



**PORTLAND/THE JUBILEE  
CENTRE: MPs  
PERCEPTIONS OF  
CHARACTER EDUCATION**

**DECEMBER 2014**

## OBJECTIVES

- To assess the views of MPs with regard to character and virtue education in schools, and within the world of work.
- **To establish a baseline for future research.**

### *Low base sizes*

*Findings marked with an asterisk (\*) are where the number of MPs in a group is below 50. These results should be treated as indicative rather than representative. This is particularly true for the Liberal Democrats.*

## METHODOLOGY

### November/December 2014 MPs Panel Survey

Sample size	150
Fieldwork dates	25 <sup>th</sup> November – 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2014
Weighting	By party and region to be representative of the whole of the House of Commons

With a sample size of 150 MPs, the margin of error on results at a 95% confidence level is  $\pm 7.02$ . Differences of less than this should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# CHARACTER EDUCATION

## Broad support for character education

There is firm support for character education among MPs. Two-thirds of MPs agree that character education should be taught in schools. Furthermore, eight out of ten MPs from each of the three main parties agree that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results, with three in ten agreeing strongly.

## MPs disagree on the state of young people

MPs are divided along party lines on whether young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values, with a majority of Conservative MPs agreeing and half of Labour MPs disagreeing.

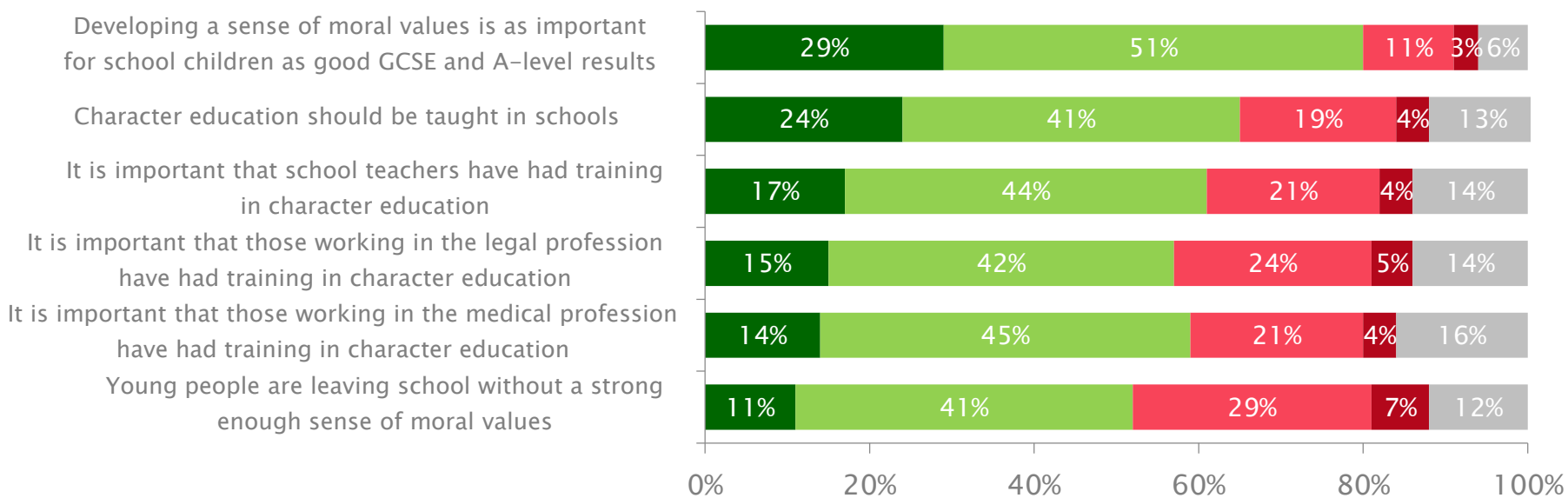
## Conservative MPs are divided on professions

Overall, MPs are favourable towards character education for each of the professions tested. However, whereas more than two-thirds of Labour MPs say that it is important that those working in the professions have had training in character education, Conservatives are divided on the issue.

