the partner and family models we trialled have shown lots of promise, the report identifies important concerns that need to be addressed through further piloting before these models could be rolled out.

The report also points to areas with greater potential than we imagined. For example, Young Leaders have been much more engaged in our early years pilots than we previously understood – and CREC suggests that there is potential to develop this form of youth social action much further. Involving more Young Leaders appears to be a win-win-win: for young children, for the young leaders, and for Scouting overall. We will be exploring this opportunity further.

The report has been essential in helping the Early Years Programme Board to frame our final recommendations to The Scout Association Board of Trustees. We are very grateful to Professor Chris Pascal and the team at CREC and delighted to make their full report widely available to those who would like to better understand the potential and challenges of early years Scouting.

Andrew Bollington   Liam Burns
Project Sponsor,   Chief Programme Officer
Early Years Programme Board

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Executive Summary

Background

Scouting is currently available for young people aged 6 to 24 years of age but the 2018-2023 Scouting Strategic Plan, Skills for Life (Scout Association, 2018), recognised a growing need for more informal learning opportunities for younger children and committed The Scout Association to researching, piloting and evaluating different models of reaching young people under 6 years of age. The plan also set out a clear commitment to grow Scouting in areas of deprivation and to focus on communities that are currently underrepresented in the movement. To support these priorities, The Scout Association successfully secured funding from the Department for Education via the Voluntary and Community Sector Early Years Disadvantage Grant to deliver and evaluate 20 early years pilots in areas of multiple deprivation from 2019-2020 (21 were actually opened) and explore their capacity to improve developmental outcomes for young children, particularly in the areas of communication and language skills and in life skills.

This commitment by The Scout Association is congruent with wider Government initiatives to improve early outcomes for young children and to support community services for young children and families which have significantly declined during the recent 'age of austerity'. Young children and families living below the average income have limited access to the community activities for young children, many of which were previously offered by children's centres, youth clubs, libraries, parks and museums, and so the potential for family and home learning in these public and community spaces has been reduced. Furthermore, a large body of research shows that early experiences of informal or non-formal family learning offered within communities and the home can aid 'school readiness' and also have long-term implications for life chances and the social mobility of young citizens. The Scout Early Years Project has developed as part of this wider context of community and civic development.

The Early Years Scout section is provisionally called Hedgehogs and the pilot project has aimed to test three delivery models in which more active work with parents has been specifically sought:

1. Scout Led Model
2. Family Led Model
3. Partner Led Model

The Scout Association commissioned the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) to evaluate the impact, quality and feasibility of the Early Years Programme and to test out the viability and sustainability of the three delivery models.

These headline findings are drawn from the main body of the Evaluation Report, covering the pilot phase from March 2019 to February 2020. They are based on the evidence collected from a selected group of 6 of the 18 pilot Hedgehog groups, the collation of

monitoring data from all 18 pilot settings, and interviews with strategic leads in the Scout Movement. It should be noted that this learning is not intended to be presented only as research findings but to form part of a feedback process which has contributed to ongoing reflection and refinement of the project delivery since its launch and as it looks ahead to a possible wider roll out.

Headline Findings

This evaluation documents the achievements of the pilot Early Years Programme and points to aspects of the Programme which require further development. It is hoped that these findings and the emerging recommendations will inform the next phase of implementation as the Programme moves forward. These findings are grouped under the three dimensions set out in the evaluation brief: Impact, Quality and Feasibility. In addition, the findings on the viability and sustainability of the three delivery models are presented.

Impact

The Scout Association identified four objectives for Early Years Scouting and the evaluation provides strong early evidence that, with further investment, development and extension the Early Years Project has the potential to realise these.

1. **Improved outcomes for young people (and hence increased impact of Scouting on society)**

Participation in the Early Years Scout Programme, even over a relatively short period of time, has had a positive and sometimes transformative impact on the children's development, especially in the areas of communication and language skills and life skills. The Programme has also impacted positively on the adult volunteers and parents with key outcomes including the development of life skills and parenting skills.

2. **Increased numbers of young people joining Scouting**

The Early Years pilots have successfully recruited a cohort of younger children with a significant majority being families new to Scouting and achieving mixed gender and inclusivity for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND). A number of the pilots have a waiting list of recruits and have applied to expand their numbers which indicates an unmet demand for this age group in Scouting.

3. **Increased number of young people joining Scouting from currently underrepresented backgrounds**

It is evident that it cannot be guaranteed that any one delivery model will automatically recruit children from underrepresented backgrounds as this depends on the strategies pursued by those leading the group and the particular locality in which it is located. All of the children in the pilot groups are living in areas of deprivation but the demographic data of children currently attending the pilot Early Years groups suggests a partial or mixed picture of their success in recruiting from demographics underrepresented in Scouting. Although located in disadvantaged communities, most pilots have not yet recruited children from very low income families or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families in significant numbers. Some of the pilots have successfully developed strategies which have enabled them to recruit underrepresented families and their success can be built upon.

4. **Increased recruitment and retention of adult volunteers, avoiding detrimental impact to existing provision**

The pilot Programme has been successful in recruiting a pool of both new and existing volunteers who wish to work with the younger children. The evaluation reveals a new pool of female volunteers is being drawn in through the Early Years Project and a presently untapped potential for an important contribution to be made by Scout Young Leaders.

Quality

The evaluation has affirmed the **age appropriateness** of the Early Years Programme and its fit with **expert understanding** of early years practice. The Programme is of high quality and meets the developmental needs of the young children extremely well. The Programme is closely aligned with the national Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum but has its own distinct and different goals, with more of an emphasis on adventure, practical skills, outdoor skills, physical activity and community engagement which emphasises its difference from schooling. However, there is a need to incorporate more content on Scout heritage, ethos and values to ensure the Scout identity of the Programme is better secured.

The incorporation of strategies to work in **partnership with parents in sessions** and by offering **home activities** is a unique and very positively viewed element of the Early Years Programme which could lead to enhanced outcomes for the children. This aspect of the Programme could be usefully transferred to other Scout sections.

In all the study pilots the children display a **high level of involvement** in the activities offered indicating that the activities offered are highly engaging for the children and that deep level learning is taking place. Irrespective of delivery model, the pilots are providing the children with **rich learning experiences** indicating the potential power of the Programme to enhance young children's learning in key areas of development. Section leaders and volunteers are demonstrating high levels of skill and delivering the Programme in a motivating and engaging way which is inspiring and energising the young children to thrive and extend their potential but there is a need to incorporate more child led activities within the Programme to fully realise its potential to enhance child outcomes.

Feasibility

The evaluation explored the feasibility of the Early Years Programme and its ability to attract and retain new adult volunteers, to generate support and understanding within the Scout Movement and to have sufficient resources and capacity to administer the new section. The evidence indicates that volunteer recruitment to work with this age group is strong and that initial reticence has been largely dispelled and there is enthusiastic support more widely within the Scout Movement to extend Scouting to these younger children. Key lessons from the pilot indicate several important issues which need to be addressed for the Programme

to move forward successfully and sustainably, including:

- Funding and Investment
- Scout Organisational Structures
- Communications and Website
- Training and Induction
- Materials and Resources
- Uniform and Branding
- Ongoing Research and Evaluation

There is also an awareness of the system and personnel challenges in extending the programme more widely and a consensus that any further development should be phased and with continued evaluation to ensure organisational learning continues.

The Three Delivery Models

The evidence indicates that all three models are seen to be viable and sustainable given further time to embed and evolve but each of the models has strengths and limitations which should be carefully considered as the Programme is extended. There are particular issues in using families and partner organisations as delivery partners and any extension of these models need to be closely monitored as they develop. Despite early issues in implementation of these delivery models, they potentially provide a key strategy in extending the reach of Early Years Scouting to new communities and underrepresented groups.

There is a general view expressed that all three models should be continued in the next phase of development and possibly a further hybrid model might be explored, in which different delivery models are given as options to be contextualised locally according to circumstances and even delivered alongside each other within a District. It would therefore seem wise to continue to closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of alternative delivery models in the next phase of the Project.

Recommendations for the Way Ahead

Analysis of the evaluation evidence and reflection on the Programme achievements suggests some clear priorities for further action. These are presented as a list of 9 recommendations and collectively they stand together as a route map to inform future planning.

1. Obtain dedicated investment so that there are sufficient resources to fund the further development of the Early Years Programme and its wider implementation.

2. Generate positive and unreserved support for the Early Years Programme, both internally within Scouting and more widely within the public sphere, so that attitudes towards young children's participation reflect the powerful potential of including this age phase in the Scouting movement.

3. Continue to explore, develop and evaluate different delivery models to see how they can reach underrepresented groups in Scouting, with particular attention given to any extension of the Family led and Partner led delivery models.

4. Develop Scout systems and infrastructure so that Early Years Scouting is fully embedded as a 'Foundation' section within the Scout Movement with equal visibility and support to that given to other sections.

5. Develop and make available age specific training, induction and support for all Early Years leaders and volunteers to ensure they understand the developmental needs and capacities of these younger children. Training also should include best practice early years pedagogic approaches so leaders and volunteers are better able to use age appropriate strategies, including more child led activities, which can engage, excite, motivate and extend children's capacities and more fully realise their potential. Training in effective strategies to engage a diverse community of children and parents, and to support home learning would also be desirable.

6. Review and revise the Early Years Scout Programme and resources to ensure they reflect expert knowledge and best practice in early years, particularly in a. the encouragement of child initiative and agency; b. the use of small group and paired activities which encourage more sustained, shared dialogues; c. more use of outdoors and encouragement of a wider range of physically active activities; d. increased content on Scouting heritage, ethos and identity.

7. Agree and promote a designated uniform and branding for the Early Years Scout section.

8. Develop a coherent and age appropriate communications and marketing strategy, including an updating of the Scout website, to make Early Years Scouting more visible and accessible.

9. Commission further research and evaluation of the Early Years Scout Programme, its functioning and long term impact to ensure the continuation of organisational learning.

Part A: Pilot Early Years Programme Background and Evaluation Methodology

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the Early Years Scout Programme

The 2018-2023 Scout 'Skills for Life' strategic plan (Scout Association, 2018) set out a belief supported by wider evidence that Early Years Scouting has the potential for:

- Improved outcomes for young people (and hence increased impact of Scouting on society);
- Increased numbers of young people joining Scouting;
- Increased number of young people joining Scouting from currently under-represented backgrounds;
- Increased recruitment and retention of adult volunteers, avoiding detrimental impact to existing provision.

Reflecting on this evidence led to an acknowledgement in the Strategic Plan that there is potential for The Scout Association to have an even greater positive impact on even younger children by engaging with them and their families at an earlier stage in their lives. The pilot Early Years Scout Programme was therefore designed to explore the potential and possibilities of engaging with children at a younger age and working with parents to enhance home learning experiences through the development of a mix of new delivery models, and at the same time attempting to engage with children and families from currently under-represented backgrounds (notably Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community and most economically deprived communities). It was also seen as a strategy to address the shortage of volunteers who support Scouting and are vital to the long term sustainability of all sections.

The Scout Association's initiative is congruent with the Government's desire to improve early outcomes for young children by supporting community services and facilities that have suffered a significant decline through the 'age of austerity'. This decline has impacted most heavily on households with young children living below the average income (Bradshaw, CPAG, 2017). The economic cuts have significantly reduced access to community activities for young children previously offered in children's centres, youth clubs, libraries, parks and museums, so reducing the potential for family and home learning in these public and community spaces (McDowell, 2016; Pascal et al, 2019).

Furthermore, a large body of research shows that early experiences of informal or non-formal family learning offered within communities and the home can aid 'school readiness' and also have long-term implications for life chances and the social mobility of young citizens (Myhr et al, 2017). The importance of enhancing children and families' quality of life and improving home learning environments is recognised by policy makers. This clear connection between school outcomes for our youngest citizens and changes in the local environment around them is under-researched but has been recently documented in a report by Pascal et al (2019). We also know that informal family learning contributes to character building, positive learning dispositions and the executive learning functions known to influence successful school and subsequent life outcomes (Cara and Brooks, 2012;

Diamond, 2012; Pascal and Bertram, 2012; The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy, 2012; The National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, 2013; Heckman, 2014).

The evidence reveals that the opportunities for informal and community based learning for very young children has significantly reduced over the last 10 years, particularly for those children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or growing up in low income families. The need for projects which open up new opportunities for informal and inclusive learning for our youngest children which encourage a sense of civic attachment, social cohesion, positive dispositions, cultural and environmental awareness and character building could not be more strongly made. We believe it is in this wider social and civic context that the potential value and impact of the Early Years Scout Programme should be viewed.

1.2 The Early Years Scout Programme
Scouting is currently available for young people aged 6 to 24 years of age but the 2018-2023 Scouting Strategic Plan (Scout Association, 2018) recognised a growing need for informal learning opportunities for younger children and committed The Scout Association to researching, piloting and evaluating different models of reaching young people under 6 years of age. This approach already exists in Northern Ireland and in other parts of the world, including the USA and Denmark. The plan also set out a clear commitment to grow Scouting in areas of deprivation and to focus on communities that are currently under-represented in the movement. To support these priorities, The Scout Association secured funding from the Department for Education via the Voluntary and Community Sector Early Years Disadvantage Grant to deliver and evaluate 20 early years pilots in areas of multiple deprivation from 2019-2020 (21 were actually opened) and their capacity to improve developmental outcomes for young children, particularly in communication and language and in life skills. An additional source of funding from the Mercers Company has allowed the Scouts to run additional pilots taking the total number to 30 (however these additional pilot sites are not included in this CREC evaluation). In order to distinguish them from the existing provision in Northern Ireland, the pilot groups have been called Hedgehogs.

1.3 The Three Pilot Models
The Pilot Early Years Scout Programme aimed to test three delivery models:

1. Scout Led
This model is closest to the traditional form of delivery, where a number of adult volunteers deliver a programme to a group of younger children on a weekly basis. The parent/carer, although encouraged to volunteer, may simply bring their young people to Scouting and not play an active role. This model is similar to the Squirrels programme run by a separate organisation working under a Memorandum of Understanding with Scouts NI (Northern Ireland). 13 pilot sites included in this evaluation operated using this delivery model.

2. Family Led

In this model the young child experiences a similar format of delivery (weekly meetings with ad hoc events/trips etc) but parents/carers are asked to attend the session and take an active role in delivery, with the Scouting volunteer taking a much more coaching/facilitator role. This model is similar to a programme run by Scout's affiliates in Denmark called Family Scouting and in the USA called Lions. 4 pilot sites included in this evaluation operated using this delivery model.

3. Partner Led

This model is the least established form of traditional delivery of Scouting where professionals in Early Years settings (such as nurseries, children's centres and day care settings) deliver the defined Scout Early Years programme. 4 pilot sites included in this evaluation operated using this delivery model.

To ensure the safety of the young children participating in the pilot programme, thorough DBS checks have been made. All volunteers, including those delivering Scouts in a partner setting, complete Scouts' National Vetting Process including a disclosure check, and other vetting checks, modified appointment advisory committee requirements and Scout safeguarding training. Currently over 100 adult volunteers and parents have been recruited to run the trials which were planned to operate for at least 12 months from early 2019 and are providing spaces for over 400 children and their families, exceeding the DfE funded places target (97 adults and 370 children).

1.4 The Early Years Scout (Hedgehog) Programme

The Early Years Scout or 'Hedgehog' Programme is guided by three key documents:

1. Theory of Scouting;
2. Scouting Strategic Plan; and
3. Scouting Theory of Change.

The programme is based on the Scouts Method but is also informed by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework, a compulsory standard across England (there are equivalent policies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) supporting people working with children up to five years old. The principles in the EYFS encourage children to learn by playing, exploring and being active, and through creative and critical thinking both indoors and outside. These are very similar to Scouts' principles but are often delivered with less of the adventure, outdoor activity and responsibility than Scouts provide. It was felt that putting the Scouts Method together with what educationalists believe to be important for this age group could be very powerful.

The Programme has been designed to help young children to improve their emotional, communication and language skills, resilience, independence and readiness for school. It also aims to develop their self-control, problem-solving, ability to focus, confidence to try new things and interactions with other children. Additionally, the Early Years Scout Programme aims to support children's wellbeing and sense of community, to inspire adventure, leadership and citizenship and to develop children's skills of life. The Programme also sets out to help their parents engage in activities that support their child's early

development and so enhance home learning experiences. The programme is designed to be inclusive for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and to be flexible to suit different ages and needs of the children. The pilots have been testing to see how well this combination of positive principles through a delineated programme of Scout activities can best be delivered.

Working with the children's charity Action for Children, 52 weeks' worth of programme materials have been created and given in an 'off-the-shelf' format to a team of adult volunteers to run the section pilots. Each meeting for four and five year olds has three key principles as set out in the following extract from a recent Scout blog (The Scout Association 2019) reproduced overleaf:

1. Storytelling: Research shows that storytelling not only inspires imaginations but also helps language development and helps children to read and write. Each meeting begins with a 5–10 minute introductory story that leads into the meeting's theme and activities with the storytelling reinforcing the 'learning by doing' that's about to come.

2. Routines set for comfort and learning: Routines help young children to deal with the constant challenge of learning new things and show when to do things, creating safe and comforting boundaries. Each session has a set of routines such as welcoming, saying goodbye, turn taking and group times, teaching social skills and stimulating connections.

3. A focus on participation, play, exploration and independence: Evidence reveals that learning happens alongside playing and interacting for young children. So, although meetings are led by adults, the type of play and adventure that is inherent in Scouts is at the heart of the activities offered within a session.

There are more than one hundred ready-made activities in the Programme and all of these:
 - present tasks in imaginative ways that create opportunities for adventure and exploration.
- create open-ended things to do that help young people make choices and express their own ideas. For example, laying creative resources on a flat surface and allowing them to make their own decisions about how to use them.
- use materials or storylines that children think of as play, like making jelly worms and then describing the squishy, slimy, sloppy feel of them.
- are full of hands-on activities that encourage them to get involved. For example, they get stickers for participating.

Each meeting is built around themes of Adventure, Creativity, Helping Others, Outdoors, Skills, and Around the World. There are activity stickers, a safety checklist, helper guidance, and notes to help volunteers know the aim and purpose of each session. At the end of each session there's a reflection session which helps the children think about what they've just learnt.

At the end of every meeting plan, there's a linked activity to do at home. This brings the home learning environment into the process and encourages connections between the family and the young child's learning. Pre-made letters are included in the programme to share with parents/carers.

1.5 Evaluation Scope

As part of the Pilot Programme The Scout Association commissioned an independent evaluation of the Programme led by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), that has worked in consultation with partners to consider the impact, quality and feasibility of the Pilot Early Years Programme in relation to the **8 project objectives** (questions) as detailed below:

Impact

1. Can we evidence a positive impact on the development of young children related to the Scout Theory of Change?
2. Can the provision help us to reach areas of deprivation and demographics underrepresented in Scouting?

Programme Quality:

3. Is the programme consistent with an age appropriate interpretation of our Theory of Change?
4. Is the programme consistent with existing sector/expert understanding of early years activities/development for this age range?
5. Is the programme appropriate for 4-6 year olds, or is a different age range more appropriate/possible?

Feasibility:

6. Can we attract and retain (after their child moves on) new adult volunteers, and not undermine existing provision?
7. Is there support and understanding within the movement (both for roles likely to be involved directly in Early Years delivery, but also wider)?
8. Can we appropriately resource and administer Early Years provision on a national (staffing, processes, programme development etc.) or local (line management requirements, local training delivery, places to meet etc.) level, being explicitly conscious of likely success in areas of deprivation and underrepresented demographics in Scouting?

The evaluation was undertaken from April 2019 – February 2020 and focused its evidence gathering on 6 of the pilot Hedgehog groups including 2 groups for each of the 3 pilot delivery models but gathering monitoring data from all 18 DfE funded pilot sites. It should be noted that the data gathering took place at a very early stage in the development of the pilot programmes and observation of sessions was primarily done in the winter months when access to outdoor experiences was more restricted.

2. Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Methodological Approach and Design

In order to evaluate this project CREC has used a mixed method approach with four specific research strategies:

- Focus groups with a purposeful sample of delivery partners, adult volunteers, involved parents/carers and children.
- In depth interviews (face to face/telephone) with representatives of above groups, participating organisations and the Scout strategic leads/project leads.
- Analysis of monitoring evidence gathered during pilots on numbers and characteristics such as, family types, ethnicity etc.
- Site visits and observations by the CREC research team to capture child process and outcomes (Child Tracking Observation Tool).

We have worked closely with The Scouts to gain access to the required data and key stakeholders. These methods have generated a complex and wide-ranging set of quantitative and qualitative data that has been rigorously analysed and systematically assessed against the 8 project objectives providing an evaluative base line by which further progress towards the key programme aims can be evaluated as the Early Years Scout Programme develops.

In order to make the evaluation report comprehensive, manageable, robust and efficient we have focused the above data gathering methods using an adaptation of two innovative methodological frameworks or tools we have used in previous evaluative work:

Evaluative Tool 1: Benchmark Evaluation Framework
The first tool is a Benchmark Evaluation Framework of Early Childhood Programmes that we initially developed for a project undertaken for the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), the research arm of the international journal, which facilitates an assessment of programme provision against a set of delivery objectives. For this EY Scouting project these will encompass the eight programme objectives (questions) grouped into the three elements set out in the evaluation specification: Impact, Quality and Feasibility. The evaluation evidence in each area will help the Scouts understand existing capacity/capability gaps and where efforts might best be directed to drive improvement in the development and delivery of scouting for children under 6 years of age. The qualitative and quantitative data needed to complete the framework evaluation has been gathered through a series of focus groups, interviews, child observations and monitoring data.

Evaluative Tool 2: Delivery Model Case Study
The second instrument is the Delivery Model Case Study, (used by CREC in a number of other, similar evaluation of early childhood programmes). This evaluative tool tracks the success and impact of each of the three delivery models as they progress over time. These pathways map out the development journey of the three models, identifying any gaps or issues in delivery and reach, exploring the impact and providing front line evidence of the adeptness of the model to meet the Programme objectives, thus illuminating the current capacity of the Programme to deliver to this new younger age group. Qualitative and

quantitative data was gathered for the model case studies using focus groups, interviews, monitoring data and observational data with a range of stakeholders involved in each of the three delivery models and a meta-analysis of pilot monitoring data.

To populate the data sets in each of the above frameworks data was collected using:

- **21 Focus Groups** (6 specific pilot sites covering each of the 3 pilot cohorts and across all 3 models)
    - 2 groups representing the Partner led model (completed beginning, mid-point and end point)
    - 2 groups representing the Scout led model (completed beginning, mid-point and end point)
    - 2 groups representing the Family led model (completed beginning, mid-point and end point)
    - groups of up to 6 participating children, representing the 3 models (completed mid-point)

    These 21 focus groups were used to evaluate and obtain qualitative data primarily on the eight project objectives.

