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Charity research reveals “secret of youth”

nfpSynergy’s new Youth Awareness Monitor helps charities better understand and engage with young people, their future

The UK’s first rolling research project to specifically explore and monitor young people’s attitudes and behaviour towards charities, campaigns and giving has now launched, following a successful pilot. Young people claim to volunteer twice as much as the rest of us and form many of their charitable views by the time they reach secondary school, preliminary findings show.

Leading not for profit sector think tank nfpSynergy’s new Youth Awareness Monitor (YAM) offers third sector organisations unique twice-yearly insights into what - if anything - young people think about them, their main charitable competitors and related social issues and causes. It will also track how our youth learn about, and respond to, charities and their campaigns, as compared against the wider population.

The UK’s 11.8 million 11-25 year olds increasingly represent a key audience for many charities, for several reasons. Quite apart from being a core group of service users and campaign beneficiaries for *some* charities, young people are current and future volunteers, campaigners and donors for *all* charities – not to mention purveyors of parental “pester power”! And their interests and affinities develop early – from primary school age onwards. Moreover, the government has re-affirmed its priority to create “active citizens”, with the Russell Commission calling for greater investment in youth volunteering.

Some preliminary YAM findings:

- **“Young (41%) claim to volunteer twice as much as the rest of us (19%)”** - and seem even more likely to give money (86% young v 74% rest). Far from being “born hoodies” young people appear to be more likely to be setting a good example. Do jaded adult peers perhaps end up draining young people of their idealism?
- **“87% aged 11-25 claim to be involved with charities, many since age 11”** – and the best known charities for adults are already the best known charities by the age of 11 and 12
- **“Most (51%) young people learn about charities at school or uni”**
- **“86% of young people are concerned about child protection, just ahead of cancer”** – these issue top a league of youthful charity concerns, closely followed by cruelty to animals and bullying (both on 79%), and war & conflict (75%).
- **“Noses and breasts top youth charity campaigns”** – 94% and 86% of young people claim awareness of league-topping Red Nose Day and Breast Cancer Week, respectively!
- **“1 in 20 students red faced over red noses”** - 6% of UK students plead ignorance of Red Nose Day! Are they stuck in bed; or simply overseas?
- **“TV ads top way young (69%) learn about charity campaigns”** – followed by 60% of young people learning from TV programmes, 46% from print adverts; and 41% from charity shops.
- **“Charity shop window to youthful awareness”** - 2/3 (63%) of young say they learn about charities generally from their charity shops - and ¼ (25%) claim to regularly use charity shops.

nfpSynergy's Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, said:

"This research highlights the fundamental importance of young people – and their attitudes and behaviour - to the future of *any* thriving charity. It demonstrates how informed and inspired many young people are by the work of not for profit organizations, many of which fail to fully appreciate or utilize their drive. It is vital we understand what turns young people on – and off – charities and their campaigns since many engage with causes whilst still at primary school; and - once engaged – remain highly committed thereafter."

A successful pilot period last autumn has already seen several major not for profit organisations sign up to this substantial survey of the charity-related views and behaviour of a representative sample of over 1100 11-25 year olds. Third sector organisations still have time to subscribe to the Youth Awareness Monitor before the end of February when the new wave of research commences. Participation includes input into questions and twice-yearly debriefing seminars. The new YAM is just the latest in an expanding raft of syndicated, cost-effective nfpSynergy monitors, delivering subscribers with regular insights into other key stakeholders including politicians, business leaders, health professionals, journalists and the wider public.

Charities keen to sign up to nfpSynergy's Youth Awareness Monitor before the new wave of research commences this spring should contact Ariel Spigelman - on ariel.spigelman@nfpsynergy.net or 020 7415 7161 - by the end of February. For more information about nfpSynergy, visit: www.nfpsynergy.net.

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS: To interview nfpSynergy's Joe Saxton about the new Youth Awareness Monitor, its preliminary findings, and how charities can best engage with young people, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

• nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy (www.nfpsynergy.net) is the UK's *only* think-tank dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - *nfpSynergy* has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.

• Joe Saxton

Joe Saxton co-founded *nfpSynergy* in 2002 after fifteen years experience in the voluntary sector, including as a director of the RNID (Britain's largest charity for deaf and hard of hearing people) and as a trustee of the RSPCA.

He has recently (May 2005) been appointed Chair of the Trustees of the Institute of Fundraising (www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk) - the professional body for fundraising and the largest individual representative body in the voluntary sector, with 4000 individual members and 200 organisational members. Joe was recently named one of the hundred most influential people in UK social policy by *The Guardian* and has been repeatedly voted one of the ten most influential people in UK fundraising by *Professional Fundraising*, most recently weighing in at the Number 1 slot.

A well-known and respected voice within the charity world and frequent face at sector conferences, Joe has contributed - via original research, opinion pieces and interviews - to a wide range of specialist and mainstream media, both print and broadcast, from *Third Sector* and *The Guardian* to *BBC Breakfast* and *BBC Radio 4*.