# OVERALL, MP EXPRESS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

- MPs show strong support for character education across all statements.
- Regarding young people, two-thirds of MPs (64%) agree that character education should be taught in school, and eight out of ten MPs (80%) agree that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results.
- Regarding the professions, six out of ten MPs agree that it is important that school teachers (61%) and those working in the medical (59%) and legal (56%) professions have had training in character education.

■ Strongly agree   
 ■ Tend to agree   
 ■ Tend to disagree   
 ■ Strongly disagree   
 ■ Don't know



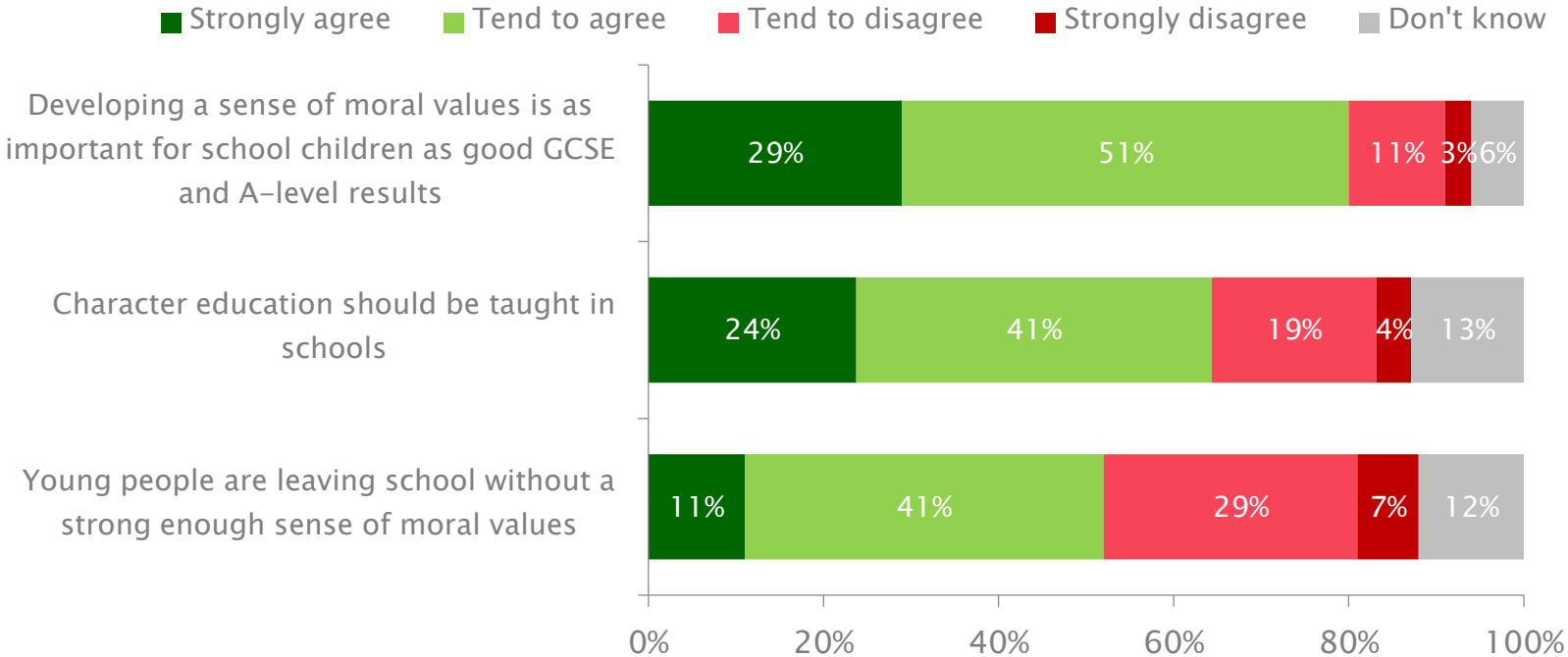
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)



# CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



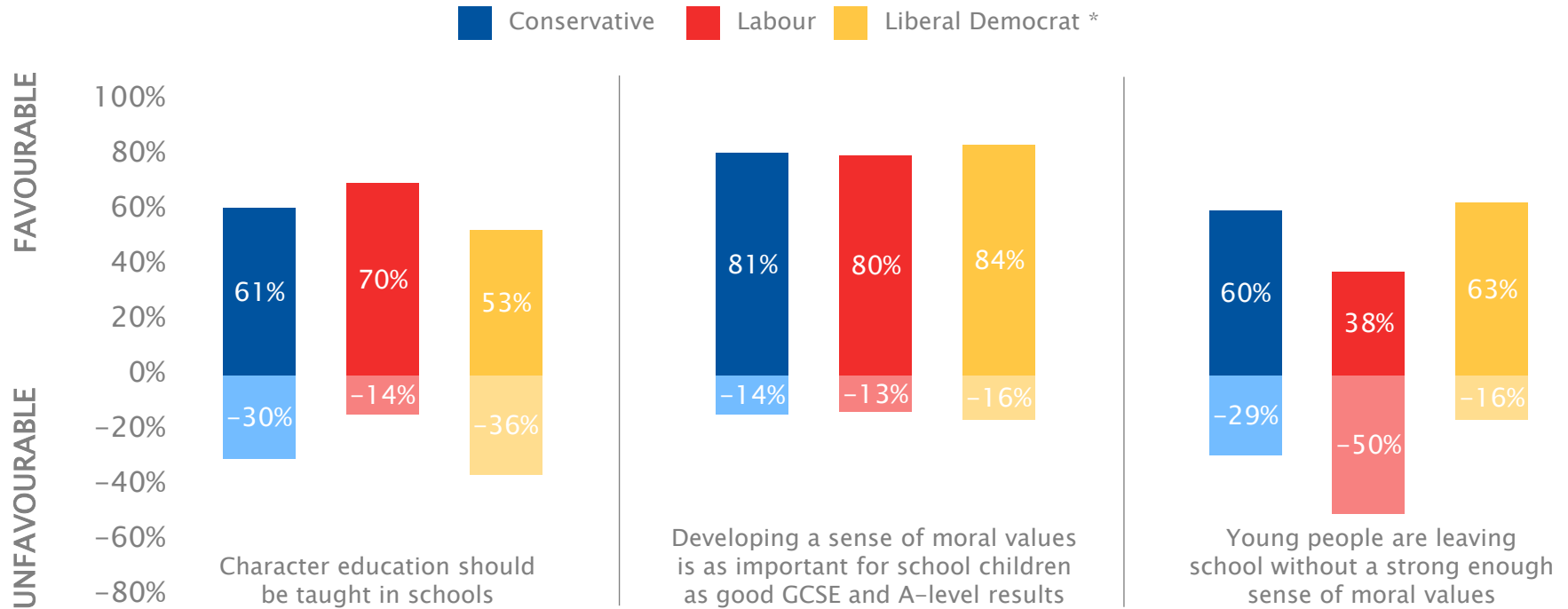
# MPs OVERWHELMINGLY AGREE CHARACTER EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT AND SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS.



- Eight out of ten MPs (80%) say that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results, and accordingly, two-thirds of MPs (64%) say that character education should be taught in schools.
- MPs are more divided on whether young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values, with half of MPs (51%) agreeing and more than a third of MPs (37%) disagreeing.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)

# ATTITUDES TO CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE VARIES BY PARTY.



- Overall, Labour MPs are more likely than Conservative MPs to say that character education should be taught in schools. While a similar proportion of Conservative and Labour MPs (61% and 70%, respectively) agree that character education should be taught in schools, three out of ten Conservative MPs (30%) disagree, compared with only one in seven Labour MPs (14%).
- There is a similar party split with regards to the current state of character education. Whereas six in ten Conservative MPs (60%) agree that young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values, less than four out of ten Labour MPs (38%) say the same.