- **8 Interviews with key stakeholders,** including Group Scout Leaders and District Commissioners
- **6 follow up telephone interviews** with pilot sites not included in Focus Groups in order to explore emerging themes and saliences
- **Monitoring Data:** All pilots were required to record and return a basic data monitoring form which records attendance of children, and volunteers, family types, ethnicity etc.
- **Child Tracking Data:** During site visits a child observation tool was used for tracking and recording how the Scout Programme was delivered, the level of engagement of the child with the programme and the range of their learning experiences. Some of these data have been used to act as a proxy for child outcomes data in this short-term evaluation.

We feel the methods we have used for gathering data are efficient and rigorous as they provide rich and illuminative data from a robust, purposeful sample of respondents within a manageable timeframe and budget for such assessments. They were done with the minimum of intrusion on providers and users' time and privacy. In addition, we hope the process of participation within the data gathering process has been both empowering and developmental for parents, delivery partners and adult volunteers, involving them in a reflective and developmental process which we believe has enhanced their sense of voice and inclusion in decision making processes.

2.2 Ethical Protocols

All CREC's work is underpinned by strong ethical principles relating to the dignity and safety of participants and which is constructed round the following set of principles to ensure all actions should:

- Be done with, not to, participants;
- Be open and honest, and secure informed consent;
- Be collaborative and inclusive;
- Be empowering and developmental;
- Have utility;
- Be respectful;
- Protect all participants from harm;
- Keep confidentiality and anonymity;
- Provide feedback.

All participants were asked to provide their informed consent which guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Data collected during the evaluation has been kept securely for the duration of the project in line with CREC's data protection and security policy. We have worked with the Scouts to raise awareness of the evaluation work being conducted with relevant partners and provided content for an information sheet which was distributed to relevant volunteers and partners, to ensure that there was awareness and understanding of the evaluation, its purpose and timescales. The Scouts have facilitated access to relevant programme and documentation and monitoring data. CREC is in possession of relevant, up to date and valid policies for carrying out this work. CREC believes that through this ethical approach we have been able to achieve high levels of participant satisfaction whilst also ensuring the highest level of quality and integrity in our research and evaluation activity.

Part B: Evidence and Analysis

3. Benchmark Evaluation Findings

These evaluation findings will encompass the evidence gathered for each of the eight programme objectives (questions) and are grouped into the three elements as set out in the evaluation specification: Impact, Quality and Feasibility. The evaluation evidence presented in each area is intended to help The Scout Association understand existing capacity/capability gaps in the Early Years Programme and where efforts might best be directed to drive further improvement in the development and delivery of Scouting for children under 6 years of age.

3.1 Programme Impact

Project Objective 1 - Can the Scouts evidence a positive impact on the development of young children related to their Theory of Change?

A key aim put forward in the 2018-2023 Scout 'Skills for Life' strategic plan (Scout Association, 2018) is that participation in Scout programmes will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people. This goal is supported by research that indicates life chances can be enhanced by early experiences which promote executive functions, social skills, language development and relationships. Building on this knowledge, the Theory of Scouting foregrounded in the strategic plan sets out what these key outcomes should be for Scouting programmes and suggests that young Scouts should demonstrate that they:

- Are physically active, have healthier lifestyles, with courage to try new things;
- Have the skills to succeed, regardless of academic ability;
- Are happy, resilient and confident;
- Are responsible leaders and team players;
- Are becoming active citizens in society;
- Have strong friendships, with care, trust and respect for others from all backgrounds.

The Scout Association (2018) acknowledges that there are significant challenges in capturing the impact of Scouting on the development of these outcomes due to the nature of an individual's participation in Scouting, the reliance on volunteers, issues over permissions and accessing data, and the current lack of a coherent measurement approach across all Scout sections. Work is currently being undertaken across the whole Scouting movement to develop measures of these outcomes but as yet there is no one measure of the impact of Scouting that can be used for these younger children. Nevertheless, some key aspects of development that are relevant to younger children and should be enhanced as children engage in a Scout Programme are identified in the Skills for Life strategic plan:

- Happiness;
- Personal wellbeing (measured by satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety);
- Perseverance and grit;
- Confidence and self-esteem;
- Understanding and confidence in their own beliefs and attitudes;
- Responsibility and trustworthiness;

- Ability to work in a team;
- Initiative and acting as a role model.

The Scout Association Theory of Change (Annex A) reiterates these intended outcomes and how they might be reached, suggesting that in all Scout programmes there should be a focus on how: 1). systems and processes; and 2). People, support these outcomes. A vital first step in this Theory of Change is that all participants should be clear on what these developmental outcomes are and what the impact of the programme is on individual children who are engaging. In this evaluation we have therefore documented qualitative evidence about the impact of the Hedgehog sessions on young children's developmental outcomes and related these to the stated Scout outcomes. In relation to the Early Years (Hedgehog) Programme it should be noted that when evaluating the impact of the Programme on these developmental outcomes there are some significant limitations to the strength of the evidence presented in this report. These are:

- The children are young, with those currently participating ranging from 2 years to 6 years (some younger and older siblings attended Family led sessions regularly) and so difficult to assess in a short period of time;
- The data was collected predominantly during the evenings of the winter months;
- In England the Programme has been running for only a year;
- Many children have not attended consistently throughout this period;
- Much of the evidence we have is self-reported from parents and volunteers;
- The size of the sample children in the pilots is small;

The differences between the three delivery models may be affected by the very small size of some of the groups.

Despite these cautions the evidence from interviews and focus groups is consistent across all the pilots that participation in the Hedgehogs Programme, even over a relatively short period of time, has had a positive and sometimes transformative, impact on the children's development. It is also evident that the outcomes identified by participants align well with each of the Scout stated child and young people outcomes as stated in the Theory of Scouting (Scout Association, 2018) and illustrated in Figure 1, revealing that the programme has led to positive outcomes in all the desired areas.

> *I was a real cynic about these young ones, no way, but it has been absolutely brilliant. We've seen a transformation in just a few weeks. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *You can have massive impact on lives at this younger age – an impact for life. As child I wasn't confident but Scouting gets you out of your shell – they do things they wouldn't normally do in school – it's something completely different. It puts them in places outside their comfort zone. You see the change, it transforms people's lives, it gives them the confidence to have a go. (Scout Regional Lead)*

Key outcomes for children which were identified and directly attributed to the Hedgehog Programme by most parents and volunteers were in the areas of Skills for Life (including communication and language), Citizenship and Connectedness. There was less evidence on Leadership outcomes and Adventure, which indicates that the current programme and the way it is delivered with a lot of adult

direction and indoor activity (noting it was winter when the research took place) could be developed to further encourage these outcomes.

Figure 1: Identified child outcomes

Theory Of Scouting Outcomes for Young People	Reported Hedgehog Outcomes
Adventure: physically active, healthier lifestyles, with courage to try new things	**Physical Development:** *The Programme makes a big difference but especially in exercise and healthy outdoor living – life skills which are introduced gently overtime.*
Skills for life: skills to succeed regardless of academic ability	**Communication and language skills:** *They are learning from interactions with each other, they're using and learning the meaning of different words in different contexts. They are astonishingly different when they leave at 6 years to when they come in at 4 years. (Scout Strategic Lead)* **Listening and attention skills:** *You can see the impact of the Programme on the children in the Nursery, the boisterous become quieter. Others become more involved, with increased listening and attention, responding to praise. Back in the room the children interact more easily with others. There's a change in social relationships. (Hedgehog Leader)* **Life skills including confidence, independence, motivation, voice, resilience, concentration, persistence, self-management, independence, autonomy and responsibility:** *The Programme makes a big difference but especially in concentration, independence, competence, confidence, relating to each other, turn taking. They don't think they are learning and they develop an appreciation of the nature and diversity of a big community like Scouting to which they belong. (Scout Strategic Lead)*
Wellbeing: happy, resilient and confident	**Emotional wellbeing:** *Sometimes there is space and time to share their experiences and feelings. I've heard about bullying, death all kinds of things.*

	They do not always have the language but they have trust in the Leader, someone outside their immediate circle. Story books too provide a stimulus – not like going to bed with Alexa App! (Scout Strategic Lead)
Leadership: responsible leaders and team players	**Self-esteem and pride:** *I think they also get a huge amount of pride from being part of the group. They wear royal blue t-shirts and sweatshirts and they do the promises – oh god they love the stickers! (Hedgehog Leader)*
Citizenship: active citizens in society – locally, nationally and internationally	**Values and morals:** *The biggest impact has been on relationships: Adults to Adults; Adults to Children and Children to Children. We've developed a context of shared values and trust in which adults and children support each other. We have the courage to intervene supportively. (Hedgehog Leader)* **Awareness of natural world:** *Once you are a Scout, you are a Scout forever. It's a view of life. It weaves a deep commitment to the environment - to the World – sustainability is part of it too. (Hedgehog Leader)*
Connectedness: strong friendships, with care, trust and respect for others from all backgrounds	**Social skills and friendships:** *The big thing is friendships, one child who arrived had no siblings, no previous affiliations such as preschool and at first as he was going round the group, he was very shy, didn't speak but over time he came out and made friends. (Hedgehog Leader)* **Shared identity and belonging:** *The stickers, the neckerchiefs, the Hedgehogs songs give them a sense of belonging and identity ……it's that bit extra isn't it. Reinforces their individuality and specialness but they identify as a group of Hedgehogs. (Hedgehog Leader)*

There was also some indication that in those pilots with high Muslim participation the Programme has been particularly powerful for girls, especially those from Muslim communities. Also, children with special needs have benefited enormously from the Programme and have been fully integrated into all group activities in every observed session.

> *The appeal is we do it together. Something a little bit different rather than just dumping him off – he's learning to watch others, not be so egocentric and then join in. He's on the Autistic spectrum and I've seen the change. He can take the centre spot and lead the Pledge now. This is once a week – it's a group activity and integrated – he's come on leaps and bounds. At Nursery he gets a lot of one to one and withdrawal. Here he fits in. The routine and shape of the session on a Saturday – we walk here – he knows what to expect and that all helps. And I cherish this extended learning for all. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

There is also evidence that the Hedgehog Programme has had a significant impact on the adult participants, including parents, volunteers and young leaders. Commonly cited outcomes for adults and young leaders were:

- Life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience, self-organisation, responsibility, leadership;
- Self-esteem and self-worth;
- Friendships and social skills;
- Belonging and identity;
- Parenting skills;
- Values and morals;
- Employment skills.

> *In these sessions you see not only children making friends but adults talking together especially Dads who might not have conversations often about parenting. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

> *As a volunteer I've got great things out of it. I've taken early retirement and I've developed myself. I've been a school governor but the main benefit for me is that it has made me a better Dad. I'm so much more patient now with Lucy- I'm learning and changing. I do Beavers, 15-20 kids asking insane off the wall questions- learning to manage that situation with my own kid at one time I might have said 'what a stupid question' but working with these others, I'm thinking how to construct an answer. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

> *We look outside the box in a way that other groups or after school activities don't. We bring the families on board and they get the Scouting morals. Parents, and especially grandparents, have really responded well and told us how much they enjoy seeing what their children have been doing and they then share their experiences of what they did as a child. The Hedgehogs is bringing the community together, even more so than the Beavers can. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *We have a young Leader who had issues and poor communication skills – she did drumming therapy and it wasn't working. She came to us and her confidence*

has grown – she really relates to the kids – enjoys the role and the responsibility – everyone has benefited, the kids and her. It's seems a slight thing but we knew she was changing when she said 'I'll make the coffee' just thinking of others taking responsibility. (Hedgehog Leader)

The learning and development outcomes documented for both the children and adults participating in the Hedgehog Programme are in line with The Scouts Theory of Change (Annex A) which foregrounds 1). systems and processes and 2). people. It is apparent that the impact is largely due to the high motivation and dedication of the people involved, the caring ethos they promote and create, and their careful planning and preparation for the Hedgehog sessions. All of which reveal that the majority of Hedgehog volunteers and leaders have already developed a clear understanding of the Scouting ethos and its stated aims and outcomes as these relate to these younger children and have become skilled at putting them into practice.

Key Findings for Project Objective 1

1. There is consistent evidence that participation in the Early Years Scout Programme, even over a relatively short period of time, has had a positive and sometimes transformative impact on the children's development.

2. The outcomes align well with the stated Scout Association desired child outcomes.

3. Key outcomes for children which were identified and directly attributed to the Hedgehog Programme were in the areas of Skills for Life (including communication and language), Citizenship and Connectedness. There was less evidence on Leadership and Adventure outcomes, which indicates that the current programme and the way it is delivered with a lot of adult direction and indoor activity (noting it was winter when the research took place) could be further developed to encourage these outcomes more.

4. The Programme has also impacted positively on the adult volunteers and parents, with key outcomes being the development of life skills (including confidence, motivation, resilience, self-organisation, responsibility, leadership, self-esteem and self-worth, friendships and social skills, belonging and identity, parenting skills, values and morals and employment skills.

5. The positive outcomes can clearly be attributed to a realisation of The Scouts Theory of Change involving the development of Scout systems and processes and people.

Project Objective 2. Can the provision help the Scouts to reach areas of deprivation and demographics underrepresented in Scouting?

The 2018-2023 Scout 'Skills for Life' strategic plan (Scout Association, 2018) has a clear goal to enhance the inclusivity of Scouts by breaking down any barriers that prevent people from joining and proactively working to increase the diversity of Scouting communities. A specific intention of the Scout Early Years Project is to increase the numbers of children joining Scouting and in particular to increase those joining from currently underrepresented backgrounds, including children from disadvantaged communities and from black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. It is evident that it cannot be guaranteed that any one delivery model will automatically recruit children from underrepresented backgrounds as this depends on the strategies pursued by those leading the group and the particular locality in which the group is located. All pilots under the Early Years Programme were sited in disadvantaged communities and section leaders were instructed to prioritise children from these communities and from underrepresented backgrounds. It was evident that some of the pilots have been more stringent in applying these criteria than others in order to recruit their cohorts. There was some worry expressed that homogenising families living in 'areas of deprivation' could serve to deter some families and volunteers and that it may be better to promote the sections in a more positive way using terms that don't stereotype and label. There was also an expressed view that although Scouting should be inclusive this should not be at the expense of over prioritising disadvantaged and underrepresented groups as Scouting should remain as being for all.

> *I have an issue with 'area of deprivation', as one colleague said to me, 'I live there, I don't feel 'deprived''. With the housing crisis we face nationally, many areas are more fluid in their composition, so I'm just cautioning about our use of words like 'deprived' or even 'hardship'. I like to turn it round and say funding for 'opportunity areas' or something like that. I'm just addressing what maybe negative stereotyping and labelling. We just need to be careful. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The evidence in England (Baker et al, 2014) suggests the pre-eminent, predictive factors for educational underachievement are 'ranked' as: 1. Poverty; 2. Gender; and 3. Ethnicity, all aspects of recruitment that the Early Years Scout Programme sets out to address. Other aspects to consider in relation to the inclusion of underrepresented groups in Scouting are 4. Religion and 5. Special educational needs and disability (SEND). An analysis of the monitoring data in relation to these categories of participant reveals the demographic makeup of the children currently attending the pilot Early Years groups and suggests a partial or mixed picture of their success in reaching areas of deprivation and demographics underrepresented in Scouting.

Poverty

It should be noted that all pilots are located in socially disadvantaged communities and the pilots were encouraged to target low income families. The monitoring evidence reveals that in the Early Years Pilots only 15% of the participating children were eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), an indicator of family poverty, as shown in Figure 2. Given the communities chosen for the pilots, one might expect higher levels of Early Years Pupil Premium children to be attending. It could however be the case that not all parents either understood the term 'Early Years Pupil Premium' or wished to identify as receiving Early Years Pupil Premium for reasons of stigmatisation, in which case the true figure might be higher. Whilst it is not possible to verify that entirely we can also look at the parent/carer data to provide other socio-economic indicators by which to better understand the success of the pilots of engaging children from disadvantaged and lower income families.

Figure 2: Children eligible for early years pupil premium (all models) n = 252
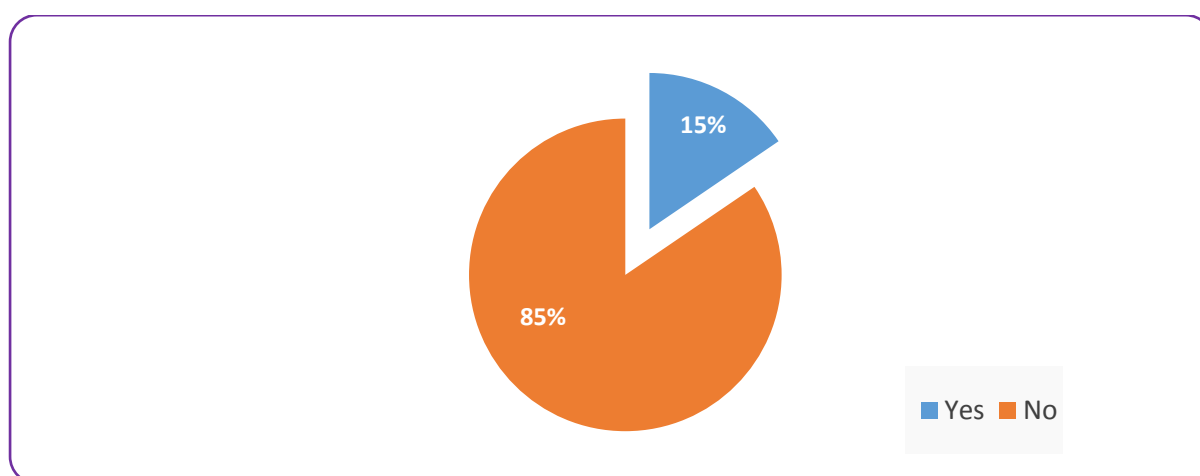
Across all three models, the data shows that single parent households account for almost 30% of the children who attended whereas the national average is just over 22% (ONS 2019). Whilst being a single parent household does not necessarily mean that a household is socio-economically disadvantaged it will by its nature only have a single income and thereby have a lower than average household income, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation data shows that single parent families make up the largest proportion (24%) of any family type in persistent poverty (https://www.jrf.org.uk/data).

Overall 59% of all children come from families where both parents work; 57% come from families where both parents work and at least one of those works full time. Even when single parent households are included, 80% of children come from households where at least one adult is in full time employment. We do not however have any indication of household income levels so cannot determine to what degree those full time salaries are high or low paid.

Only 11% of children across the three models come from families which have no adult earners. Interestingly (although only a small sample) all children in the Family led model come from homes with some level of employment (and a slightly higher proportion of part time/zero hours only households) which might suggest this might be something to explore further in any future roll out and evaluation. It should be noted with exception of the one

point above, there is little difference between the three models in terms of who they have reached.

This evidence seems to indicate that children from lower income families are accessing the groups but it is not possible to state how far the Hedgehog groups have reached the very poor and disadvantaged on the data that we currently have. It would be helpful for any further research or evaluation to explore this issue further and explore what barriers there may be for children from very low income families to access the groups.

Gender

*A*ll the pilot groups had recruited a mix of male and female children but most had recruited more males than females (65% male/35% female). However it should be noted that this was a markedly more balanced gender split than most other Scout sections, as revealed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Gender of children attending Scout sections (2019)

	Hedgehogs	Beaver Scouts	Cub Scouts	Scouts	Explorer Scouts
■ Female %	35%	19%	21%	26%	33%
■ Male %	65%	81%	79%	74%	67%
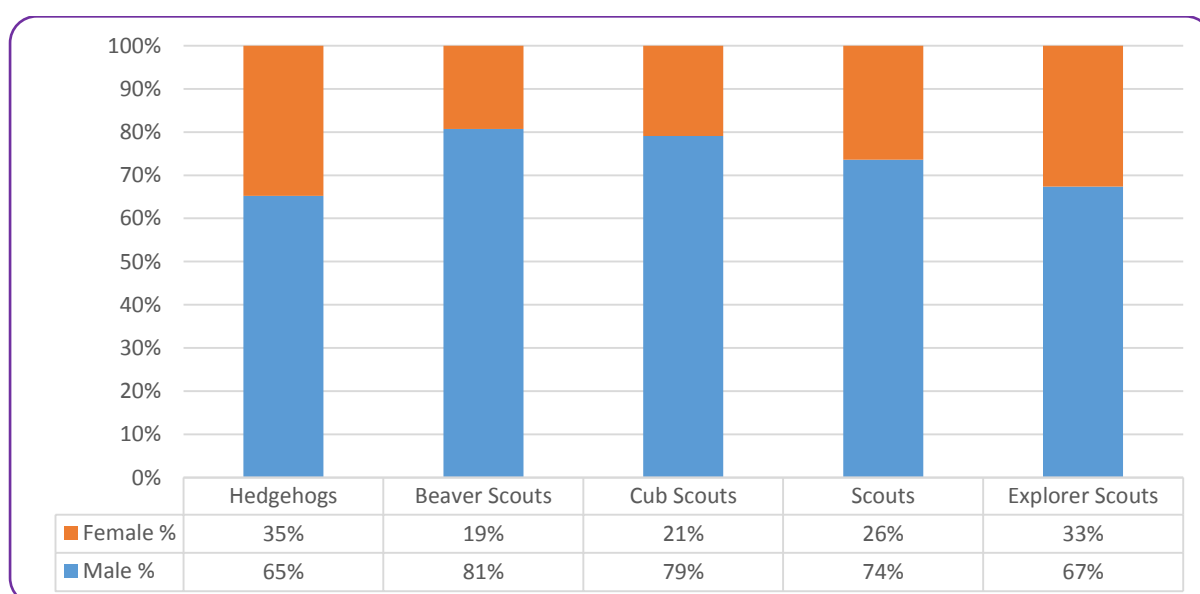
NB: Whole Scout data is based on the 2019 Scout Census

Ethnicity

The evidence on underrepresented groups reveals some progress has been made in this regard when recruiting for the pilots but the majority of Hedgehog participants are white (78%) and this picture matches the representation of other Scout sections but is even more so, as revealed in Figure 4. It should be noted that there were a couple of pilot Early Years groups that have successfully recruited a much more diverse group of children and this may be due to the location of the pilot in a more diverse community. It is also noted that mostly the pilot sites are quite mono-cultural and so the ethnic and religious make-up of the section will be sensitive to where pilot sites were located.

> *We are inclusive. My child has mild SEND, we have girls and boys but the communities here are white working class. You just don't see multi-ethnic groups around here, but we are open to all and we keep subs as low as we can. We welcome all and we are positively inclusive. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

Figure 4: Ethnicity of Scouts (2019)
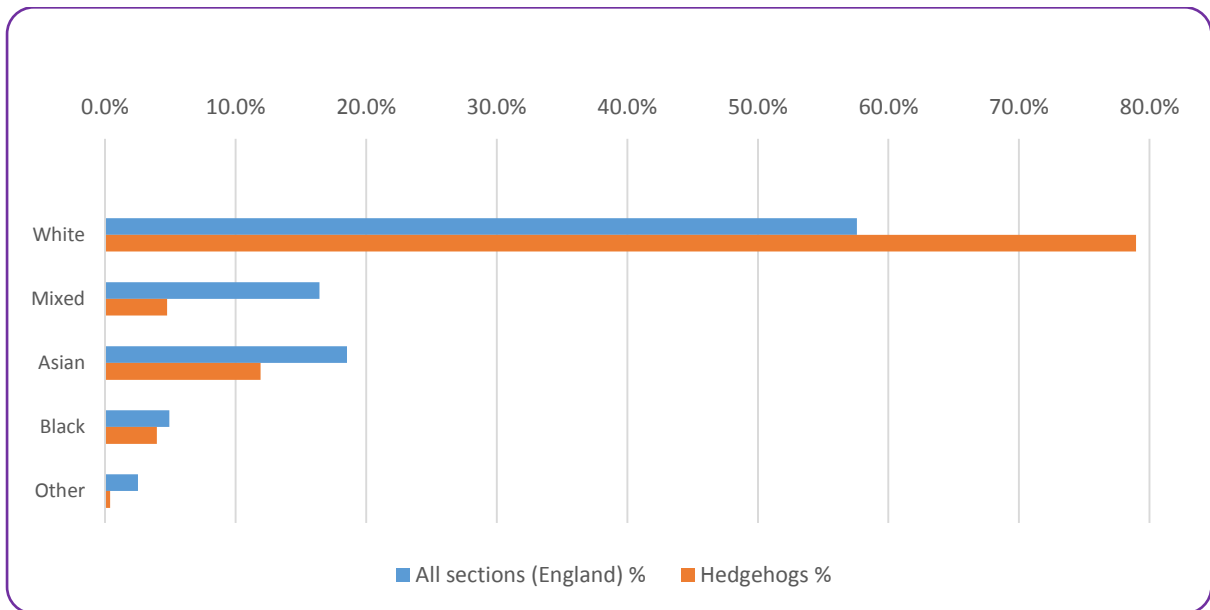
NB: Whole Scout data is based on the 2019 Scout Census

Religion

The stated religion of the Early Years Scouts shown in Figure 5 further illustrates the preponderance of traditional scout group characteristics but also indicates that many of the participants (52%) do not have a stated religion or belief. However, the participation of those with other religious beliefs or with no belief seems to indicate that religion is not a bar to accessing the Scout groups.

Figure 5: Religion of Early Years Scouts (all models) n = 252
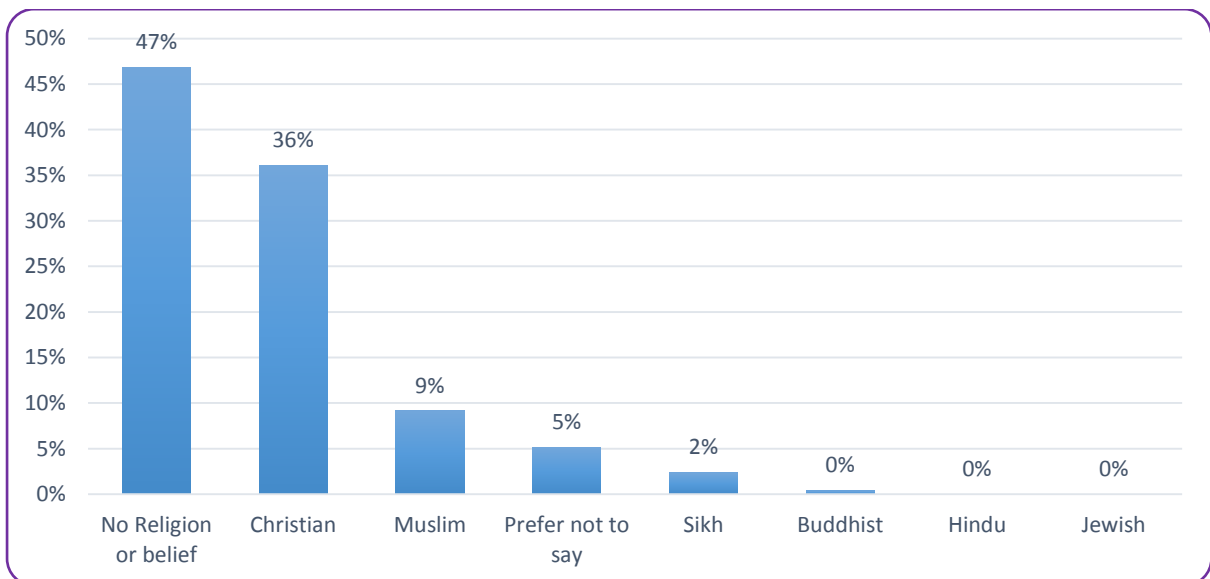
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

There is evidence that the pilot Hedgehog sections have operated an inclusive recruitment strategy and have been successful in welcoming children with special educational needs and disability, as shown in Figure 6, with some 6% of recruits identified with this characteristic.

> *All the groups are very easy with SEND, very much so. We are inclusive and we are supportive of them in our regular programme. Parents want them to be part of 'normality'. Other children at that age are totally accepting. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Figure 6: Early Years children identifying with special educational needs or disability (all models) n = 252
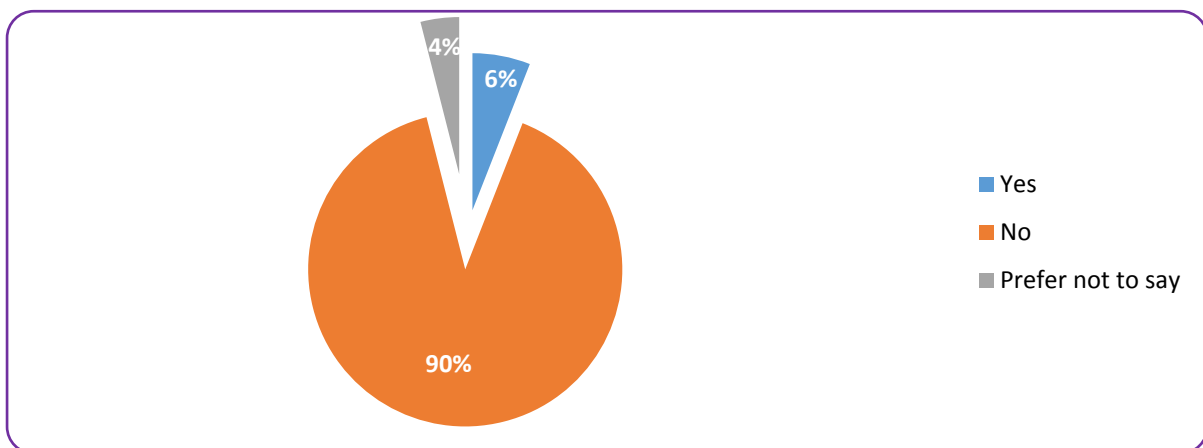
The evaluation explored how many of the families of the current cohort of Early Years Scouts had previous connections to Scouting through older siblings or personal experience and how many 'new' families had been reached by the pilot programme. This evidence set out in Figure 7 reveals that most of the Early Years Pilots have been successful in recruiting 'new' children and families to Scouting, particularly the Partner led pilots, with nearly 60% of families overall having no previous connection and so fulfilling one of the key aims of the Project.

Figure 7: Previous connections to Scouting (all models) n = 252
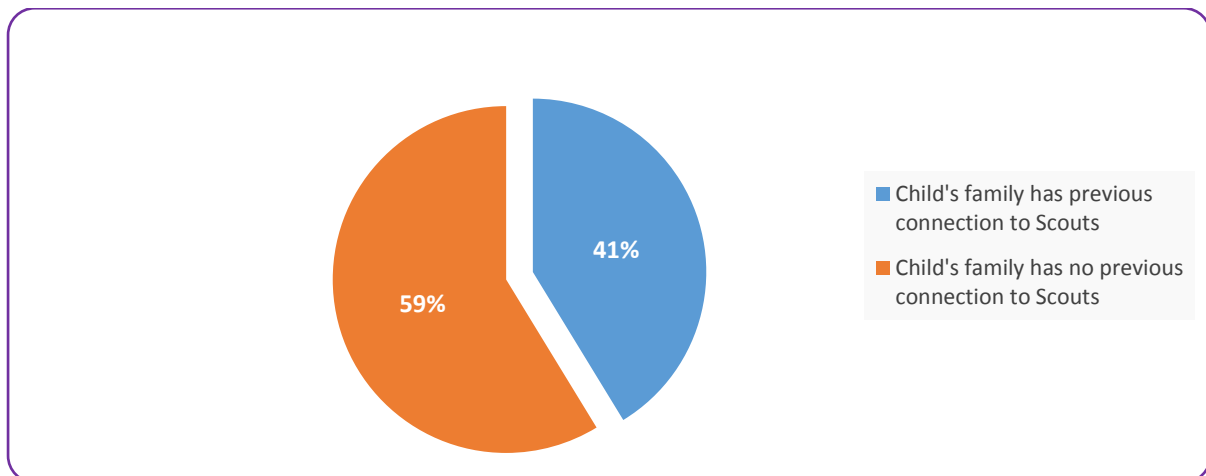
The evidence from the interviews and focus groups on recruitment to the Early Years pilots indicates that for the Scout led sections, recruitment of children was not difficult at all. Hedgehog groups were full and primarily achieved through word of mouth and using family and community networks developed for the older Scouting groups. In these locations it was felt that there was a large unmet demand for these early years sessions. Being located in community venues, especially where a Beaver section existed, with established links into the families was a major benefit, as the statements below reveal.

> *We make more use of our existing families to reach others in community. Hedgehogs are the waiting list for Beavers. In lower income areas they are more likely to have community centres like this one – they are really accommodating here. We are about pulling the kids in from the street and getting the parents on board. We see the kids as individuals and make personal connections. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *We recruited 4 and 5 year olds from this estate which is in the bottom 10% in terms of deprivation indices and they were mostly recruited from our Beaver waiting list, siblings and extended friends and from 5 different schools and preschools. We now have a waiting list – there's a gap in opportunity at this age to get them out of the house. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Recruitment in Partner led sections was also relatively straightforward as the nursery or school hosting the group had a ready-made cohort of children to draw from and existing links to the families in the local community, and sometimes existing Scout sections.

> *Engagement was very easy, we advertised through school and via social media and the section filled up very quickly. We already have Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts sections at the school. They have waiting list criteria linked to attendance at that school and siblings at school. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Recruitment in Family led sections was much more difficult as they did not have an existing cohort of children or pre-existing family links to use. In these pilots, they had to start from scratch and locate and identify families that met the project criteria.

> *We rigorously applied the criteria – we didn't just want to create a Beavers waiting list. And we worked hard to achieve the 40-45% deprivation. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *Our biggest challenge is, if we're serious about engaging the 'hard to reach' then how do we do this? Where we have no existing group in an area it's really difficult to get things started. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Obtaining information about qualifying families was very hard for the Family led section leaders, which they stated was due to GDPR restrictions that prevented Children's Centres, schools and other partner organisations passing on contact details. This has meant that they have built their group more slowly over the pilot period and many still have not recruited their full numbers and in some cases numbers have dropped off. Reasons cited for this were lack of access to information, the stringent criteria they were asked to apply, especially that a parent or family member attend, the lack of time and resources to publicise the opening of the section and the sometimes low numbers of underrepresented groups in the locality, many of whom are under considerable pressures.

> *We were 8 but now down to 4 children. Even D's sister and niece 'can't be bothered'. There are 4 other siblings, so what to do with them? Really many want cheap childcare and can't stay here with child when there's others at home. One Mum said she hoped they'd be able to transfer to Beavers earlier if they had started Hedgehogs and was disappointed when I told her Beavers don't start until 6 years. (Hedgehog Leader)*

To facilitate participation some of the Family led pilots had been very flexible about the admission of younger and older siblings at the sessions in order to allow the parent to attend, with these sections catering for children as young as 2 years and as old as 6 years. The existence of other siblings obviously created issues for some parents required to stay with their child. Some groups had been flexible about the requirement for parents to attend every session or for one family member to bring more than one child. This it was felt helped those parents who might be on zero hour contracts with flexible and unpredictable working times.

> *This is a disadvantaged community where parental engagement would negatively impact on some children being able to attend (ie parents would not bring their child if they had to attend) and we didn't want that barrier preventing some children attending. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

One of the Family led pilots also held its sessions on a Saturday morning, rather than a weekday evening, in an effort to enable easier access for local parents to come with their children and this proved an attractive option for their target families. It should be recognised that in spite of these challenges, some of the Family led pilots have shown that beginning a group in a new area, targeting

underrepresented groups and requiring parents to attend can be successfully achieved but this takes very skilful leadership, good local connections, hard work and more time to establish.

> *We've got a good mix here. We recruited on line, opened it up to as many as possible. We identified any promising contacts but partners were worried about GDPR. We registered interests and then undertook a purposeful selection given the bid's intentions. We didn't take everyone because we do see this as targeted at particular groups: so we now have twins, the child with two mums, the South Asian British cousins whose parent has very little English and a mixed race Autistic boy. I knew the postcodes of certain affluent areas and I made it much harder for them to be admitted. We are up to max figures now. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Many of the volunteers and leaders in the Family led pilot sections expressed the view that requiring the parents to attend with their children was a major barrier for many of their target families. Also, the lack of a Beaver group for their children to progress to was also cited as a disincentive.

All the pilot sections were using a mix of word of mouth, social media, websites, open events, local networks, school and preschool organisations, community venues and events to send out information about the Early Years pilot sections as an aid to recruitment and to publicise their activities. It was expressed that more help from the national Scouting Association and a higher profile on the Scout website and publicity campaigns for Early Years Scouting would have been welcome. There was little evidence of targeted publicity aimed at underrepresented ethnic groups in the pilots visited for this evaluation.

Key Findings for Project Objective 2

1. The monitoring data of the children currently attending the pilot Early Years groups suggests a partial or mixed picture of their success in reaching areas of deprivation and demographics underrepresented in Scouting.

2. The pilots have successfully recruited a cohort of younger children to the sections, with a significant majority being families new to Scouting and achieving mixed gender and inclusivity for children with special educational needs and disability(SEND). However, although being located in disadvantaged communities, in most pilots they have not yet recruited children from very low income families or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families in significant numbers.

3. Some pilots have developed strategies to successfully target underrepresented families but recruitment takes time and resource, and is affected by the community location of the section.

4. The pilots have used a wide spectrum of recruitment strategies locally, but would benefit from more support from the national Scout Association.

5. Sections which are not building on existing Scout sections face more challenges in recruitment and for Family led models, the requirement for parents to attend can be a barrier to participation with the pilots adopting more flexible approaches to parent involvement address this.

3.2 Programme Quality

Project Objective 3 - Is the programme consistent with an age appropriate interpretation of The Scout's Theory of Change?

The Scouts' Theory of Change (Annex A) encourages a focus on developing two key aspects of the organisation in order to secure desired outcomes: 1. Systems and processes; and 2. People. The implementation of the Early Years Programme seems to have adopted this approach in its development and implementation. The Programme was developed in close collaboration with early years sector experts from a partner organisation, Action for Children. This strategy aimed to ensure that the Programme aligned with age appropriate expectations and the current requirements of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. It should also be noted that although aligned with the national EYFS, the Early Years Scout Programme has its own distinct and different goals with more of an emphasis on adventure, practical skills, outdoor skills, physical activity and community engagement.

> *The children's lives are dominated by digital technology, this Hedgehog section is especially needed. It just gets them out, uses their brain differently. It's play learning, exploratory, yet there are rules and discipline, they have to put their hands up to be quiet. Also it's about who are we - Identity and belonging. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The children also expressed their appreciation of the active nature of the Early Years Programme.

> *I love playing parachutes – the big one when everyone has a hold of it – it comes up in the air and bounces. (Hedgehog Child)*

> *I like playing hide and seek – there's lots of places here, lots of trees. The bug hotel you can hide behind there. (Hedgehog Child)*

> *I like being noisy, songs, dancing and making things. (Hedgehog Child)*

The Programme also suggests that the activities are delivered in a non-formal style, being often outdoors, designed to be enjoyable and fun as well as offering a wide range of new and challenging experiences for the children. The challenge for section leaders is to ensure that these activities are delivered in a way that is attractive, relevant and appropriate for these younger aged children. They also are encouraged to ensure that the children get to experience things they would not get at school, such as being in the community, craft and 'messy' activities, being outside, using torches at night, taking risks, sitting round a fire, toasting marshmallows and maybe even camping (some participants desperately wanted this experience while others were less sure).

> *We are training them in how to manage risk. There is a lack of common sense in many kids because they are not allowed to make decisions and explore. We offer controlled exploration. We give them more choices usually but with hot fat as part of the activity tonight it was obviously more difficult. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *I've got children this age myself. I love that they are getting Scouting so early. The little ones can be brought in. It's the activities, the nature walks, camping, being outdoors in the dark with torches. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *They may go to preschool but this is different. Open fire cooking, making flints, breath of fresh air, adventure and they learn about consequences and cause and effect. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

And again the children revealed their awareness that this was a different experience to school.

> *There's more room to run around, more seats too. We do learning at school and learning here but it's game learning here rather than writing. (Hedgehog Child)*

> *Playing games, the 'duck, duck, goose' game and eating 's'mores' (marshmallows), chocolate and biscuits toasted on the fire. (Hedgehog Child)*

A further unique and special element of the Early Years Scout Programme is its promotion of a shared identity and the Scouting ethos and values which are made concrete for these young children through symbols such as the wearing of the Hedgehog uniform and neckerchief, the rituals around the flag, and the session opening agenda including forming

and sitting in a circle, joining in a welcome, singing and iteration of the promise, which opened most, but not all, of the pilot sessions observed. This requires a level of self-discipline and self-control for these young children which we observed developed significantly as the children settled in and became familiar with the routines.

> *…and discipline, the Hedgehogs sit in a circle. They know what is expected and they understand what and how to be behave, how it works when you're here and it's different! (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *Sometimes people think it's about leaving them to run around screaming but it's nothing like that, it's very disciplined. There are rules and learning but it definitely isn't school and we don't want it to look like school. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The children in the pilots certainly manage and appear to thoroughly enjoy these rituals that might be seen by some in the wider early years sector and in some older Scout sections as being rather demanding for these younger children. However most of the children and adults we interacted with feel these rituals and the uniform are an essential element of the Early Years Programme and ensure the connection to the Scout Movement was visible and understood by all. The children are proud to display this new identity and eager to present it publicly coming or going from sessions or taking part in community activities such as parades. However, in some of the pilots, especially the Partner led ones we visited, there is a lack of visibility of this element of the Programme so that both children and volunteers do not have a concrete sense that the session is a Scout one and that Hedgehogs are part of the wider family of Scouting.

> *The Hedgehogs have just fitted in. Part of being Scouts is the uniform; there wasn't a uniform available but they said we could have one so we chose purple hoodies and neckerchiefs. They came along and just took to it. All the Hedgehogs have uniforms, they do the scout promises –if (Hedgehogs) is just 'added on' to another provider's early years offer it loses that connection with the Scouts. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Our evaluation of the Programme design, content and the suggested 52 activities (summarised in Section 1.4) indicates that it is largely congruent with best practice for children from 4 to 6 years of age and has been very positively received by Hedgehog section leaders, volunteers and parents. The suggested hour long programme for each session, beginning with a group welcome, the Promise, some singing, a themed story, followed by an activity, then some physical games and finally a reflection and closing ritual, was closely followed in most of the pilots. Leaders and volunteers felt this pattern provided a pacey and balanced session which kept the children interested and on-task. This means, according to the Scout Theory of Change, that the people involved in delivering the Programme are enthusiastic and confident in doing so and those leaders and volunteers who have early years' experience through their professional work, (and a number of the pilot leaders and volunteers do) can transfer this knowledge and skills easily to ensure the successful delivery of the activities to the children.

The Programme, the suggested activities and the required resources are provided to the pilot section leaders in an easily accessible and well defined way (a handbook and resource box) to support ease of planning and running a session. Most of the pilot section leaders and volunteers really appreciate the defined Early Years Programme and the supply of resources provided and most leaders report that they largely followed the outline sessions and activities. However, they also state that they adapt them to suit the particular day, the context and the mix of children in the group and that this flexibility is important.

> *The resources are really good, the ideas, the pack. It all really fills the hour but we feel free to be flexible in what we do and change it if need be. We don't always look to Scouting for guidance but more to the EYFS which we contextualise to our circumstances. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *But you do need to put it together, plan and keep it going, have pace, and routines help. They know it's: Hello Song; Pledge; Flag and Promise; Story; Activity on story; maybe some physical blow out; then Goodbye song. But there are some who like to get stuck into it and want more time and some who want a bit of physical games. You need to know your kids and mix and match, be flexible. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Also, although largely happy with the fit of the Programme to the age of the children, many leaders and volunteers suggested some modifications and tweaks that they felt would improve the Programme further. In particular, they suggested more Scout focused information and activities (to help adults as well as children) and more varied physical activity options.

All of the pilot Hedgehog leaders, volunteers, parents and children like the section name of Hedgehog, and make enthusiastic use of it in their branding, games, names and activities as expressed by one of the Hedgehog children who gave us a spontaneous and very detailed naturalist lecture on Hedgehogs when we visited.

> *We learn about Hedgehogs and we learnt when hedgehogs get frightened: (the children had a visit from a local naturalist at the previous session). (Hedgehog Child)*

Yet despite this satisfaction, at a strategic level there are one or two voices of dissent about the section name.

> *There is a lack of symbolism in the Early Years Programme eg references to the family groups, team bonding, packs that other sections have. I think it's unfortunate that we've gone with the name Hedgehogs as this is probably going to stick now and not enough thought probably went in to its choice. The other sections all link to pack animals, to families, and when you think of Hedgehogs you conjure images of small scared, solitary defensive creatures. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> **Key Findings for Project Objective 3**
>
> 1. The Early Years Scout Programme is largely congruent with best practice for children from 4 to 6 years of age, and has been very positively received by Hedgehog section leaders, volunteers and parents.
>
> 2. The Programme is closely aligned with the national Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, but has its own distinct and different goals, with more of an emphasis on adventure, practical skills, outdoor skills, physical activity and community engagement which emphasises its difference from schooling.
>
> 3. The emphasis on promoting the Scouting ethos and values, and a shared identity for all participants, is a central quality in the Programme and is realised and appreciated in most cases through the wearing of the Hedgehog uniform and the Scouting Promise and rituals. The children are highly motivated by these visible symbols of belonging.
>
> 4. The Programme demands a high level of self-discipline and control from the children which is positively promoted and enjoyed by the children.

Project Objective 4 - Is the programme consistent with existing sector/expert understanding of early years activities/development for this age range?

As stated earlier, there is evidence that the Early Years Scout Programme is largely consistent with existing sector/expert understanding of early years activities and development. Its primary focus on the development of personal and social skills (life skills) and physical development, with activities designed to encourage story-telling, language development, routines and play, aligns with children's capacities and need for physical and cognitive stimulation and social interaction at this young age. The Programme also fits well with the Scouting ethos and values as expressed and developed through the Programme activities and structure.

The focus group evidence indicates that it is widely felt that the Early Years Programme is of quality and well designed to suit the age of the children. It is also felt strongly that the younger children are well able to access a Scouting 'framed' programme and engage actively and with great benefit with the spectrum of Programme intentions and activities.

Although the Early Years Programme of activities and resources provided are generally welcomed as useful and supportive in creating age appropriate experiences for children, not every leader is aware that for young children a predominantly didactic or adult led approach with the whole group is not best practice. Expert knowledge suggests that children at this age learn best through a balanced pedagogic approach with more child led and small group activities that create opportunities for social interactions and sustained shared dialogues with adults and their peers (Pascal et al, 2019) and in this respect the sessions could offer a more balance mix of child le and adult led activities. This indicates the need for some form of training in early years pedagogic approaches for section leaders that might enhance the children's experiences further.

There is evidence from the interviews and focus groups that the Programme is best delivered by section leaders who together have a blend of Scouting and early years' experience. Where sessions worked well there is generally at least one experienced Scout leader working with another leader with early years' experience. This ensures the age appropriateness of the activities and also ensures the Scouting ethos was visible. In some pilots where this blend of experience and expertise is missing the Programme seemed to lack these two important elements.

> *We need more adults and parents involved – and we're training young Scout leaders – involving these young adults. But these are Nursery age children and a blend of the EYFS and Scouting seems to work best. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *We are different people, me and B, with different skills and we bring different things but we work really well together. I began with Beavers but these children have much more curiosity. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The extension of the sessions with activities to follow up at home is particularly appreciated and enjoyed and again is very congruent with early year's expert understanding. This evidence indicates that involving parents, either at sessions or in follow up activities is a very important, and unique element in the Early Years Scout Programme, which other Scout sections might learn from. Sector experts (Gorard and See, 2013) point to evidence showing that actively involving parents in supporting their children's learning and development provides a vital and effective means of enhancing life chances through ensuring more and richer learning opportunities outside the sessions and into the child's wider life experiences. This aspect of a quality early years programme does mean however that within Scout Early Years sections there is a need to enhance expertise in working with parents at Scout sessions and supporting home learning, which is both a training and organisational capacity issue. This requires investment and capacity building but the evidence indicates that this is where realising a deeper and more lasting impact on children's outcomes may lie. At present the evaluation evidence indicates that many Hedgehog section leaders and volunteers feel under-prepared and unsure about how to work effectively with parents and feel this can be an additional strain at sessions. In a small number of pilots the view is also expressed that it may be counter-productive to have the parents present as this may hinder the child's developing independence and autonomy, especially if the child has not had much out of home experience previously. It should be emphasised that this is not a widely expressed view with most participants strongly endorsing the need to work in partnership with parents and the value of the take home activities.

> *We've had a good rapport with parents, a good relationship. We thought it would be like a mother and toddler group but it's not turned out like that. They do interact but they don't volunteer to do things. Leaders have had to encourage them a lot. They are happy to interact with their own child but they don't want to do anything with the wider group. I can see parent volunteering improving over time. You develop a relationship with parents as volunteers…it's not there yet (with the Hedgehog parents) but if we did a trip, they would be there. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *We involve parents. We have Facebook groups and a page for parents and leaders they can post responses to 'homework' like bird identification tonight. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Potentially, a slightly more contentious element of the Programme when considered against early years sector understanding of good practice, is the use of stickers, badges and uniforms. These are contested issues in the wider early year's professional discourse, with some feeling that stickers and badges may encourage extrinsic motivation and competition at the expense of intrinsic motivation and cooperation, and the uniform requirement can lead to feelings of exclusion and a loss of individuality. However, there are many counter arguments to this by experts and it is absolutely evident in the dialogues with the pilot leaders, volunteers, parents and children that these visible symbols are very highly valued elements of the Early Years Scout Programme and that if anything they, and the children, would like them embedded and extended further. It is felt that the stickers provide a powerful motivator for the children and also reminder of, and point for, reflection building on previous activities. In most cases participants express a desire for cloth badges once the full set of stickers for each of the Programme themes have been collected, providing a visible symbol of achievement, commitment and attendance. The uniform was also seen as very important in encouraging a sense of shared identity and belonging.

> *The badges and uniform are important and a symbol of visible achievement, a reward. The badges should get harder as they get older and have continuity and progression. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *It works well for us towards the end of the day, putting the stickers in the book gives a boost, a new focus. They like the stickers and it's a record of what they've done. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *We all wear a uniform- it gives them an identity and there are badges that mirror the badges of the older children. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The children often mention the uniform and stickers in their feedback.

> *I'm happy when I put my uniform on to come to Hedgehogs. (Hedgehog Child)*

> *It's fun; we go outside too and have stickers with our books. (Hedgehog Child)*

> *I like the writing badges and the woggle. (Hedgehog Child)*

Key Findings for Project Objective 4

1. The Early Years Scout Programme is largely consistent with existing sector/expert understanding of early year's activities and development but could have more content which promotes Scouting heritage, ethos and values.

2. The focus on promoting life skills, communication and language and physical development, within a broad and rich programme of experiences aligns with children's capacities and need for physical and cognitive stimulation and social interaction at this young age.

3. The Programme is best delivered by section leaders who together have a blend of Scouting and early years' experience. Some leaders are not aware that for young children a predominantly didactic or adult led approach with the whole group is not best practice and more child led activities that create opportunities for social interactions and sustained shared dialogues with adults and their peers are desirable. This suggests training in early years pedagogic approaches could benefit Hedgehog leaders to better support children's learning.

4. The incorporation of strategies to work in partnership with parents and extend the session objectives by offering home activities is a unique and very positively viewed element of the Early Years Programme which could lead to enhanced outcomes for the children. This aspect of the Programme could be usefully transferred to other Scout sections.

5. There is some uncertainty amongst section leaders and volunteers how to work effectively with parents and a need to develop training and organisational capacity to support this aspect of the Programme.

6. The promotion of the Scout uniform and the use of stickers and badges are highly valued and seen as powerful motivators for the children and visible symbols of their belonging and achievement.

Project Objective 5 - Is the programme appropriate for 4 - 6 year olds, or is a different age range more appropriate/possible?

The Early Years Scout (Hedgehog) section is aimed at children from 4 to 6 years of age, for the first time offering Scouting experiences to younger children in England. This new section precedes the Beavers section, which was established in 1986 after some years of trialling and aimed at children from 6 to 8 years. The new Programme extends the Scouting reach to younger children and potentially opens up participation opportunities for more parents and communities. There appears to be a strong demand for Scouting at this age.

> *I think it's brilliant! We as a group, and the parents, would like to carry on. We can see the value in it, and the kids enjoy it. Parents have said there's nothing else around for that age group. I can see it being a huge thing – there's not as*

much negativity about Hedgehogs as there was about Beavers when that was starting up. There's a demand for it, it's a good positive thing for children of that age; Scouts is all about family, promoting goodness, and skills. (Hedgehog Leader)

In practice some of the Family led pilots are opening their sessions to children both younger and older than 4 and 5 years, with children as young as 2 years and as old as 6 years actively participating in the Hedgehog group activities due to the requirement for parents to be present. This spread of ages gives us an opportunity to explore the age range that the Programme might be suitable for, though the numbers of younger children are very small.

The evaluation undertook a series of close and structured observations in 6 of the 18 pilot sections, using a schedule that enables a detailed assessment to be made of the quality of the Programme and the age appropriateness of the activities and experiences offered. In the Family led pilot groups, these observations included children younger than the specified age range and though the numbers are very small (3 or 4 children only) they reveal that the quality of these younger children's experience seems to be equally as good as that of the 4 and 5 year olds. It should also be noted that the presence of their parent meant these younger children have individual support throughout the session and the very small number of children means that conclusions about the fit of the Programme to a younger age group cannot be made.

The observation evidence covers several aspects of the Early Years Programme as it is experienced by the children and provides over 3 hours of close observation of 36 children from the 6 study pilots over several months (108 hours of observation in total), allowing us to confidently assess the quality and appropriateness of the delivered Programme for this age group. This observation evidence is further supported by interviews and focus groups with adults, leaders, volunteers and children which also explored the quality of their experiences of the Programme. The evidence for each observed aspect of the Programme is set out below.

Zone of Initiative

This feature assesses the level of free initiative or choice offered to children in the sessions. High quality early years practice promotes high levels of child initiative and encourages choice for the children. 'Affordances' in the environment create opportunities for children to develop 'executive' skills such as exploration, decision making, problem solving, self-management and persistence. A curriculum with a lack of choice tends to allow less opportunity for developing 'agency' even when an exciting programme is offered. Of course, agency within a context of adventure and risk taking for young children has to be balanced against hazard and recklessness and therein lies the skill of the early year's pedagogue. In this aspect of the schedule each child observation rates the amount of choice or child initiative the child experiences during the observed period.

Zone 1 - No choice for the child. He/ she is obliged to do the activity
Zone 2 - There is a limited choice between specified activities
Zone 3 - Some activities are excluded
Zone 4 - Child has freedom of choice

The combined evidence from all the 6 study pilots is shown in Figure 8. This evidence shows that the children in all pilot groups are adult directed for most of the session with little time for free initiative.

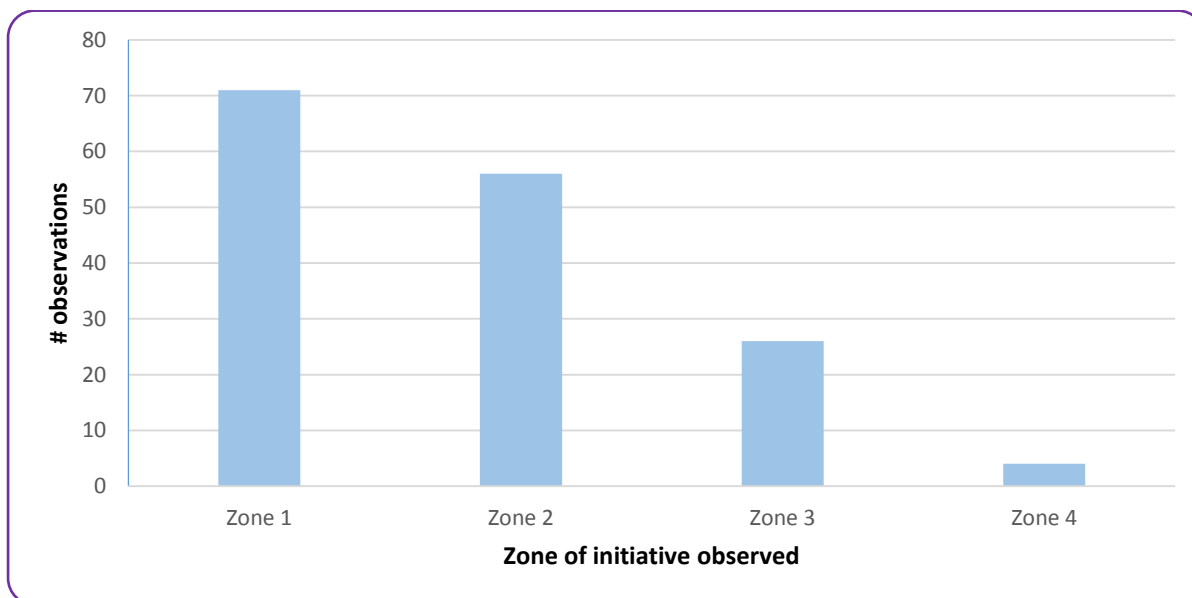**Figure 8: 'Zone of Initiative' observations frequency (All pilots combined)**

Figure 9 provides a more detailed breakdown of the level of child initiative in each of the delivery models. This reveals that the Partner led pilots appear to offer slightly more free initiative and the Scout led pilots slightly less.

Figure 9: 'Zone of Initiative' observation frequency by delivery model
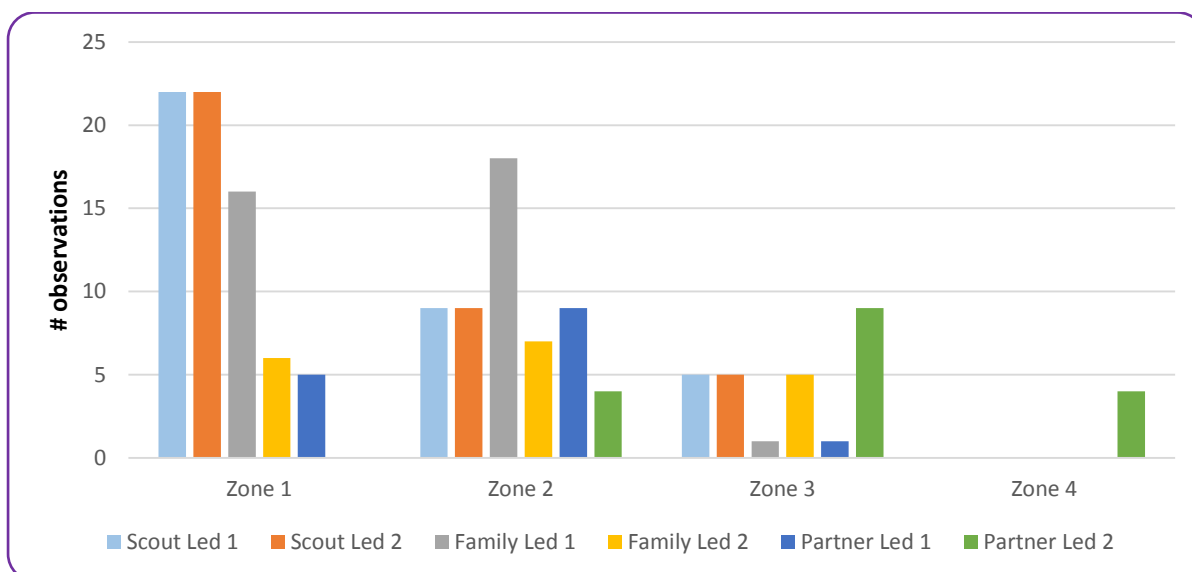
Given that the EYFS and expert opinion suggests that even in shorter, more focused sessions of activity (for example in SEND nurture groups, language enrichment programmes or small group intervention programmes) children should experience a balance of child led and adult directed activity it may be worth reviewing how this balance might be better achieved in the Programme. A note of caution about this evidence should be highlighted as the bulk of observations took place over the winter months and due to weather and darkness most sessions operated indoors where it may have been felt that more adult direction was necessary.

Grouping

This feature assesses the organisational grouping of the children during the activities. Again, expert opinion suggests that children should experience a range of grouping experiences with plenty of small group or paired activity so that social skills and talk are encouraged. The combined evidence from all the 6 study pilots is shown in Figure 10. This evidence shows that in all pilot groups the children are rarely working as an individual or in pairs during the session with activity largely group based and for around 70% of the observed time children are operating as part of the whole group, which in some of the larger Sections could constitute over 16 children.

Figure 10: Grouping (All pilots combined)

Figure 11 provides a more detailed breakdown of the grouping experienced by children in each of the delivery models. This reveals that while whole group activity is predominant in all the study pilots, the Scout led pilots provide more opportunity for small group work and the Family and Partner led pilots offer a wider range of grouping experiences. One possible explanation for the difference could be that the Scout led groups are generally larger and so use small group activity more frequently to ensure children are not overwhelmed by the larger numbers when all the children are together.

Figure 11: Grouping (by delivery model)
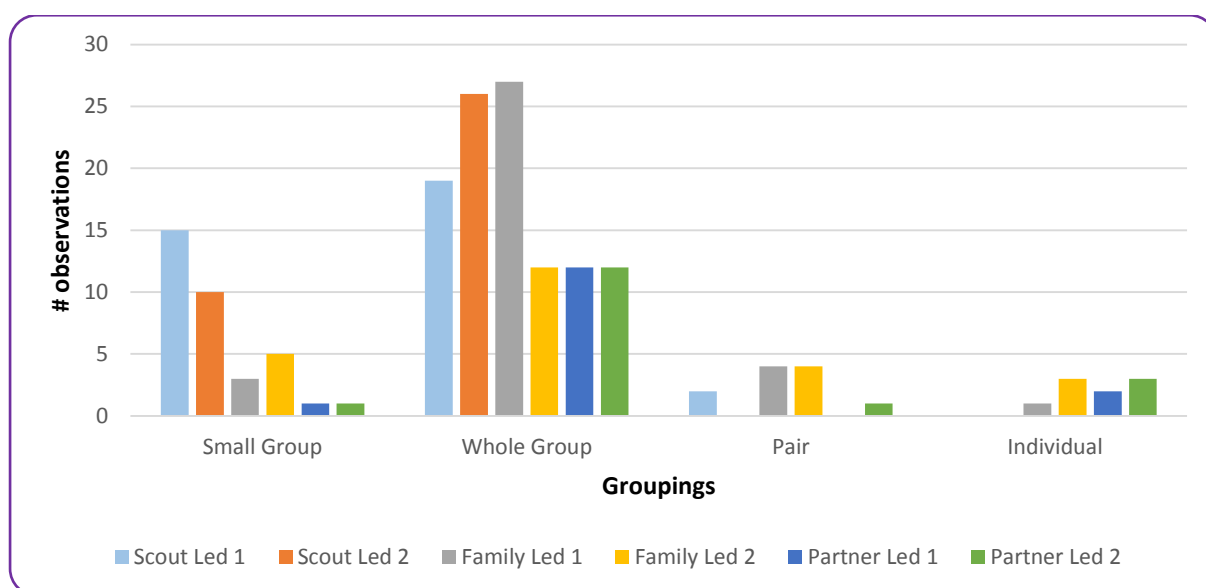
Whilst it is important for the children to experience being part of the larger group and finding their place and voice in this wider Scout community, it might be worth reflecting on how more small group and paired activity might be encouraged within the sessions.

Learning Experiences

This feature assesses the range of learning experiences offered to children during the sessions, as based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. This divides learning experiences into 7 domains:

- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Physical Development (PD)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Literacy (L)
- Mathematics (M)
- Understanding the World (UOW)
- Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development (PD) and Communication and Language (CL) are seen as the prime areas of learning from birth to five years in the EYFS curriculum framework. Expert opinion suggests that there should be a prime focus on PSED, PD and CL with this age of children but that a wide range of learning experiences should be offered to ensure children experience rich and varied learning opportunities. The combined evidence from all the 6 study pilots is shown in Figure 12. This evidence shows that the children in all the study pilots are experiencing a wide range of learning experiences but with an emphasis on PSED and CL, as suggested by expert opinion. The lower levels of Physical Development (PD) and higher levels of Expressive Arts and Design (EAD) may be due to the fact that the observed sessions were largely indoors due to

the time of year where movement is more restricted and craft activities were more commonly chosen.
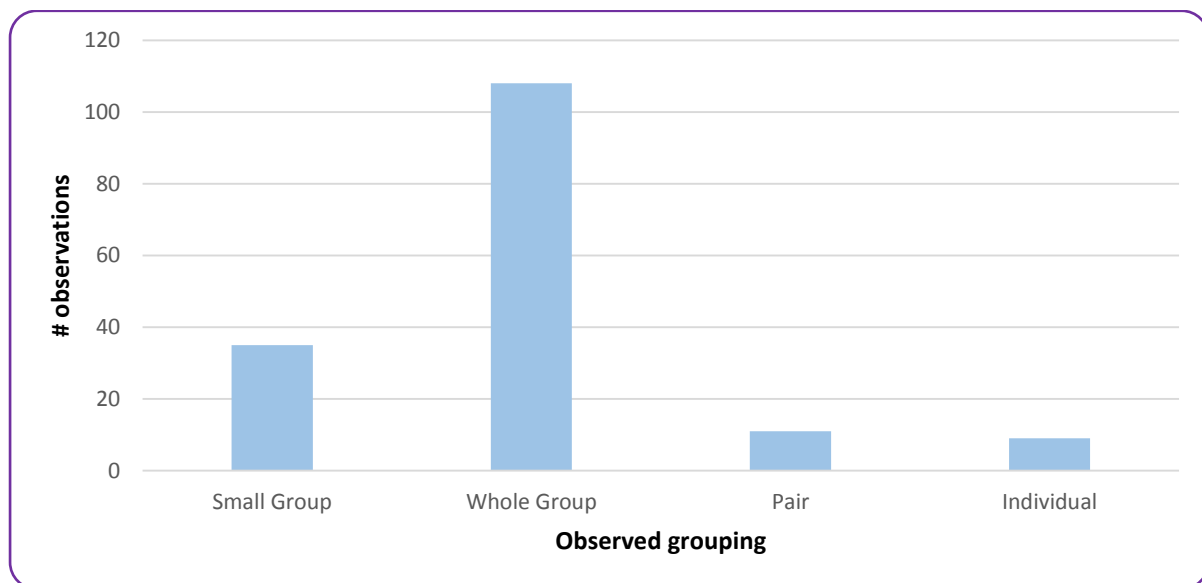
Figure 12: Learning Experiences (All pilots combined)
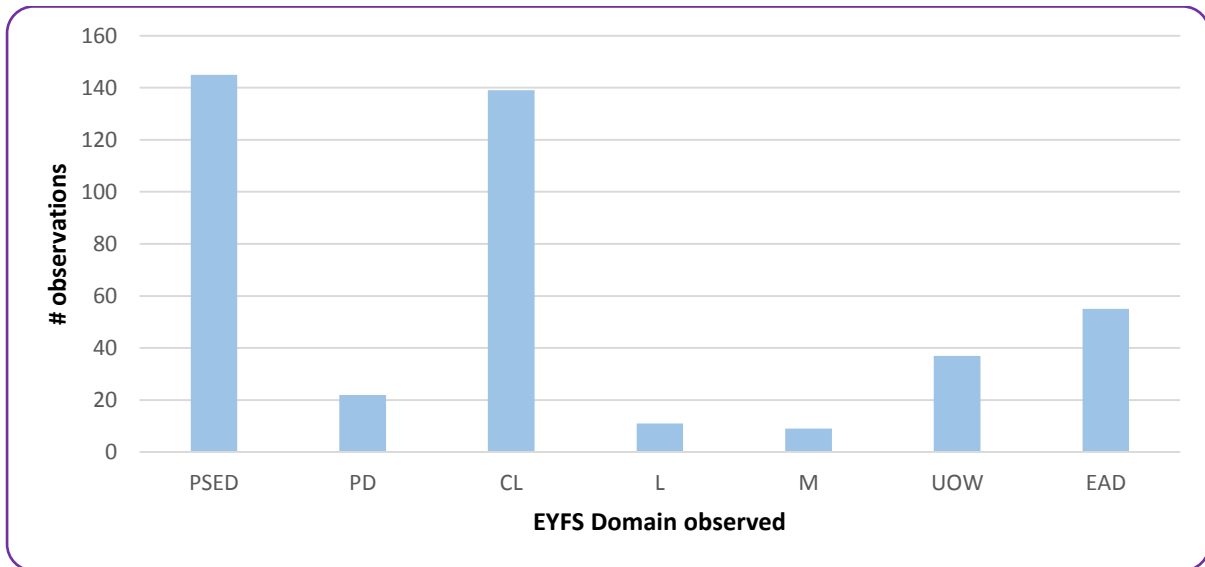
Figure 13 provides a more detailed breakdown of the grouping experienced by children in each of the delivery models. This reveals a similar pattern in all 3 delivery models.

Figure 13: Learning Experiences (by delivery model)
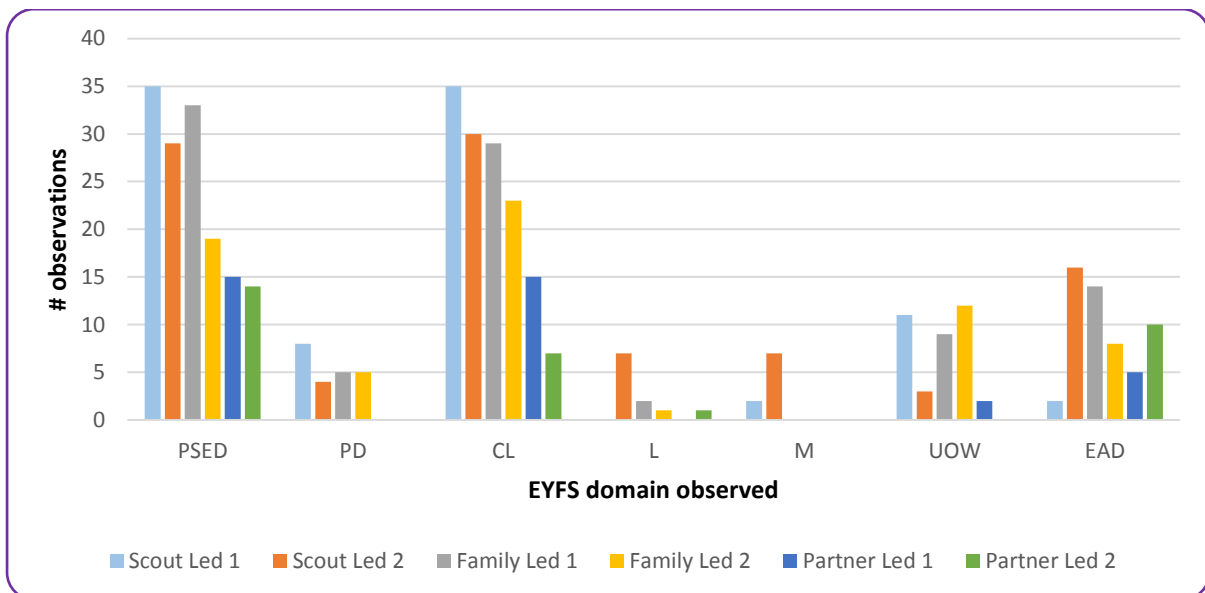
The evidence would therefore seem to show that the learning experiences offered are wide ranging and in line with best practice and focused on the key outcomes that the Early Years Scout Programme sets out to achieve.

Interactions

This feature assesses the type of interactions between the adults and children in the groups during the sessions. The interaction can be either verbal or non-verbal. Over the observed period, the dominant form of interaction is identified and coded as below:

Balanced interaction between Target Child and Adult:	TC ↔A
Balanced interaction between Target Child and Child:	TC ↔C
Target Child interacts with Adult:	TC →A
Target Child interacts with another Child:	TC →C
Target Child interacts with a group of Children:	TC→GC
Adult interacts with Target Child:	A → TC
A Child interacts with Target Child:	C → TC
Target Child talks to self:	→ TC←
No interaction:	TC
Group of Children to Target Child:	GC→TC
Adult interacting with a Group of Children:	A → GC
Balanced interaction between Adult and Group of Children:	A ↔ GC
Balanced interaction between Target Child and group of Children:	TC↔GC

Expert opinion suggests that children should be encouraged to engage in sustained shared dialogues with adults and other children, and that talk and dialogue in a variety of group situations should be encouraged so the child not only learns how to speak and communicate but also how to listen and give attention. The combined evidence from all the 6 study pilots is shown in Figure 14. This evidence shows that in all the study pilots there is a dominance of adult led dialogue within the large and small group activities but within which each child is encouraged to, and did, contribute. Within this dialogue all children are encouraged to listen, take turns and speak.

Figure 14: Interactions (All pilots combined)

Figure 15 provides a more detailed breakdown of the interactions experienced by children in each of the delivery models. These data reveal that the patterns of interactions are slightly different in each model. In the Scout led model dialogue between the adult and the group of children is the dominant form of interaction, with less individual adult to individual child dialogues occurring. In the Family led model there is more one to one dialogue between adults and children which is likely due to the presence of parents with their child during the session. In the Partner led model group dialogue predominates but interestingly there are more periods when the child is not interacting at all, despite the relatively small numbers in these groups.

Figure 15: Interactions (By delivery model)
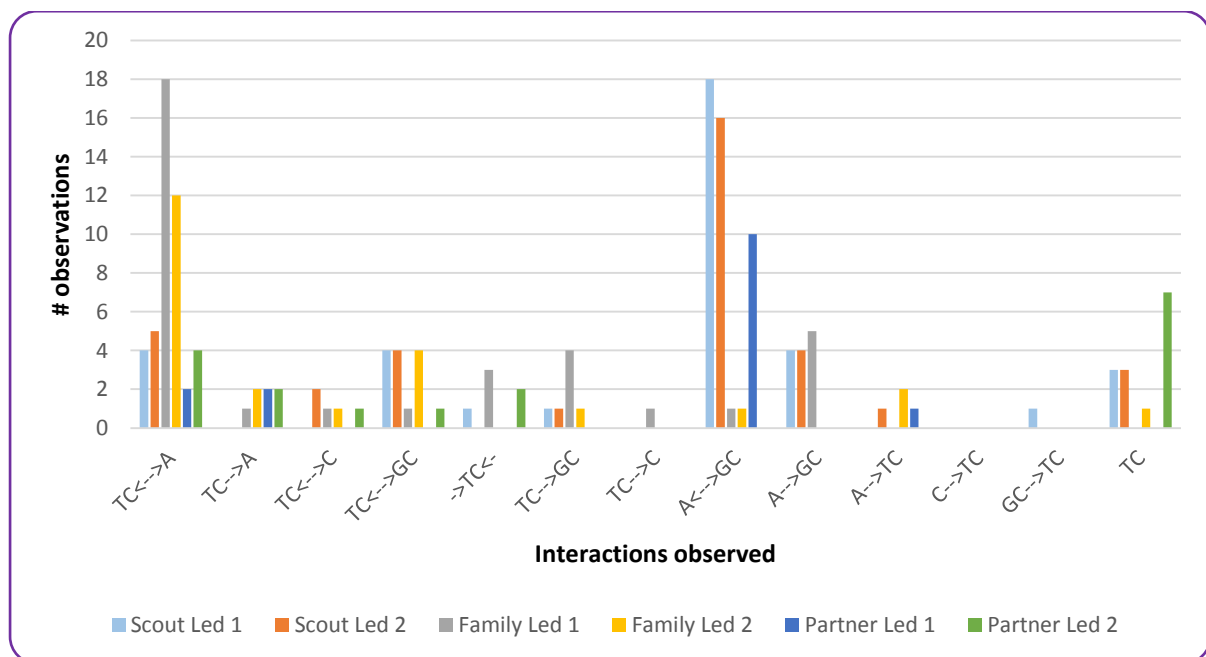
The evidence therefore implies that the types of interaction are shaped by the delivery model, that in turn shapes the size of the group and the adult: child ratio, and all of that shapes the nature of the interactions. Seeking more opportunities for sustained shared dialogue between adult and child, and between child and child through varying the grouping throughout the session might be something to be explored further as the Programme develops.

Child Involvement Levels

Measures of Child Involvement assess the intensity of response or engagement of the child to the experiences offered, using an operational measure of the 'state of flow' called the Leuven Involvement Scale (Pascal, Bertram et al, 1998). This feature provides a robust assessment of the match of the programme to the developmental level of the child and is an excellent indicator of the quality of an early year's programme and its ability to impact deeply on child outcomes. In high quality sessions, the levels of Child Involvement will be high (a weighted mean of 3.5-4.5) which suggests that the learning opportunities offered are appropriately pitched for the age and interest of the group of children and that deep

level learning is occurring. In poorer quality sessions, the levels of Child Involvement will be low (a weighted mean of 2.5-3.0) which suggests that the learning opportunities are not appropriately pitched and so children are unengaged in the activities offered for significant stretches of time. Interestingly, evidence shows that high levels of involvement are usually associated with higher levels of child initiative and lower levels of involvement are usually associated with lower levels of child initiative and choice (Pascal, Bertram et al, 1998).

The combined evidence from all the 6 study pilots is shown in Figure 16. This evidence shows that in all the study pilots the children we observed display a high level of involvement in the activities offered. The weighted mean Child Involvement level for all Hedgehog groups was 3.91, which means children are intensely involved for most of the session, indicating that deep level learning is taking place. Looking at range of learning experiences offered in conjunction with these data, it suggests that this learning is likely to be in the areas of Communication and Language (CL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED). This supports the evidence from the interviews and focus groups that the sessions are having an impact on children's learning and development.

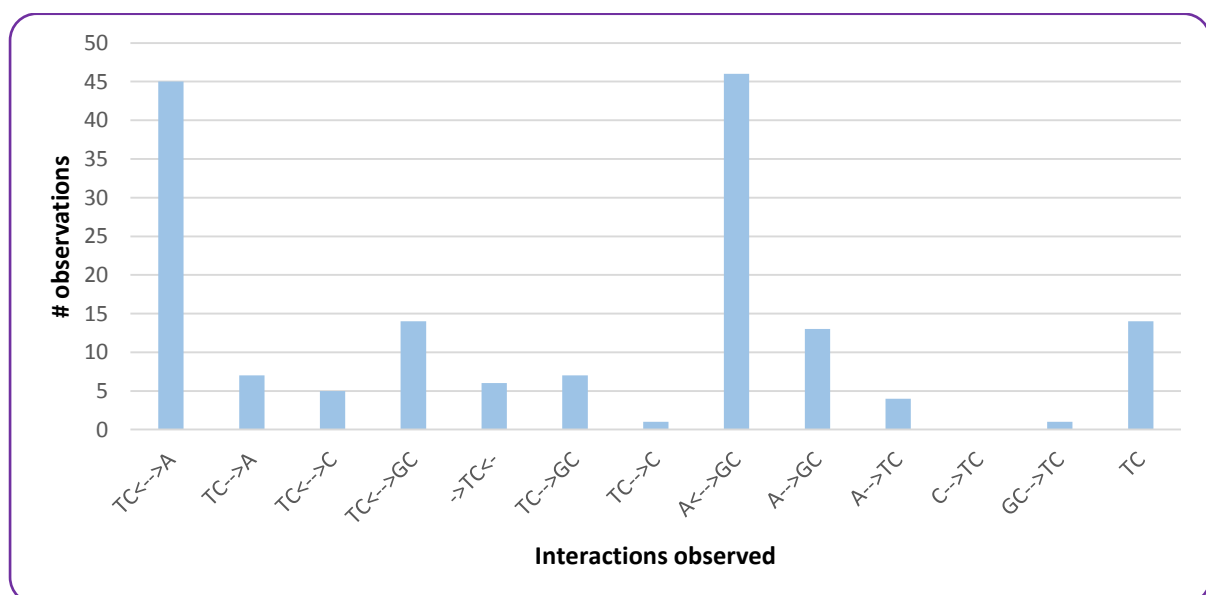**Figure 16: Involvement (All pilots combined)**
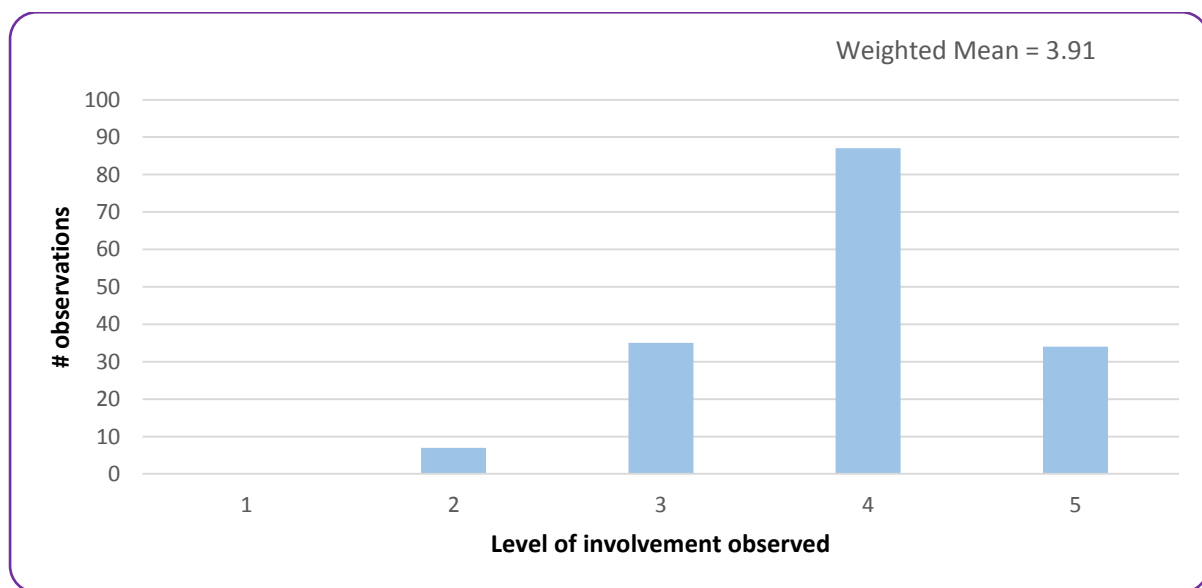
Figure 17 provides a more detailed breakdown of the involvement levels experienced by children in each of the delivery models. These data reveal that the Involvement levels are slightly higher in the Family led models and slightly lower in the partner led models but that all models meet the quality threshold. The variation should be treated with caution as the numbers involved in some of the delivery models are much smaller.

Figure 17: Involvement (By delivery model)
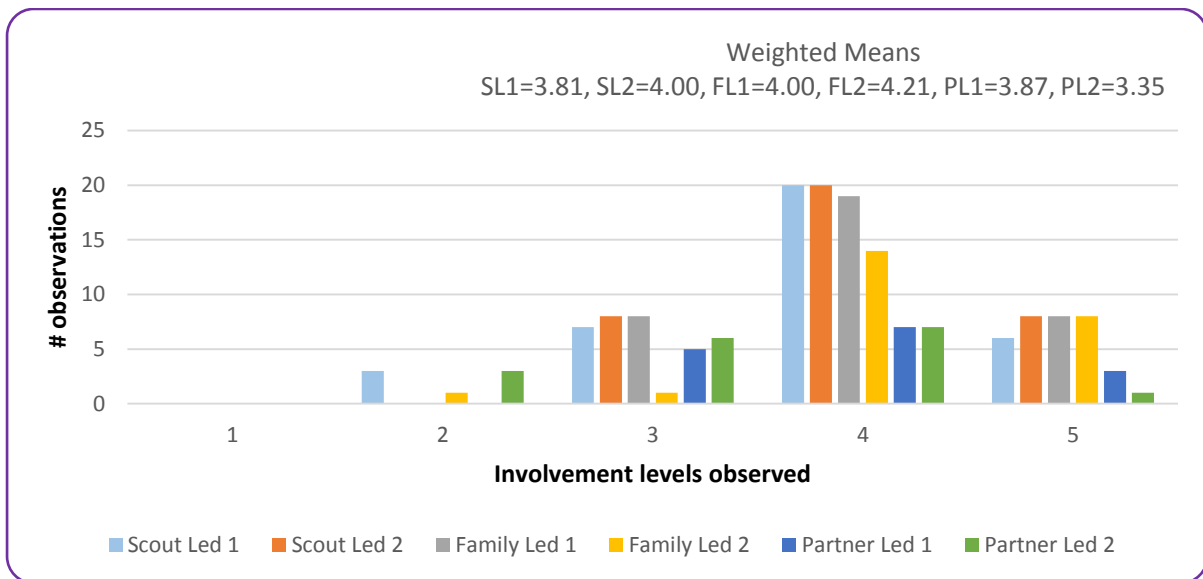
The evidence would seem to show that all the study pilots, irrespective of delivery model, are providing the children with rich learning experiences and generating very high levels of involvement from these young children, often at the end of the day when it would be expected that they would be tired. This is a great indication of the potential power of the Early Years Programme to enhance young children's learning in key areas of development. It is also a great tribute to the skill and expertise of the Section leaders and volunteers who are delivering the Programme in such a highly motivating and engaging way, which is inspiring and energising these young children to thrive and extend their potential.

> *I am pleased to see the feedback regarding the high levels of engagement and involvement. But while it's nice to see the higher levels of engagement I can see that it's a very adult-led approach and there is a cost to this (in terms of child initiative and autonomy). I've wrestled with that, I've thought on that. Maybe it's something we need to be comfortable with because that is what we are about but it's definitely something we need to bear in mind within our conversations. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Key Findings for Project Objective 5:

1. There is strong demand for an Early Years Scout Programme aimed at children from 4-6 years, with younger children participating fully in some of the pilots.

2. All the study pilots, irrespective of delivery model, are providing the children with rich learning experiences and generating very high levels of involvement in these young children indicating the potential power of the Programme to enhance young children's learning in key areas of development.

3. In all the study pilots the children display a high level of involvement in the activities offered, indicating that the activities are highly engaging for the children and that deep level learning is taking place.

4. Section leaders and volunteers are demonstrating high levels of skill and delivering the Programme in a motivating and engaging way, which is inspiring and energising these young children to thrive and extend their potential.

5. The children in all pilot groups were adult directed for most of the session with little time for free initiative. It may be worth reviewing how a more balanced programme of child led and adult directed activity might be achieved in the Programme to encourage child initiative and autonomy.

6. The children in all pilot groups are rarely working as an individual or in pairs during the session, with activity largely group based, and for around 70% of the observed time children were operating as part of the whole group. It might be worth reflecting on how more small group and paired activity might be encouraged within the sessions.

7. Children in all the study pilots are experiencing a wide range of learning experiences but with an emphasis on Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication and Language Development (CL). This is in line with best practice and focused on the key outcomes that the Early Years Scout Programme sets out to achieve.

8. In all the study pilots there is a dominance of adult led dialogue within the large or small group activities but within which each child was encouraged to, and did, contribute. Seeking more opportunities for sustained shared dialogue between adult and child and child and child through varying the grouping throughout the session might be something to be explored further as the Programme develops.

3.3 Programme Feasibility

Project Objective 6 - Can the Scouts attract and retain (after their child moves on) new adult volunteers, and not undermine existing provision?

A stated objective of the Early Years Scout Project is to achieve increased recruitment and retention of adult volunteers, avoiding detrimental impact to existing provision. It has not been possible in this short evaluation to evaluate the longer-term retention of new adult volunteers in the Programme, although it was reported that in Northern Ireland where the early years 'Squirrels' section has been in existence for a number of years that retention levels of volunteers is high. However we do have evidence about volunteer recruitment

levels and their role in the pilot Hedgehog sections.

> *With Squirrels what you see is the increasing involvement of parents because the children are young and we see more Leaders who had been parents who are still there after 20 years – and they want to put something back. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The monitoring evidence indicates that the pilot Programme has been successful in recruiting new and additional volunteers, particularly the Scout led and Family led sections. The demographic makeup of the new Early Years section volunteers alongside volunteers in other Scout sections, is shown in Figures 18 and 19. These data show that the gender of Hedgehog volunteers is over 80% female, with far fewer male volunteers, which contrasts with other sections where the gender balance is more even. This indicates both that a new pool of female volunteers is being drawn in through the Early Years Project and that Early Years Scouting is attracting male volunteers in greater numbers than that found generally in the early years sector (3-4%).

Figure 18: Gender of Early Years volunteers compared with wider organisation

	Hedgehog Volunteers	Sections leaders & Assistant Section Leaders	Sectional Assistants
% female	81%	45%	49%
% Male	19%	55%	51%
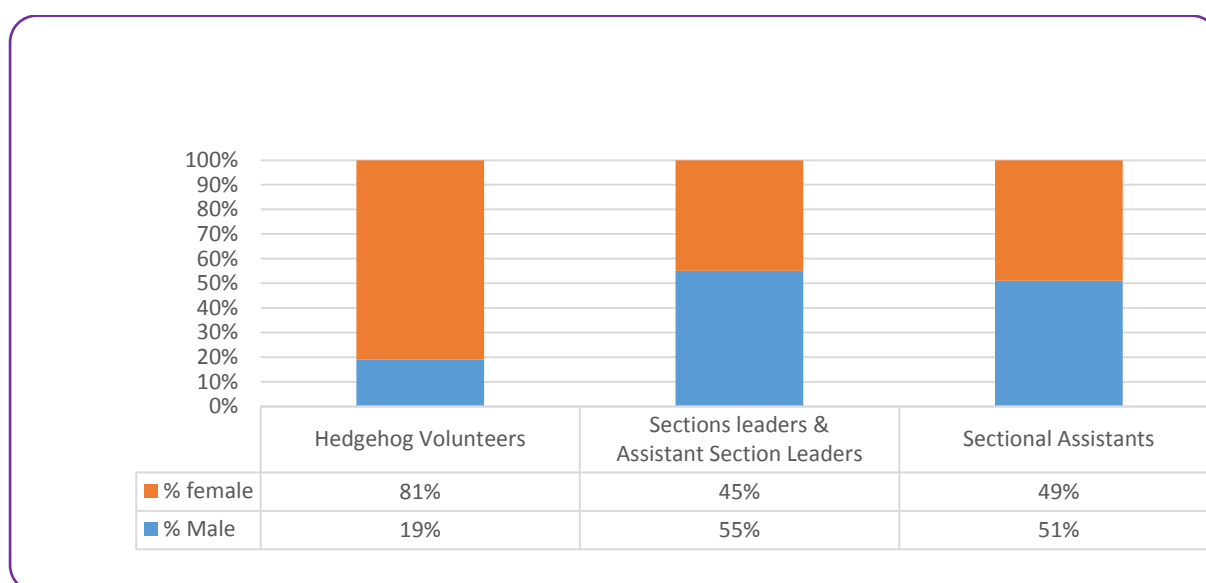
NB: Whole Scout data is based on the 2019 Scout Census

The ethnicity of early years volunteers is also slightly different from other Scout sections, with more diversity evident, but particularly in the more homogenous groups rather than across the pilots as a whole.

Figure 19: Ethnicity of volunteers (2019)
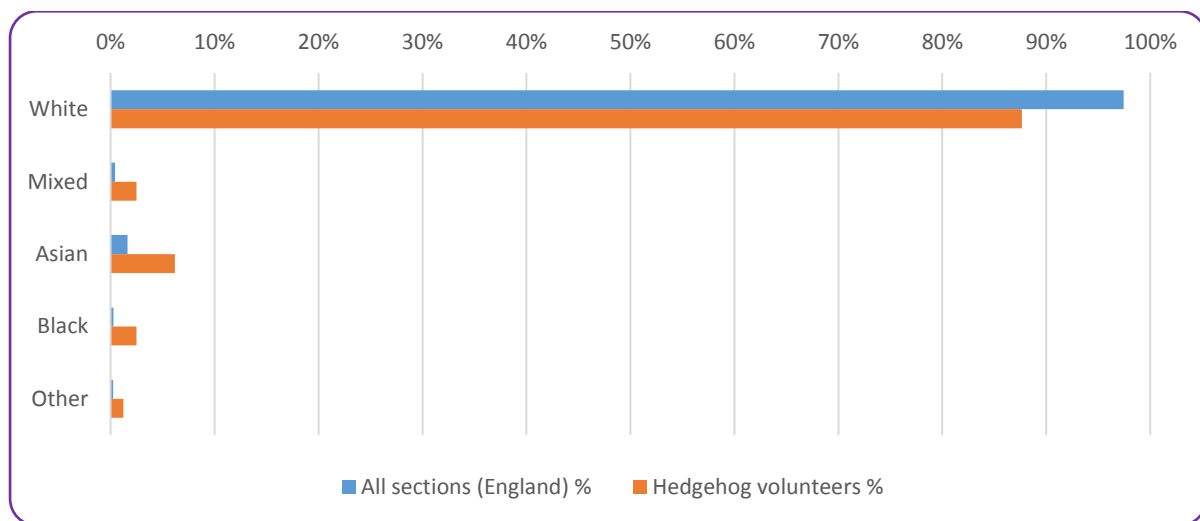
NB: Whole Scout data is based on the 2019 Scout Census

Many volunteers across Scouting get recruited through their children's involvement and there is evidence from the Early Years project that new volunteers found out about Scout volunteering through their children attending the group and put themselves forward. Some are also offering to support other Scout sections as well as the Hedgehog group, so adding to volunteer capacity more broadly.

> *Leaders stay on, mostly, volunteers often want only to be with their child – very practical reasons – but some go through to volunteer with Beavers. (Hedgehog Leader)*

This would indicate that the Early Years section may be fruitful ground for recruiting volunteers earlier and at a point in their life where they may be more open to, and have more time for, volunteering, especially where this involves their children and especially where a child has Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). It is also an opportunity to break down preconceived ideas about Scouting that may have become a barrier to their volunteering later.

> *We've attracted 4 new volunteers through running Hedgehogs. People are coming in expecting Scouts to be about tying knots etc but they're seeing the personal side of Scouting and how fun it is and it's not like they imagined. It breaks down preconceived ideas about Scouting and the new volunteers say to me 'I didn't think I had anything to offer Scouts because I've never done it before' but they can see through Hedgehogs what it's actually about. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *I'm delighted that I was able to bring in my professional experience – it was great to be doing community volunteering with this age. It's much easier in a way to do this than at any other age. There is a workload issue with other sectors that I don't face here. Adding in this Section has been easier than with, say, the Beavers. (Hedgehog Leader)*

There is also some evidence from existing volunteers who have previously or are currently working with older groups that working with the younger group has re-inspired them, making them realise that being part of Scouting is worthwhile again. The younger age group appears to be a motivator and has helped retain existing volunteers to the Scout Movement that may have been lost.

> *Well I began in the Beavers as a parent but I quickly became the Group Scout Leader and mostly an administrator, so I lost contact with the bit I really liked. Here I gain energy from the kids, they give me the Tigger experience whereas the admin is just Eeyore stuff. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *Doing something for kids and the community, personal satisfaction, and it's a de-stresser. It's my Tuesday night. I look forward to it. I love knowledge about outdoors and nature and passing it on. Young children think differently – it's just amazing the things they say and ask. I'm a kid too. There's real satisfaction. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

There is some evidence that, though the numbers are smaller in the pilot, the Family led model has been particularly effective in recruiting new volunteers through their requirement that parents are active in the sessions. There is an acceptance amongst parents in the pilots that with younger children it is reasonable to ask them to stay and get involved, which may be harder to justify with older children. It is also reported that through attending the Family led groups some parents have become 'infected' with the Scouting bug and are now progressing to be active Scout volunteers for this and other sections over the long term.

> *I've committed to Cubs. I'm 51 – and I hope to be here at 71. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

> *Of the 16 children in the group, 7 of them have attended regularly with their parent who stay and volunteer. In two cases we have already had them volunteer in other age groups. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *The kids love it and having their parents involved – even if a parent goes forward following the child up the Scouting movement – it gives us another opportunity to recruit potential leaders. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

In contrast, the Partner led model has not inspired many new volunteers for Scouting as parents are not directly involved and those running the sessions appear to see the sessions as part of their professional day job and have not yet been inspired to get more involved.

> *I've had no training but the manual is enough and I bring my EY professionalism to it. I'd never be a Scout leader, I've no time and I've too many family commitments. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The evidence from the focus groups and interviews reveals what attracts adult volunteers and what is

needed to retain them once their child moves on. The benefits for volunteers are clear with new recruits reporting that they see their volunteering as very rewarding personally and an opportunity to give something back to their community, expressing a strong satisfaction and deep enjoyment from working with the younger children and seeing their growth and development.

> *As a volunteer I've got great things out of it. I'm up for Cub Leader. Can't wait for the adventure of camping with these. It's a massively different childhood today but I've not looked at my phone whilst I've been here this morning. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

> *EY volunteers say 'I get more out of it than children do'. It's very rewarding, a feel good factor for the adults. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

For some the volunteering has given them a new sense of purpose and value and has enhanced their wellbeing and mental health. Some volunteers also report that the experience and skills gained add value to their CV or life more broadly. Examples include Young Leader volunteers using the experience in university applications, trainee teachers and social workers experience and parents being assessed for fostering and adoption.

> *One volunteer Leader is a Cub Scout Leader who has two children this age and also works in Early Years. Another is hoping to adopt and wanted to demonstrate experience to Social Services. He arranged with his company to work at home on Wednesdays so he is always available. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *For some it helps their career path, adds to their CV, especially if they are thinking of teaching. Often they come to us pre-university and then they come back afterwards. Some parents say they want to put something back into their communities. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Many parent volunteers report the benefits to their parenting skills, the climate at home, their confidence and sense of self-esteem, and also extending their friendships and community involvement.

> *It's joyful, there are friendships, we adults make friends. It's social and very big in the community, we have a real impact with 120 people at the last AGM. (Hedgehog Parent Volunteer)*

A particular finding in this evaluation is the effective use of Scout Young Leaders as volunteers in the Early Years sections. There is evidence in some pilots, particularly the Scout led ones, of the active use of Young Leaders in the running of the sessions. This strategy is working really well, particularly in the larger groups where it helps lower the adult: child ratio. The observations revealed these young people work very sensitively with the younger children and appear to love the sessions and their role. The impact on these Young Leaders is also clear and they report increased confidence and ability to take on responsibility. It also seems to have encouraged more Young Leaders to get involved in other Scout sections. Again, it is pointed out that for this to work effectively there will be a need to scale up

training and support for Young Leaders quickly.

> *It's great to have these young leaders …near enough to be older siblings and children see them as not different to the rest of us. (Hedgehog Leader)*

An emerging issue noted by those at a more strategic level in Scouting is how to manage the influx of new volunteers that the new section might generate who will put more demands on the system for things such as DBS checks, age specific training, induction and oversight of their role and contribution. It was generally felt by leaders at District and County level, as well as at section level, that recruiting and retaining a new set of volunteers will require age specific training and other practical support, eg funding for uniforms, early years resources. There was an expressed need from volunteers for more early years focused training, for designated Hedgehog section support at district level and for the development of the Scout website with Hedgehog visibility and appropriate content.

> *This is the perennial question. It is a challenge and you see that parents' volunteering tails off as their child gets older – normally when their kid decides it's not cool to have your parent tagging along. We need to provide effective training. With regards to the parents of younger children or parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds we are going to need to support them practically. We might need to consider provision of crèche facilities during training or funding for uniforms for example. Generally, if we have the right people and give them the right training and support then we can retain good volunteers, we just might need 'a bit of glue' to connect and support this new group of Hedgehog Leaders. (Scout Strategic Lead)*
>
> *That said, 12 of 16 parents of Hedgehogs children have since asked to volunteer having experienced Scouting, often for first time. The potential is there to develop parent volunteers but in reality there is not the capacity to use those parents so it needs to be handled carefully. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Key Findings of Project Objective 6

1. The pilot Programme has been successful in recruiting a pool of both new and existing volunteers who wish to work with the younger children.

2. A new pool of female volunteers is being drawn in through the Early Years Programme.

3. The new volunteers are drawn in by the younger age of the children and their openness to being more actively involved as a parent.

4. Recruitment of volunteers at this younger age provides an opportunity to change outdated stereotypes of Scouting.

5. Some existing volunteers are retained due to more positive Scouting experiences with the younger children.

6. Volunteers express significant personal benefits from their Scouting experiences.

7. There is potential for an important contribution to the Early Years and other sections to be made by Scout Young Leaders.

8. Recruiting and retaining significant numbers of additional volunteers needs careful management and requires investment in age specific training, support and resourcing.

Project Objective 7 - Is there support and understanding within the Scout Movement (both for roles likely to be involved directly in Early Years delivery, but also wider)?

The very existence of the Early Years Scout project indicates that there is support for the initiative and a basic awareness and understanding of the implications of rolling it out. The senior team leading the project appear to have utilised the Scout Theory of Change to ensure the Scout systems, processes and relevant people have been well prepared for the pilot phase. They have also built in to the pilot project a carefully phased plan which has involved people from all levels and consulted external experts in the design and implementation of the Early Years Programme and the pilot strategy. They have built in costs and time for communication, training, materials, resources, and commissioned an independent evaluation to document learning that can be used to forward plan. There is also an awareness that this will be a challenging Programme to implement that will require careful management and intelligent forward planning. Experience with the introduction of the Beavers section is being reflected upon and lessons from this successful initiative drawn. However there is also an awareness that extending Scouting to include these very young children brings both challenges and opportunities that create new and distinctive demands on the Association.

The focus groups and interviews indicate that initially there was some reticence about extending Scouting to this young age phase. Issues cited include immaturity of the children,

toilet training, pre-empting later Scouting experiences, lack of capacity and potential detriment to other Sections.

> *There were initial concerns over such things as intimate care for young children but in practice there have not been any issues. Scouting specific challenges have mainly been around resources to adequately support the age group. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *The main challenge we have had is support from the District. There was a change in leadership and it was difficult to get the support in this period. We're now trying to get the District on Board because we hear some other groups saying 'we don't want babies at our District camps'. I try and go along each time and share positive stories and they've all been invited to come down and see what (the children) can do – they're not babies… they're doing Scout activities…they're definitely pre-Beavers. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *There's also a comparison with the Primary science teacher. Don't spoil our excitement at Primary level by doing it at Pre-school. Those sort of concepts you hear. Hedgehogs too young – but of course the curriculum is not linear but spiral. You learn by extending previous experiences. As Vygotsky said we move from the known to the unknown and revisiting. (Hedgehog Leader)*

However the positive experience of the pilots seems to have largely dispelled these anxieties which have given way to very strong support for the development of Early Years Scouting at both strategic and delivery level. The evaluation evidence has highlighted wide acceptance that there is a strong demand for this section and agreement that this demand should be responded to positively. It is seen as a natural extension of the Scouting family. The feedback in the evaluation was that it isn't so much 'should' the Early Years Project be rolled out, but rather 'how' and 'when'.

> *I was a real cynic about these young ones – no way – but it has been absolutely brilliant. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *I'd be devastated if they stop it. It feels like Hedgehogs have always been part of it now. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *Yes, if the Scouts really believe that this is to benefit children through providing them with skills and opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have then this is a great idea. I personally believe this is the case. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The 18 pilot groups, and the in-depth scrutiny of 6 of them, has also provided good evidence of the viability and sustainability of the Early Years Programme and the systemic and resource investment that will be needed to extend it more widely. It has also highlighted the strengths and limitations of the three delivery models, which are examined in more detail in Section 4. The issues raised by participants in the evaluation show an astute awareness of the logistics of extending the pilots by those engaged in developing the pilot Project and these have been grouped according to the two strands of the Scout Theory of Change.

Systems and Processes

1. Inclusion of Early Years section in all Scout systems and processes.
2. Funding and providing adequate resources for younger children.
3. Managing increased pressure on Beavers as more children will be waiting for a place and mapping clear and progressive routes for children's and young people's participation from 4 to 25 years.
4. Hooking Early Years sections into local District networks and planning.
5. Developing processes for working in collaborative partnerships with other organisations, including schools, nurseries, community groups.
6. Considering how Scout communications and websites might be developed to promote Early Years Scouting as a full and equal section in Scouting.

People

1. Development of dedicated and well-articulated Early Years roles and expertise at Local, District, County and National level.
2. Securing capacity and time for Scout Leaders at District, County and National level to support the new section.
3. Recruiting and retaining sufficient Early Years leaders and volunteers.
4. Ensuring access to age specific Scout training and support.

Key Findings of Project Objective 7:

1. There is an appetite to learn from previous experiences (Beavers) and current experiences (Hedgehogs) in introducing new sections and build future planning on these lessons.

2. The initial reticence about the Early Years project has largely been dispelled and there is now overwhelming support for extending the Programme.

3. There is a clear awareness of the logistics of extending the pilot project and ensuring it is sustainable.

4. These challenges include the development of all Scouting systems and processes to incorporate fully an Early Years section and the development of age specific roles, expertise and volunteer capacity at all levels.

Project Objective 8 - Can the Scouts appropriately resource and administer Early Years provision on a national (staffing, processes, programme development etc.) or local (line management requirements, local training delivery, places to meet etc.) level, being explicitly conscious of likely success in areas of deprivation and underrepresented demographics in Scouting?

If the Early Years Scouting Programme is to be successfully rolled out, particularly in areas of deprivation and for underrepresented groups, then a carefully costed implementation plan is required. It is not in the scope of this evaluation to make a judgement about the ability of the Scouts to appropriately resource and administer a new Programme at a national and local level as this would require access to confidential and complex financial and contractual data which could be applied to a detailed action plan. However, those involved in delivering the 3 different models in the pilot project, all of which are located in areas of deprivation, have a good understanding of exactly what resource is required to ensure a section is viable and sustainable over time in their context. The evidence indicates that in most cases the pilot groups are using existing resources and administrative support effectively to ensure the current groups are functioning efficiently and sustainably.

The focus groups and interviews with the pilot project leaders and volunteers and also National, District and County Leaders, show awareness that The Scout Association will need to think carefully about putting in place adequate and appropriate resources, training and administrative arrangements which are geared to younger children, if the pilot is to be extended. It was felt that quality should not be sacrificed for speed.

> *I think there would be a massive uptake but there needs to be serious thought about how things are rolled out. We need to think about the wording, how we go about starting new sections. There are lots of positives but the programme needs to be rolled out well. There need to be improvements from the way the pilot has been rolled out. Whatever it looks like it can't be constructed in a silo. The communication needs to be better, it has improved, but there needs to more discussion with those on the ground who have run pilots before things move forward. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *There is a need to scale up the model to test some of the indicative learning from this year. If we launch nationally straight away we won't know how the parent led and partner led models will sit within the current structures and how they will operate. If I offered it out to a whole district, say of 14 groups, then I think that they would feel concerned that they should immediately take up the opportunity and I have concerns over the skills and capacity of the groups and of the county structure to support them. I would like to see a scaled up model evaluated –perhaps open up a district to trial the different models running side by side and see how it works as a system. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *Individually where a group is good I can really see benefits for children, leaders and parents, if we commit we need to resource it properly. My caution is about a national roll out without sufficient preparation, training and resourcing and the need for strategic systems and clarity of purpose. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Key lessons from the pilot indicate some immediate resourcing and capacity issues which need to be addressed for the Programme to move forward successfully which are set out below:

Funding and Investment

There is a need to secure adequate and dedicated funding to resource the development of the Early Years Programme and ensure its sustainability over the long term. A clear spending plan is also required which identifies and prioritises aspects of the system for development and increases in human capacity. It is also suggested that the strategy may need to be two-pronged: ensuring both universal access for all children and also targeted access for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

> *The availability of adequate funding might be an issue but I thinking Scouting could do this easily. We have the systems and infrastructure – we'd like to have a fully committed real Early Years Programme in Scouting. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Scout Organisational Structures

There is an expectation and desire that at District, County and National level there should be age specific appointments to support the new groups, ensure the quality of provision is monitored, share good practice and also champion the Early Years Programme within the wider world of Scouting. It was felt that the level of these appointments should match those dedicated to other Scout sections.

> *And at District level we need structures and appointments to support an EY Hedgehogs roll out. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *If this is to expand there needs to be Assistant District Commissioner in place to support that early years network in the same way we have for Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. You would also need an Assistant County Commissioner to support that person. It's important for sharing good practice, support and moderating and monitoring the quality of what is being delivered. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Communications and Website

There was a feeling that the Scout website and social media platforms could be developed and made more attractive and informative to support the new Early Years section. Also, that Scouting communications and publicity could be active in promoting Early Years Scouting and encouraging recruitment with dedicated strategies and visuals which show diversity and encourage less advantaged and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to participate.

> *And the website needs to address Hedgehogs and Beavers. It needs a serious update. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *The website needs to be a lot clearer. It's based on a military frame. Needs better navigation. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

Training and Induction

Most new volunteers in the pilot project had received minimal induction and training before the group was launched. Many volunteers had no previous knowledge of the Scout Movement and what the ethos and values of the Association were. Other volunteers understood Scouting but had little

experience of working with younger children. Both aspects of expertise and skill are required to run a successfully Early Years Scout Programme. The development and promotion of age specific Scout training for Early Years is seen as a priority.

> *We need training to work with the younger child. One of us has training with the Beaver age but this is not enough. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *I've had no training, not inducted into Scouting either. It's really needed. (Hedgehog Volunteer)*

> *We need training and more understanding about the Scouting Movement. I also think the Scouting Movement as a whole needs more training about EY. I've worked in Childcare but what about someone who has worked in Security? There's nothing as yet specifically for this youngest age group. That needs to be rolled out properly before any expansion, so everyone knows. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Materials and Resources

The current Early Years Handbook and resources are working well but need to be reviewed and extended to include more activities and materials which foreground the Scout Movement and its values, and to encourage more physical activities. Activities which encourage more child initiative and small group work should also be added. Some resources could be improved and more age appropriate equipment needs to be supplied for start-up groups.

> *We've bought quite a lot of different resources, for example, we have Lego but it's not appropriate so we have bought Duplo. We've also bought rugs for the floor because they tend to want to do activities on the floor not on seats. We have had to buy smaller furniture as well and all this adds to the start-up costs. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *There needs to be good training and resources. I was very impressed by the resources for the trial but wouldn't stretch to a full section. They (Scout Association) need to give more guidance to interested groups regarding the considerations before starting up a Hedgehogs group, for example, the equipment they will need. We applied for a small grant to get the small tables and chairs that we needed. (Hedgehog Leader)*

Uniform and Branding

There was a strong view that the Early Years section should have its own uniform, neckerchiefs, cloth badges and identity that indicate clearly that it is part of the wider family of Scouts. The observations and interviews consistently evidenced the importance of this aspect of the experience for the children, the uniforms giving them a sense of shared identity, pride and belonging and the stickers being a strong motivator and tool for reflective dialogues. It is also felt that the uniform and badges need to be free or heavily subsidised if they are not to be a barrier to access for deprived families.

Uniforms and badges are important for identity formation – belonging and psychological security. (Hedgehog Volunteer)

Part of being Scouts is the uniform; there wasn't a uniform available but they said we could have one so we chose purple hoodies and neckerchiefs. They came along and just took to it. All the Hedgehogs have uniforms. (Hedgehog Leader)

Oh they love it. They've got so involved especially since they've had the flag in the hall and they've had their neckers. It's the Scouting they like, the identity. (Hedgehog Volunteer)

Maybe a badge at end of year with full book of stickers. They'd love that. They love the investiture. A year programme badge would be good (Hedgehog Leader)

Badges and uniform are important and a symbol of visible achievement, a reward. Badges should get harder as they get older and have continuity and progression. (Scout Strategic Lead)

Ongoing Research and Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and further evaluation of the new section as it is rolled out is seen as vital to ensure lessons continue to be learned and implementation in different social and geographic contexts is fully informed. The value of a longitudinal study of both Early Years Scouts and adult volunteers to track their journey and progress through the Scout Movement over time is also promoted as the way to evidence the value, impact and ability of the new section to contribute to The Scout Association's overall Strategic Goals, as set out in the Skills for Life Prospectus.

Beavers is 6-8 – what can we learn from that? Maybe a longitudinal study – impact – retention of parents, etc. Why don't we do that? What benefits Scouting as a movement? What benefits individual children or communities? Is this something we should do and if so what is the business model? What is our root purpose here, our values and why do we want to expand? What gap are we trying to fill? But fundamentally we need to start with: Is this the role of Scouting? (Scout Strategic Lead)

I am concerned that we are potentially making an important decision on the future path of this programme without all the data (due to unavoidable programme slippage). The model we choose to move forward with needs to be relevant in 20 years' time. After the pilot I think we need to stay in an evaluation stage rather than commit to rolling out just one of the pilot delivery models. (Scout Strategic Lead)

Key Findings of Project Objective 8:

1. It is not in the scope of this evaluation to make a judgement about the ability of the Scouts to appropriately resource and administer a new Programme at a national and local level.

2. In most cases the pilot groups are using existing resources and administrative support effectively to ensure the current groups are functioning efficiently and sustainably.

3. Key lessons from the pilot indicate key issues which need to be addressed for the Programme to move forward successfully and sustainably, including: Funding and Investment; Scout Organisational Structures; Communications and Website; Training and Induction; Materials and Resource; Uniform and Branding; Ongoing Research and Evaluation.

4. Delivery Model Case Studies

4.1 Alternative Delivery Models

The evaluation found almost unanimous approval of the Early Years Scout initiative and a view that the groups are filling a gap in provision for young children their communities that is acknowledged and valued locally. The pilot project set out to explore three alternative delivery models for Early Years Scouting: Scout led, Family led and Partner led, each of which were given a set of criteria and an operating framework to implement. It is evident that each of the models has strengths and limitations that should be carefully considered as the Programme is extended. There are particular issues in using families and partner organisations as delivery partners, which are explored in more detail below, yet these models potentially provide a key strategy in extending the reach of Early Years Scouting to new communities and underrepresented groups. It should also be noted that the Family led and Partner led groups who have piloted the new delivery models in communities where Scouting is not already embedded have found that establishing the section and implementing the delivery model is much more of a challenge and so is taking more time. In contrast, the Scout led groups, who benefit from a ready-made infrastructure, existing resources, links to the wider Scout organisation structures and systems and an already engaged community to draw recruits from, find implementation much easier and faster.

> *I think the programmes with parent-led and nursery-led models are likely to be the least sustainable. The co-ordination costs are higher but they (the models) can allow us to access people that we're not engaging at the moment. Maybe we need to review our business models if they're coming out as too expensive because they are allowing us to do things beyond what we currently can do. We think young people benefit from Scouts so why shouldn't all children be able to access and have that benefit? (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *The Scout led model has the advantage of being the most sustainable: the infrastructure, the links to a systemic organisation and experienced leaders. Then I think the school environment can work too but I'm more doubtful about the Parent led one. It's more difficult with only families making the decisions and no structural support. Hybrids might work though. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The evidence from this evaluation indicates that all three models are seen to be viable and sustainable given further time to embed and evolve. There is a general view that all three models should be continued in the next phase of development and possibly a further hybrid model might be explored in which different delivery models are given as options to be contextualised locally according to circumstances and even delivered alongside each other within a District section. It would therefore seem wise to continue to evaluate the implementation of alternative delivery models in the next phase of the project.

> *We've got to recognise diversity and a diversity of approaches. We have to be content with that. As an organisation we have two choices; we either say that we recognise we are Scouts and we 'are what we are', we deliver to our demographics and other organisations can deliver programmes and clubs to other children, or, if we want to be brave, if we truly believe in our approach and*

the benefits it can bring to all children we need to embrace a diversity of options for delivery…we need to be clear as an organisation what we want to do and where we want to take the organisation. (Scout Strategic Lead)

Different delivery models to suit different local circumstances, I'd be ok with that. We can work through the challenges, with different options to contextualize to local situations. The more people who can experience Scouting the better. (Scout Strategic Lead)

The three different delivery models are described below, their individual strengths and limitations identified, and their implementation successes and challenges highlighted.

4.2 Scout Led Delivery Model

Description of Delivery Model

The Scout led delivery model is closest to the traditional form of delivery, where a number of adult volunteers deliver a programme to a group of younger children on a weekly basis. The parent/carer, although encouraged to volunteer, may simply bring their young people to Scouting and not play an active role. There are 13 Scout led delivery models in the pilot Project located in a range of geographical areas and all operating within disadvantaged communities. Two of these groups were selected for detailed study as part of the evaluation (one was a Sea Scout group) and received three visits from the evaluation team during the period February 2019 to February 2020.These groups are generally linked to other established Scouting groups, including Beavers, Cubs and often older Scouting sections. The delivery teams are operating under a specified Scout framework which is set out in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Scout Led Model Delivery Framework

Criteria	Specifications
Attendees	16 young people, 3 leaders and 1 young leader. Two pilots to increase their numbers to 24.
Ratio	1:6+1 indoors 1:4+1 outside of HQ
DBS	All adult leaders who deliver the programme regularly require Scout DBS (as per POR).
Training	Induction training provided by early years staff to all adults involved in the pilot.
Meeting procedure	Leaders run meetings, parents, carers and family members encouraged to be involved in the pilot. Up to local scouting to encourage adults to become leaders for the pilot or take on other roles in the group.

Meeting format	Same programme packs for all models, encouraged to follow meeting plan whilst supplementing with their own meeting ideas. Encourage parents, carers, family members and young leaders to get involved in planning, organizing and running meetings.
At home activity	Encourage young people and families to carry on activities from meetings at home and with other family members. Optional for groups to get involved in local scouting activities outside of the group.
Cost	Subs designated by group and pilot. Advised by early years staff to request subs in line with those paid by traditional sections in group
Feedback	Weekly meeting feedback smart sheet Monitoring data form Register termly

Taken from briefing paper provided to Scout Association meeting, Feb 2020

Both pilots have a full cohort of children (16+) with a waiting list, and plenty of Scout leaders and volunteers, including two or three Young Leaders, who meet on a weekday evening for an hour. Recruitment has been achieved largely by word of mouth around their existing Scout community and social media and for some it is seen as the 'waiting list' for the Beavers. The section leaders largely follow the defined Early Years Programme using the resources supplied but Leaders use them flexibly, adapting them to suit the children and circumstances and supplementing the materials from a wider bank of resources available to the other Scout sections or sourced by themselves. The children and leaders have all embraced wearing the Scout uniform and have enjoyed the formal investiture ceremony where they have learned to say the Promise in front of the flag.

There is a well-established routine in each session, beginning with a welcome circle, where all the children sing a welcome song, repeat the Promise and recall the previous week's activities. There is a lot of shared dialogue between the Scout leaders and the children where every child is encouraged to speak and also listen to others' contributions. This is followed by a themed story which introduces the session activity which is done in small groups with volunteer support and may be indoors or outdoors according to weather. There is a drink and then a physical game. There can also be a ceremony to formally invest new children into scouting. Finally, the group reconvenes the large circle, the children put their stickers in their activity book (appearing to love this process), there is singing, the home activity is distributed and a goodbye ritual ends the session.

Strengths
- Builds on existing Scouting community and network of sections.
- Venue is well known to local community.

- It complements and extends the existing Scout structures bringing in younger siblings and friends.
- A large pool of trained and experienced Scout leaders, volunteers and Young Leaders available to support the section.
- Training and coaching by experienced Scout leaders from other sections is readily available.
- Strong District and County Scouting connections which can support the group.
- Use of a bank of existing resources, equipment and furniture.

Limitations
- Less success in reaching out to more disadvantaged and hard to reach families: new reach to more disadvantaged and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families is not strongly evident (even some resistance to this).
- Demographic makeup of local community limits their ability to include BAME children.
- A sense that innovating and extending existing routines and ways of working can be disruptive.
- Little involvement of parents in sessions, other than sending suggestions for home activities after each session.

Successes
- They have recruited young children quickly to full capacity (some groups have applied for an increase in numbers).
- Successful recruitment of Scouting leaders, Young Leaders and volunteers from local community, and strengthening community links.
- Quality of programme offered is very high and children are highly involved and motivated and experience a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Positive and inclusive practice for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- Positive impact on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) and volunteers (especially Young Leaders) is evident.
- Good use of social media to encourage dialogue and extend sense of identity and belonging amongst participants.

Challenges
- An acknowledgement that reaching out to new families and communities, who may be more challenging, requires a shift in culture and attitudes.
- Gaining more skills and confidence to work with challenging families and parents, and children from different cultural backgrounds.
- Facilitating the active involvement of parents in sessions without it impacting on the development of the children's independence and autonomy.
- Modifying the Programme so that the weekly sessions provide more opportunity for child initiative and agency, and more small group and paired activity to encourage sustained, shared dialogues.

I can see how we can use the existing Scout led model to develop early years groups but this on its own doesn't get us in the communities we are not currently operating in. We've been piloting the Scout led model for 9-10 months now and can see how that works but we need to know how effective the other models are and whether they can get us in to new communities we don't currently reach. (Scout Strategic Lead)

We involve parents We have Facebook groups and a page for parents and leaders they can post responses to 'homework' like bird identification tonight. (Hedgehog Leader)

4.3 Family Led Delivery Model
Description of Delivery Model

In the Family led delivery model the young child experiences a similar format of delivery (weekly meetings with ad hoc events/trips etc) but parents/carers are asked to attend the session and take an active role in delivery with the Scouting volunteer taking a much more coaching/facilitator role. There are 4 Family led delivery models in the pilot project located in a range of geographical areas and all operating within disadvantaged communities. Two of these groups were selected for detailed study as part of the evaluation and received three visits from the evaluation team during the period February 2019 to February 2020.These groups were newly established and based in a local community venue, such as a church hall or a Scout hut. The delivery teams operated under a specified Scout framework which is set out in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Family Led Model Delivery Framework

Criteria	Specifications
Attendees	8-10 young people with a responsible adult each, 1 adult volunteer leader in charge.
Ratio	1 responsible adult to attend with child. 1 adult volunteer leader in charge per pilot.
DBS	Only volunteer leaders in charge require a DBS, responsible adults do not require Scout DBS's during pilots.
Training	Induction training provided by early year's staff to volunteer leader in charge.

Meeting procedure	Responsible adults encouraged to plan, organize and run the meetings. Leader in charge to provide oversight, mentoring to responsible adults and support during meetings.
Meeting format	Same programme packs for all models, encouraged to follow meeting plan whilst supplementing with their own meeting ideas. Encourage responsible adults to plan, organize and run meetings.
At home activity	Encourage young people and families to carry on activities from meetings at home and with other family members. Optional for groups to get involved in local scouting activities outside of the group.
Cost	Subs designated by group and pilot. Advised by early year's staff to request subs in line with those paid by traditional sections in group.
Feedback	Weekly meeting feedback smart sheet Monitoring data form Register termly

Taken from briefing paper provided to Scout Association meeting, Feb 2020

Section leaders with both Scouting and early years experience had been successfully recruited and they strongly endorsed the particular value of the Family led model and felt it was both desirable and sustainable, having clear benefits for both children and the parents who attend. A number of the parents also endorsed the value of the group both for them and their children and appreciated the opportunity to do something together rather than an activity where they just drop off the children. Some of them have really embraced Scouting and signed up for training as a volunteer and offering their support for other groups.

Kids and parents together – we are making memories here. (Hedgehog Volunteer)

However, they suggest that more training, induction and support, especially in how to work effectively with parents during the sessions and with different cultures and ethnicities, would be beneficial. They also indicate that more support from District and County Scouting infrastructure would help them develop the model further. Both of the Family led pilots have not yet recruited a full cohort of children so the groups are small and some of the children attend erratically. Also, some of the children that do attend are siblings and out of age range (from 2 years old). Recruitment has been achieved by using a range of strategies including word of mouth, social media, local media, presentations, linking with local charities and attending local school and community events.

Because of my background I linked with Nursery School (one of the few left in the county) and local groups and Charities and the Pre-school sector…and we were flexible about siblings. (Hedgehog Leader)

Leaders report that recruitment of the target group had been hard and slow due to it being a new initiative in the community with no previous Scouting experience to build on, a lack of access to information (GDPR restrictions preventing contact information being shared), the stringent criteria they were asked to apply, especially that a parent or family member attend, the lack of time and resources to publicise the opening of the section and the sometimes low numbers of underrepresented groups in the locality, many of whom are under considerable pressures. In one of the groups the numbers have declined quite significantly over the period of the pilot. In both of the study groups, although they believe that the attendance of the parent is desirable and even necessary, there has been a pragmatic decision to relax the requirement of attendance of a family member for each child, allowing one family member to accompany more than one child and to admit younger and older siblings to the group to address the parents' childcare responsibilities.

> *We've found…when you're working with the older groups there's good attendance, good time keeping…These children (Hedgehogs) don't come as regularly. It's not that the children are poorly it's more to do with if the parents can come. We think it's the commitment of the parents. So we've changed our approach recently, now parents can drop off if they're happy to. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *Maybe more flexibility, options eg parents have to stay for first so many sessions and thereafter one in every three: and we need to be flexible on age range because of siblings. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *The family-led model is a good idea but is it a good way of working in the most disadvantaged communities? Will the children from the most disadvantaged families be able to come along if parents are not willing to get involved? (Scout Strategic Lead)*

> *Sometimes they all do something together and it's nice for them to take away or have extending activities to do at home but many more are put off by the requirement to have parents present. (Hedgehog Leader)*

One of the pilot groups has been particularly stringent in applying the target criteria and has been very successful in recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups from their community but this has taken time, skill, persistence and local knowledge to achieve. There is also an expressed worry about the lack of a Beaver group for the children to move on to once they 'graduate' from Hedgehogs.

> *It's important that they see Hedgehogs as part of the bigger Scouts picture and that they have a way that they can progress to the next section. We want children, and volunteers, to stay with us. If it's just a Hedgehogs group on its own, where will they go? (Scout Strategic Lead)*

Both of the study pilots have two adult leaders, one who has early years' experience and one who has Scouting experience and this blend is working very well. In addition, there are parents who actively joined in the sessions and supported the wider group as well as their own child, whilst others are more reluctant to get involved.

We've had a good rapport with parents, a good relationship. We thought it would be like a mother and toddler group but it's not turned out like that. They do interact but they don't volunteer to do things. Leaders have had to encourage them a lot. They are happy to interact with their own child but they don't want to do anything with the wider group. (Hedgehog Leader)

The groups meet for an hour, one meeting on a weekday evening and one on a Saturday morning.

The Saturday makes us different. Many parents are too tired by work. Evenings in the Winter are dark and there is not much opportunity to go out, Saturday fits for this market town and we are in its centre if you want to shop afterwards. Some of this group are just starting school that adjustment can be very tiring for them to have to come out after school at this age and also for working parents and maybe with younger siblings. So Saturday morning works for us. (Hedgehog Leader)

The section leaders largely follow the defined Early Years Scout Programme using the resources supplied, but use them flexibly, adapting them to suit the children and circumstances, and supplementing the materials provided often sourced by themselves. The children and leaders have all embraced wearing the Scout uniform and have enjoyed the formal investiture ceremony where they have learned to say the Promise.

There is a well-established routine in each session, beginning with a welcome circle, where all the children and parents sing a welcome song, repeat the Promise and recall the previous week's activities. There is a lot of shared dialogue between the Scout leaders, the children and the parents, where every child is encouraged to speak, and also listen to others' contributions. This is followed by a themed story which introduces the session activity which is done as a small group with parent support and may be indoors or outdoors according to weather. There is a drink and then a physical game. There can also be a ceremony to formally invest new children into scouting. Finally, the group reconvenes the circle, the children put their stickers in their activity book (appearing to love this process), there is singing, the home activity is distributed and a goodbye ritual ends the session.

Strengths
- The possibility for new groups to be established in areas where there is no existing Scouting activity.
- Successful in reaching out to more disadvantaged and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families.
- Flexibility in selecting an appropriate venue and also an appropriate time for the sessions to take place.
- A sense that they innovating and extending opportunities for children in the community is energising and motivating.
- High involvement of parents in sessions and in follow up of suggested activities at home after each session.
- The pleasure and value of joint parent/child activity.

- Recruiting new volunteers from parents/family.

Limitations
- Having to create a new Scouting community with no access to a ready-made network of families.
- Venue may not be well known to local community and they may not have sole use of the venue so it is more difficult for Scouting to be visible there.
- Having to recruit new leaders and volunteers to run sessions.
- Training and coaching by experienced Scout leaders from other sections is not readily available.
- More dependence on supplied materials and have to purchase start up resources, equipment and furniture for the group to function.
- Demographic makeup of local community limits their ability to include Black and Minority Ethic (BAME) children.
- Requirement that a family member must attend every session with the child.
- Lack of expertise and confidence in working with parents, some of whom may be quite challenging.
- The lack of a Beaver group to allow progress through to the wider family of Scouting.
- Linking in with the District and County Scouting infrastructure and systems.

Successes
- Recruitment of a small but new cohort of young children and families who reflect underrepresented groups in Scouting.
- Successful recruitment of Scouting leaders and volunteers from the local community, and community links reinforced.
- Recruitment of new volunteers from parents and family members attending.
- The quality of programme offered is very high and children are highly involved and motivated and experience a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Positive and inclusive practice for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- Positive impact on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) and volunteers is evident.
- Good use of social media to encourage dialogue and extend sense of identity and belonging amongst participants between meetings.

Challenges
- An acknowledgement that reaching out to new families and communities who may have no awareness of Scouting, and who may be more challenging, requires hard work, expertise, local knowledge, persistence, resources and time.
- Leaders and volunteers gaining more skills and confidence to work with challenging families and children from different cultural backgrounds.
- Challenging stereotypes of Scouting to engage new and underrepresented families.
- Making sure Scouting identity and ethos is very visible in the session activities.
- Sustaining regular attendance of children when a family member is not available to accompany them.
- Exploring different strategies to meet the requirement that a family member attend

eg attendance of parent at a minimum number of sessions (but not every session), parent accompanying more than one child, more flexible adult child ratios.

- Facilitating the active involvement of parents in sessions without it impacting on the development of the children's independence and autonomy.
- Modifying the Programme so that the weekly sessions provide more opportunity for child initiative and agency.
- Linking up with other Scout sections so that children and parents (volunteers) can progress within the Scouting movement.

There's a debate to be had about parents being present or not. Are we educating parents too or childminders? They can be volunteers and we've had some successes with that but we also need to ask is it Scouting? Morally, I think we need to own it as part of our movement. I believe people want to join something and benefit from it but I need to be persuaded about parent-led involvement. Parents get involved in many ways of course but parent led will have sustainability issues. And frankly how does parent-led benefit Scouting? (Scout Strategic Lead)

Having a pilot hasn't allowed us to explore all the possibilities or understand all the issues but do we think it is the right thing to do – absolutely. (Hedgehog Leader)

4.4 Partner Led Delivery Model

Description of Delivery Model

The Partner led delivery model is the least established form of delivery of Scouting, where professionals in Early Years settings (such as schools, nurseries, children's centres and day care settings) deliver a defined Scouting Early Years programme. There are 4 Partner led delivery models in the pilot project located in a range of geographical areas and all operating within disadvantaged communities. Two of these groups were selected for detailed study as part of the evaluation and received two visits from the evaluation team during the period February 2019 to February 2020. These groups are newly established and based in a school or nursery, operating as a within session withdrawal group or an after school club. The delivery teams are operating under a specified Scout framework which is set out in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Partner Led Model Delivery Framework

Criteria	Specifications
Attendees	Follow setting requirements as per Memorandum of Understanding.
Ratio	Follow setting requirements as dictated in Memorandum of Understanding.
DBS	All adults who deliver the Programme regularly require a Scout DBS.

Training	Induction training provided by early year's staff to all adults involved in the pilot.
Meeting procedure	Staff run the meetings, parents, carers and family members encouraged to be involved in Scouting outside of the normal setting times. Depending on the setting the partner may encourage adults to become part of running of the pilot.
Meeting format	Same programme packs for all models, encouraged to follow meeting plan whilst supplementing with their own meeting ideas.
At home activity	Encourage young people and families to carry on activities from meetings at home and with other family members. Optional for groups to get involved in local scouting activities outside of the group.
Cost	No HQ cost to young people. Designated by setting, during normal school or nursery hours unlikely to be charging young people, however may charge out of hours activities.
Feedback	Weekly meeting feedback smart sheet Monitoring data form Register termly

Taken from briefing paper provided to Scout Association meeting, Feb 2020

Both study pilots have recruited their cohort from children at the nursery so their reach to less advantaged and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities is dependent on attendance at the setting. In both of the study pilots the sessions take place within the normal daily schedule of the nursery. One pilot has targeted children in their nursery who they feel needed additional support, while the other has adopted a universal approach so all children in the nursery attend the group session which runs each day of the week on a rota. As the sessions occur during the daily schedule, parents are not involved in the sessions, although follow up activities are sent home with the children. Although both nurseries use the suggested Hedgehog Programme and resources and valued them highly, the sessions were far less identifiable as 'Scout' sessions, particularly compared with the other two pilot models with the suggested session format being only partially followed.

> *That's probably true and maybe there should be more of a Scouting element – for adults and children – and link in with local Beavers – maybe more of a Scouting ethos – and relay this to parents too i.e. we are in fact part of Scouting – I don't think that is always understood. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *There's a strong sense of community already and locally the nursery is the identifying organization here not Scouting. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *With the Nursery led partner ones, it feels like there is not a lot of difference to what they do normally. Scout leaders with a high level of positive engagement, yes, but in many nurseries it is just a set of activities with some dressing up NOT a Scouting experience within your nursery. And even if you do make it Scouting, where are the post Hedgehogs links? (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The Scout uniform is not worn by children or adults, as the Scout tee shirts had been sent home, so other than the stickers and log books, Scouting is hardly visible. The neckerchiefs are left on the children's chairs but not really worn. This means that the children are largely unaware of any Scouts connection.

> *Frankly the children don't get that this is Scouting. This is their Hedgehogs Nest. Personally, I'd be interested to know more about the Scouting ethos and so on. We have a forest school. We could get more messages out to parents about Beavers and so on. I'm not in touch with local Scouting but we could get more involvement. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The pilot leaders and practitioners (volunteers) strongly endorse the value of the Partner led model and feel it is sustainable, having clear benefits for both children and the nursery staff. The groups currently are small (around 6 children) and led by one trained early years practitioner from the nursery who has received a short induction to the Early Years Scout Programme but who has, at this point, little understanding, knowledge or experience about Scouting.

> *No training – the manual is enough and I bring my EY professionalism to it. I'd never be a Scout leader, no time. I've too many family commitments. (Hedgehog Leader)*

> *There was no real guidance on how to run it. I think they thought we were professionals and knew what we were doing. We weren't 'inducted' in any formal way. (Hedgehog Leader)*

The partner delivery teams suggest that more training, especially to help them better understand the ethos and nature of Scouting would be beneficial. They also indicate that more support from District and County Scouting infrastructure would help them develop the model further and ensure more of a Scouting profile. Those running the sessions also query that there is not a Beaver section for the children to move on to once they leave the nursery.

> *We are concerned about gap between this and Beavers – losing continuity. (Scout Strategic Lead)*

The practitioners largely follow the defined Early Years Scout Programme using the resources supplied but flexibly, adapting them to suit the children and circumstances and supplementing the materials provided with nursery equipment and materials. Each session lasts for 30-45 minutes and there is a well-established routine in each session, beginning with a welcome circle where all the children sing a welcome song and recall the previous

week's activities. There is a lot of shared dialogue between the practitioners and the children where every child is encouraged to speak and also listen to others' contributions. This is followed by a themed story which introduces the activity which is done as a small group. After the activity there is singing, the home activity is distributed and a goodbye ritual ends the session, with the children returning to the larger nursery group.

> *We'd need more adults to do the adventurous stuff and also a Risk Assessment. (Hedgehog Leader)*

It should be noted that the observed sessions were all indoors and during the winter months so it may be that at different times of the year more adventurous, outdoor experiences might be offered, which could give a very different feel to the normal nursery routine.

Strengths
- New groups have been established in areas where there is no existing Scouting activity.
- Successful in helping Scouting reach new families.
- Flexibility in selecting an appropriate venue and also an appropriate time for the sessions to take place.
- Easy to build into normal nursery programme.
- The sense that they are innovating and extending opportunities for children in the nursery is energising and motivating.
- Follow up of suggestions for home activities after each session are seen as helpful.
- The benefits of small group activity with a targeted group are recognised.
- The use of child friendly venues and the resources within them helps sustainability.
- Access to expert knowledge of young children's development and learning enriches the children's experiences.

Limitations
- Demographic makeup of local community, and the nursery, limits their ability to include Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children.
- Little distinction between the Hedgehog session activities and normal nursery activities. Can feel like a normal withdrawal or intervention group within the nursery.
- Less likely to allow risky or adventurous activities.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of Scout Movement ethos and aims.
- Links to District and County Scouting infrastructure and systems are limited.
- Training and coaching by experienced Scout leaders from other sections is not readily available.
- The lack of a Beaver group to allow progress through to the wider family of Scouting.

Successes
- Recruitment of a small but new cohort of young children.
- Successful recruitment of volunteers from within the nursery.
- The quality of programme offered is high and children are highly involved and motivated and experience a wide range of learning opportunities.

- Positive and inclusive practice for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- Positive impact on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) is evident.

Challenges
- Making sure Scouting identity and ethos is very visible in the session activities.
- Offering more activities that give opportunities for adventure and risk (life skills) and give a different feel to the normal nursery programme.
- Facilitating the active involvement of parents in the Programme, both at sessions and in local scouting activities outside of the group.
- Modifying the Programme so that the weekly sessions provide more opportunity for child initiative and agency.
- Linking up with other Scout sections so that children and parents (volunteers) can progress within the Scouting movement.
- Offering the opportunity for Scout Leaders and Young Leaders to be involved in the sessions.
- Exploring the delivery of this model as an out of school/nursery option rather than as part of the normal daily schedule.

It's harder I think in the Partnership-led model in our settings when Government only pays fees of childcare provision when parents at work, so parents of children in greater need are not likely to be there. Maybe it could be done in other ways – older Scouts could get involved or perhaps parents and partners could find room for more involvement – online Apps, talk groups and look for wider community engagement – not just an afternoon class at the Nursery. (Hedgehog Leader)

There's no Scout uniform for staff or children but there are purple tee shirts with Hedgehogs on the back – so there is an identity and there are the neckerchiefs too. There's an opening ceremony to each session and a bit of a song then they go through the sections in the box. Teacher's do see themselves as part of Scouts, as this role being different to teaching in their day job. The teachers were more excited at the start than the children, when I visited! We need to educate the people running sessions in Scouting. After school is better than during school but they are paid teachers and have a different view/commitment than volunteers perhaps. (Scout Strategic Lead)

There is a training programme open to all volunteers though there has not been much opportunity for these teachers over the short period of the pilot. None of the current teachers has any connection with Scouting in their history. Maybe a Scout volunteer working alongside but that's not always going to be practical at 3.30 or maybe a rota basis? (Scout Strategic Lead)

Part C: Reflections and Recommendations for the Way Ahead

5. Reflections and Next Steps

5.1 Reflections on Programme Achievements

The evaluation provides evidence on the achievements of the pilot Early Years Scout Programme. It also points to key issues which have emerged from the pilots and aspects of the Programme which require further development. It is hoped that these findings and the emerging recommendations will inform the next phase of implementation as the Programme moves forward. These reflections will be grouped under the three dimensions set out in the evaluation brief: Impact, Quality and Feasibility. In addition some reflections on the viability and sustainability of the three delivery models will be presented.

5.1.1 Impact

The Scout Association identified four objectives for Early Years Scouting and the evaluation provides strong early evidence that, with further investment, development and extension the Early Years project has the potential to realise these.

Improved outcomes for young people (and hence increased impact of Scouting on society)

The evaluation evidence suggests that participation in the Early Years Scout Programme, even over a relatively short period of time, has had a positive and sometimes transformative impact on the children's development. Key outcomes for children identified by parents, section leaders and volunteers are the development of communication and language skills and life skills (including confidence, social skills, independence, motivation, voice, resilience, concentration, persistence, self-management, independence, autonomy and responsibility).

The Programme has also impacted positively on the adult volunteers and parents, with key outcomes including the development of life skills (including confidence, motivation, resilience, self-organisation, responsibility, leadership, self-esteem and self-worth, friendships and social skills, belonging and identity, parenting skills, values and morals and employment skills.

Increased numbers of young people joining Scouting

The Early Years pilots have successfully recruited a cohort of younger children, with a significant majority being families new to Scouting and achieving mixed gender and inclusivity for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). A number of the pilots have a waiting list of recruits and have applied to expand their numbers, which indicates an unmet demand for this age group in Scouting. The pilots have developed a range of strategies to promote Scouting for young children which can be built on and the development of alternative delivery models provides further opportunities for Scouting to reach new communities and children. Recruitment of volunteers at this younger age also provides an opportunity to change outdated stereotypes of Scouting that may have deterred families from engaging.

Increased number of young people joining Scouting from currently underrepresented backgrounds

All of the children in the pilot groups are living in areas of deprivation but the demographic data of children currently attending the pilot Early Years groups suggests a partial or mixed picture of their

success in recruiting from demographics underrepresented in Scouting. Although being located in disadvantaged communities, in most pilots they have not yet recruited children from very low income families or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families in significant numbers. However some of the pilots have successfully developed strategies which have enabled them to recruit underrepresented families and their success can be built upon.

Increased recruitment and retention of adult volunteers, avoiding detrimental impact to existing provision

The pilot Programme has been successful in recruiting a pool of both new and existing volunteers who wish to work with the younger children. The evaluation also reveals that a new pool of female volunteers are being drawn in through the Early Years project. The new volunteers are attracted by the younger age of the children and their openness to being more actively involved as a parent. Volunteers express significant personal benefits from their Scouting experiences and some existing volunteers are retained due to more positive Scouting experiences with the younger children. The project has also revealed a presently untapped potential for an important contribution to the Early Years and other sections to be made by Scout Young Leaders. The scope of this evaluation means we cannot assess the retention of new volunteers over time.

5.1.2 Quality

The evaluation explored the age appropriateness of the Early Years Programme and its fit with expert understanding of early years practice. It also gathered evidence on the quality of the programme as delivered by the different models. The evidence indicates that the Programme is of high quality and meets the developmental needs of the young children extremely well.

Age appropriateness

The focus in the Programme on promoting life skills, communication and language and physical development, within a broad and rich programme of experiences, aligns with children's capacities at this age and their need for physical and cognitive stimulation and social interaction at this young age. The emphasis on promoting the Scouting ethos and values, and a shared identity for all participants, is a central quality in the Programme and is realised and appreciated in most cases through the wearing of the Hedgehog uniform and the Scouting Promise and rituals. The children are highly motivated by these visible symbols of belonging.

Fit with early years expert understanding

The evidence reveals that the Programme is largely congruent with best practice for children from 4 to 6 years of age and has been very positively received by Hedgehog section leaders, volunteers and parents. The Programme is also closely aligned with the national Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum but has its own distinct and different goals, with more of an emphasis on adventure, practical skills, outdoor skills, physical activity and community engagement which emphasises its difference from schooling.

The incorporation of strategies to work in partnership with parents and extend the session objectives by offering home activities is a unique and very positively viewed element of the Early Years Programme which could lead to enhanced outcomes for the children. This aspect of the Programme could be usefully transferred to other Scout sections.

Quality assessment

In all the study pilots the children display a high level of involvement in the activities offered, indicating that the activities are highly engaging for the children and that deep level learning is taking place. Irrespective of delivery model, the pilots are providing the children with rich learning experiences indicating the potential power of the Programme to enhance young children's learning in key areas of development. Section leaders and volunteers are demonstrating high levels of skill and delivering the Programme in a motivating and engaging way, which is inspiring and energising these young children to thrive and extend their potential. The development of a more balanced pedagogic approach with a mix of adult led and child led activity would further improve the quality of the Programme.

5.1.3 Feasibility

The evaluation explored the feasibility of the Early Years Programme and its ability to attract and retain new adult volunteers, to generate support and understanding within the Scout Movement and to resource and administer the new section. The evidence indicates that volunteer recruitment to work with this age group is strong, and that there is enthusiastic support within the Scout Movement to extend Scouting to these younger children. There is also an awareness of the system and people challenges in extending the programme more widely and that any further development should be phased and with continued evaluation to ensure organisational learning continues.

Ability to attract and retain new adult volunteers

The pilot Programme has been successful in recruiting a pool of both new and existing volunteers who wish to work with the younger children and a new pool of female volunteers is being drawn in through the Early Years project. The new volunteers are attracted by the younger age of the children and their openness to being more actively involved as a parent. Recruitment of volunteers at this younger age provides an opportunity to change outdated stereotypes of Scouting. Some existing volunteers are also retained due to more positive Scouting experiences with the younger children. Volunteers express significant personal benefits from their Scouting experiences. The evaluation has also revealed the potential for an important contribution to the Early Years and other sections to be made by Scout Young Leaders. However it is evident that recruiting and retaining significant numbers of additional volunteers needs careful management and requires investment in age specific training, support and resourcing.

Support and understanding within the Scouting movement

The initial reticence about the Early Years project within the Scouting Movement has largely been dispelled and there is now overwhelming support for extending the Programme. There is an appetite to learn from previous experiences (Beavers) and current experiences (Hedgehogs) in introducing new sections and build future planning on these lessons. There is a clear awareness of the logistics of

extending the pilot Project and ensuring it is sustainable. These challenges include the development of all Scouting systems and processes to incorporate fully an Early Years section and the development of age specific roles, expertise and volunteer capacity at all levels.

Resourcing and administering Early Years Scouting
It is not in the scope of this evaluation to make a judgement about the ability of the Scouts to appropriately resource and administer a new Programme at a national and local level. In terms of the pilot Programme there is evidence that in most cases the pilot groups are using existing resources and administrative support effectively to ensure the current groups are functioning efficiently and sustainably. Key lessons from the pilot indicate several important issues which need to be addressed for the Programme to move forward successfully and sustainably, including:

- Funding and Investment
- Scout Organisational Structures
- Communications and Website
- Training and Induction
- Materials and Resources
- Uniform and Branding
- Ongoing Research and Evaluation

5.1.4 The Three Delivery Models
The Early Years Project set out to explore three alternative delivery models for Early Years Scouting: Scout led, Family led and Partner led. The evidence from this evaluation indicates that all three models are seen to be viable and sustainable given further time to embed and evolve. It is evident that each of the models has strengths and limitations which should be carefully considered as the Programme is extended. There are particular issues in using families and partner organisations as delivery partners and any extension of these models needs to be closely monitored as they develop. Despite early issues in the implementation of these delivery models, they potentially provide a key strategy in extending the reach of Early Years Scouting to new communities and underrepresented groups. It should also be noted that the Family led and Partner led groups who have piloted the new delivery models in communities where Scouting is not already embedded, have found that establishing the section and implementing the delivery model is much more of a challenge and so is taking more time. In contrast, the Scout led groups who benefit from a ready-made infrastructure, existing resources, links to the wider Scout organisation structures and systems and an already engaged community to draw recruits from, find implementation much easier and faster.

There is a general view expressed that all three models should be continued in the next phase of development, and possibly a further hybrid model might be explored, in which different delivery models are given as options to be contextualised locally according to circumstances and even delivered alongside each other within a District section. It would therefore seem wise to continue to closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of alternative delivery models in the next phase of the project.

5.2 Recommendations for the Way Ahead

The Early Years pilot project has highlighted a set of continuing challenges to be addressed as the Programme is further developed and is fully able to achieve its aims and the outcomes it desires. Analysis of the evaluation evidence and reflection on the Programme achievements suggests some clear priorities for further action. These are presented as a list of recommendations under 9 broad headings and collectively they stand together as a route map to inform future planning.

1. **Obtaining funding and investment**

There is a need to secure adequate and dedicated funding to resource the development of the Early Years Programme and ensure its sustainability over the long term. A clear spending plan is also required which identifies and prioritises aspects of the system for development and increases in human capacity. It is also suggested that the strategy may need to be two-pronged: ensuring both universal access for all children and also targeted access for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

2. **Generating support by shifting culture and attitudes**

There is a need to proactively challenge negative stereotypes and attitudes about young children's capacities and their ability to participate in, and benefit from, Scouting. There is also a need to challenge attitudes towards certain families in our communities, especially those who are seen as more challenging or coming from different social, cultural or ethnic communities. Changing outdated conceptions of what Scouting is in today's world and how it relates to younger children is also a priority.

3. **Developing the delivery models**

All three delivery models should be continued and closely monitored in the next phase of development with particular attention to the Family led and Partner led models. A further hybrid model might be explored, in which different delivery models are given as flexible options to be contextualised locally according to circumstances and even delivered alongside each other within a District section.

4. **Developing Scout systems and infrastructure**

There is a need to develop at District, County and National level age specific appointments to support a clearly designated Early Years Scouting section, ensure the quality of provision is monitored, share good practice and also champion the Early Years Programme within the wider world of Scouting. The level of these appointments should match those dedicated to other Scout sections. Embedding Early Years Scouting into District and County networks to allow younger Scouts and volunteers to progress through to other sections within the Scout Movement is vital.

5. **Training, induction and support for leaders and volunteers**

There is an urgent need to establish age specific training for all Scout leaders, Young Leaders and volunteers who are working with these younger children, especially if they are new to Scouting to ensure they understand the developmental needs and capacities of these younger children and best practice pedagogic approaches so they are able to use age appropriate and child led strategies to engage, excite, motivate and extend these capacities.

This training should include an induction into the Scouting mission, ethos and organisational structures, as well as the knowledge and skills required to work with young children and their parents. Providing leaders and volunteers with skills and confidence to work with challenging families and parents, and children from different cultural backgrounds is also required. In addition, regular support and mentoring systems for the new group leaders is essential as the Programme develops. Training in effective strategies to engage a diverse community of parents and to support home learning would also be desirable.

6. Enhancing the Early Years Programme and resources

The Early Years Programme, suggested activities and resources need some modification to ensure they meet with best practice for this age phase and provide more learning opportunities particularly in respect of a. the encouragement of child initiative and agency b. the use of small group and paired activities which encourage more sustained, shared dialogues c. more use of outdoors and encouragement of a wider range of physically active activities and d. the addition of more content on Scout heritage, ethos and values. Some resources could be improved and more age appropriate equipment needs to be supplied for start-up groups.

7. Uniform and Branding

The Early Years section needs its clear identity, an agreed name and branding. This requires a uniform, neckerchiefs, badges and branded materials which indicate clearly that it is part of the wider family of Scouts. Funding to allow the uniform and badges to be free or heavily subsidised is required if they are not to be a barrier to access for deprived families.

8. Developing a communications strategy

The Scout website and social media platforms should be developed and made attractive and informative to support the new Early Years section. Also, Scouting communications and publicity support should be active in promoting Early Years Scouting and encouraging recruitment, with dedicated strategies and visuals which show diversity and encourage less advantaged and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to participate.

9. Ongoing research and evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and further evaluation of the new section as it is rolled out is vital to ensure lessons continue to be learned and implementation of the Early Years Programme in different social and geographic contexts is fully informed. The value of a longitudinal study of both Early Years Scouts and adult volunteers to track their journey and progress through the Scout Movement over time may be valuable as the way to evidence the value, impact and ability of the new section to contribute to The Scout Association's overall strategic goals, as set out in the Skills for Life strategic plan.

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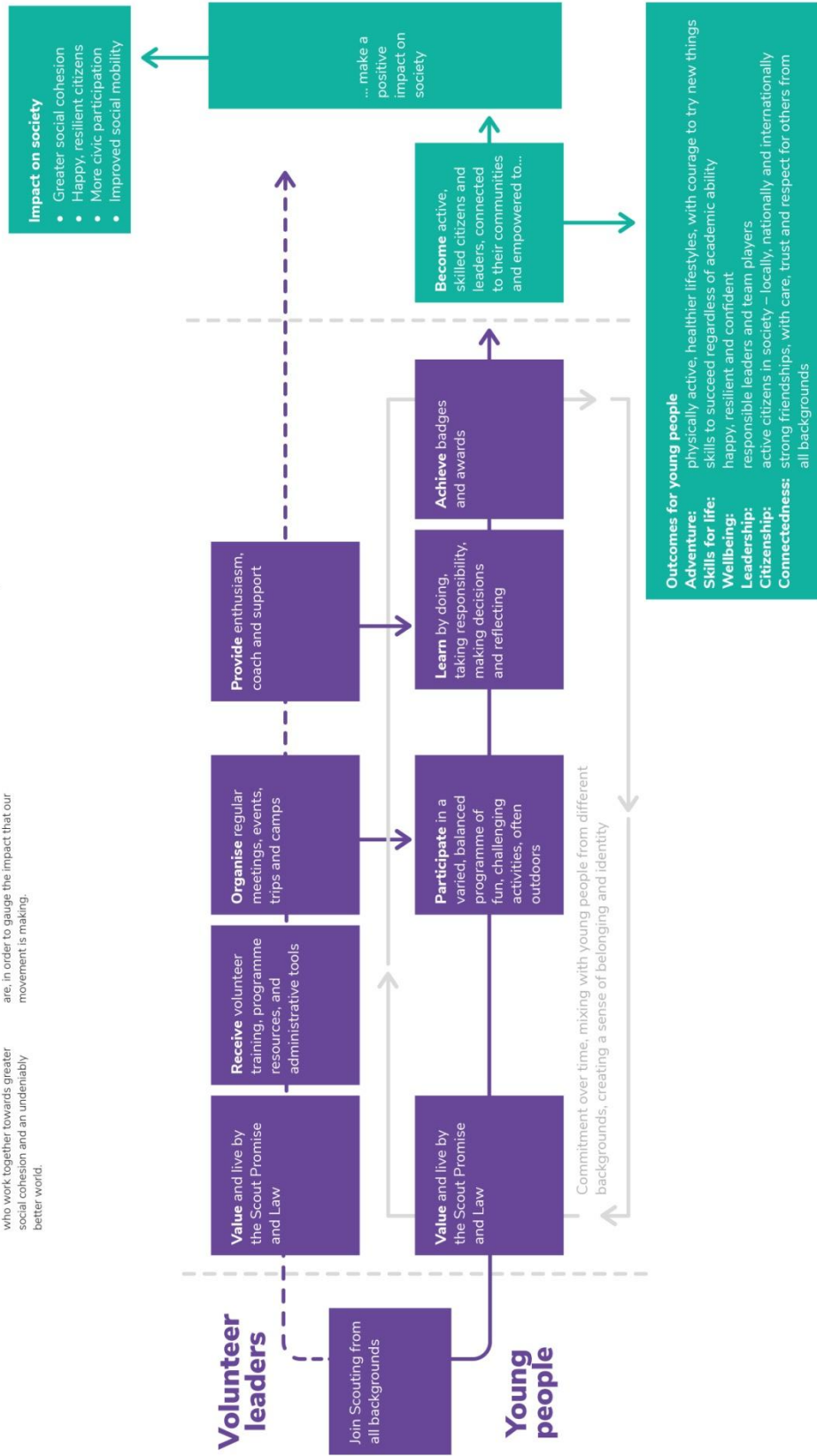
Theory of Change

Our theory of change shows the positive difference Scouts makes in society. We welcome young people and volunteers from all backgrounds. At Scouts they learn and share skills, enjoy an engaged and varied programme of activities, honour the Scout values and become active citizens of a connected community. We produce happier, more resilient citizens who work together towards greater social cohesion and an undeniably better world.

Over the last two years, we've conducted research with 13-17 year olds through the Scout Experience Survey. Based on responses to a variety of questions about their daily lives, activities, interests, citizenship and wellbeing, the research compares the experience of young people aged 13-17 who are not Scouts with those of the same age group who are, in order to gauge the impact that our movement is making.

The results of this research show that Scouts is bringing out the best in people, and that those people are contributing more to their communities. It shows that compared with young people who are not part of our movement, Scouts are learning more skills, volunteering more often, and contributing to a kinder, more cohesive society.

The role of volunteers delivering an amazing programme is vital to the impact that Scouts is making.

Impact on society
- Greater social cohesion
- Happy, resilient citizens
- More civic participation
- Improved social mobility

... make a positive impact on society

Volunteer leaders

Join Scouting from all backgrounds

Value and live by the Scout Promise and Law

Receive volunteer training, programme resources, and administrative tools

Organise regular meetings, events, trips and camps

Provide enthusiasm, coach and support

Young people

Value and live by the Scout Promise and Law

Participate in a varied, balanced programme of fun, challenging activities, often outdoors

Learn by doing, taking responsibility, making decisions and reflecting

Achieve badges and awards

Become active, skilled citizens and leaders, connected to their communities and empowered to...

Commitment over time, mixing with young people from different backgrounds, creating a sense of belonging and identity

Outcomes for young people
Adventure: physically active, healthier lifestyles, with courage to try new things
Skills for life: skills to succeed regardless of academic ability
Wellbeing: happy, resilient and confident
Leadership: responsible leaders and team players
Citizenship: active citizens in society – locally, nationally and internationally
Connectedness: strong friendships, with care, trust and respect for others from all backgrounds

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Annex B – The Scouts Programme Activities for Children

For clarity, the stated activities that young people take part in are:

- Practical skills - Learning practical skills which will be useful in my school, work or social life
- Outdoor skills - Learning skills and knowledge to spend time in the outdoors, such as navigation, camping, survival, backwoods cooking, knots/lashings and pioneering etc
- Physical activity - Taking part in physical, adventurous or sporting activities
- Community engagement - Learning about your community (such as people, places, services and democracy)
- Social action - volunteering to help other people, animals or the environment
- International activities - learning about other countries and cultures, either by visiting those countries or learning about them at home
- Creative activities - Taking part in drawing, painting, drama, sculpting, digital design, music or other creative activities
- Spiritual activities - Learning about the faith, beliefs or attitudes of others, or reflecting on my own

Annex C - The Scouts Programme Outcomes for Children

For clarity, the stated outcomes that programmes should deliver for young people are as follows:

Adventure: physically active, healthier lifestyles, with the courage to try new things
- More physically active
- Value the outdoors more
- Have increased knowledge of how to live a healthy lifestyle
- Are more likely to try new things
- Have increased courage to take risks and tackle challenging activities

Skills for Life: skills to succeed regardless of academic ability
- Have enhanced problem solving skills
- Are more independent
- Can communicate effectively
- Develop a range of practical and contemporary skills which are useful in their school, work and social life.

Wellbeing: Happy, resilient and confident
- Are happier
- Have enhanced personal wellbeing (measured by satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety)
- Have increased perseverance and grit
- Have increased confidence and self-esteem
- Have a deeper understanding and confidence in their own beliefs and attitudes

Leadership: Responsible leaders and team players
- Are more responsible and trustworthy
- Are better at working in a team
- Show leadership by taking initiative and acting as a role model to help others make a positive difference

Citizenship: participate in society as active citizens – locally, nationally and internationally
- Are more likely to play an active role in their community
- Are more likely to consider themselves local, national and international citizens

Connectedness: respecting difference, with more and deeper friendships
- Have more meaningful friendships and relationships
- Care more about other people
- Have more respect and trust for others, including those from backgrounds different to their own

CREC – March 2020