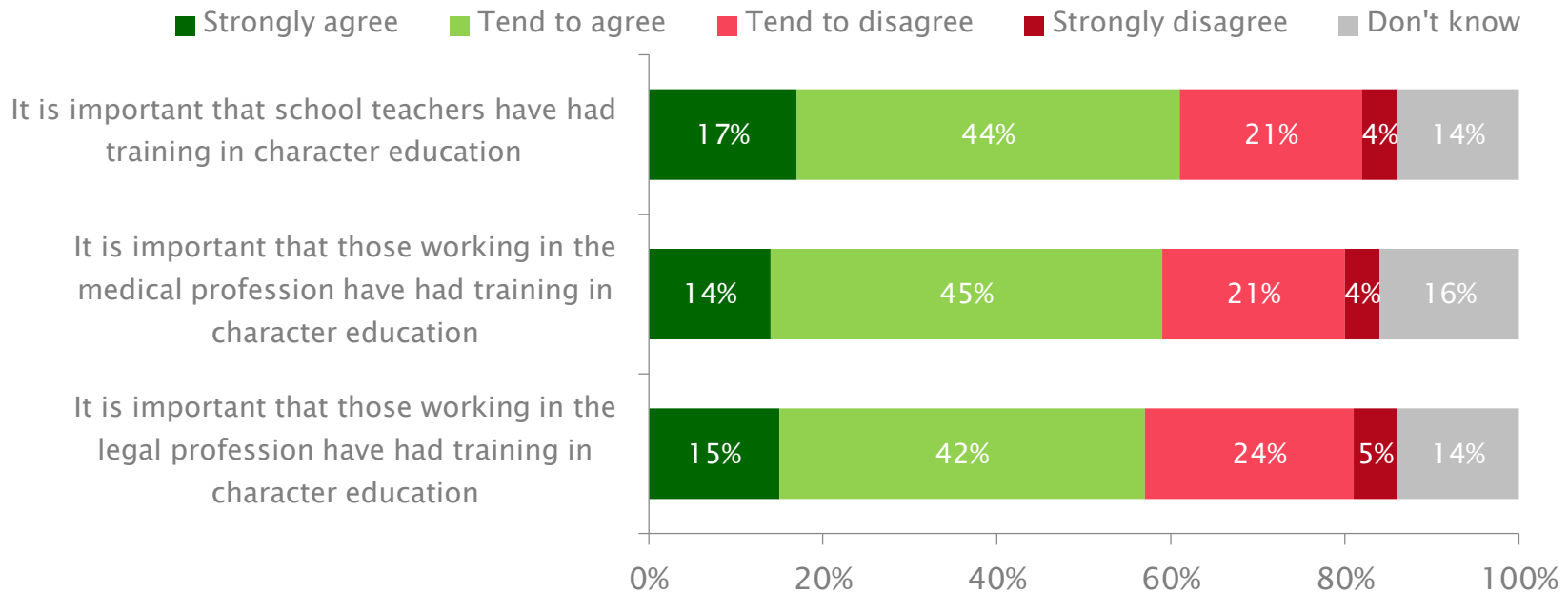
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=51, Lab=81, Lib Dem=9)



# CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR THE PROFESSIONS



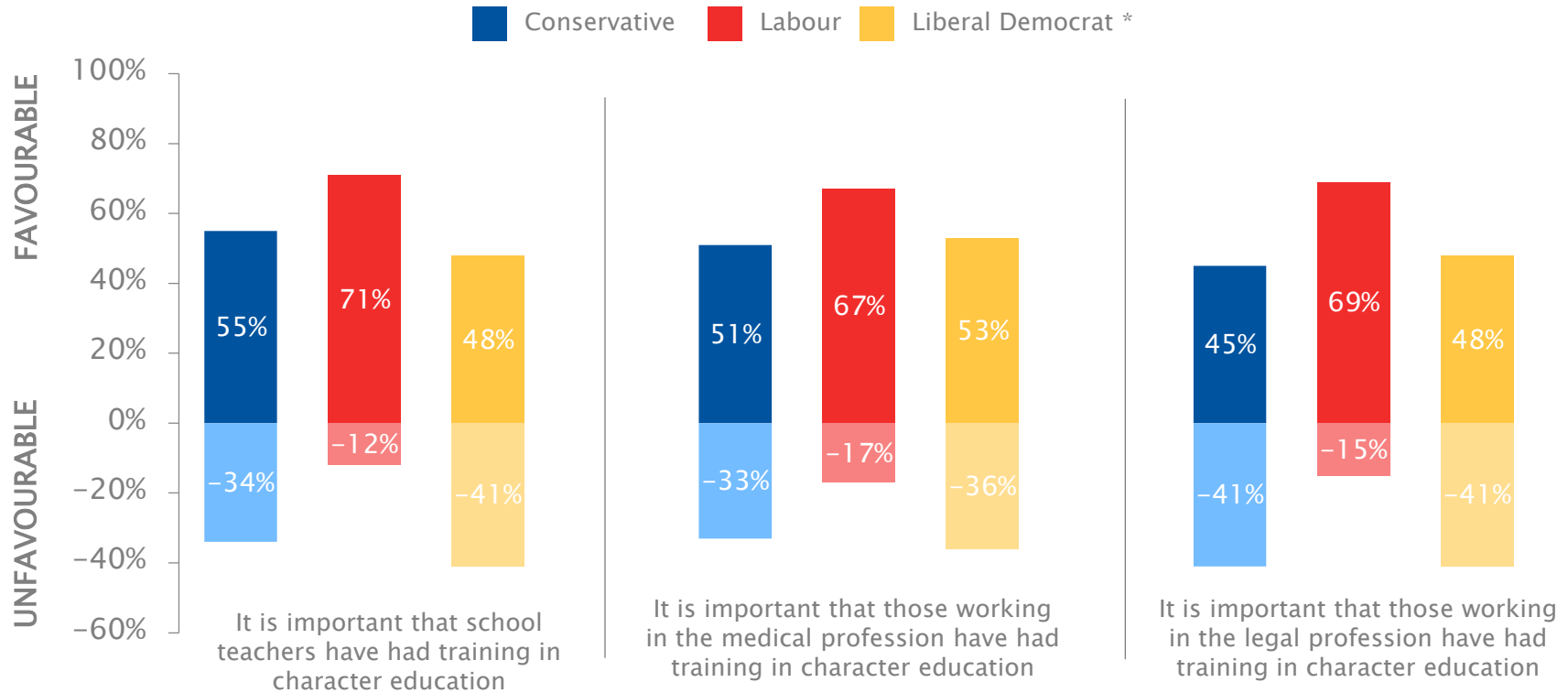
# MPs BELIEVE THE PROFESSIONS SHOULD HAVE TRAINING IN CHARACTER EDUCATION.



- Around six in ten MPs agree that it is important school teachers and those working in the medical and legal professions (61%, 59% and 56%, respectively) have had training in character education.
- A quarter of MPs (25%, 25% and 29%, respectively) disagree that this is important.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (n=150)

# Similar as with young people, there are strong lines of separation between parties regarding character education for the professions.



- More than two-thirds of Labour MPs (71%, 67% and 69%) agree it is important that those working in the professions tested have had training in character education.
- However, Conservatives are more divided on the issue. Fewer than half of Conservative MPs (45%) agree that it is important that those working in the legal profession have had training in character education, and four out of ten (41%) disagree.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding character education? By character education, we mean the development of values deemed to be morally good, which might include gratitude, courage, humility, service, justice, honesty, love and self-discipline. Base: all MPs (Con=51, Lab=81, Lib Dem=9)


**RECOMMENDATIONS  
AND NEXT STEPS**






## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

There is strong support for character education among MPs. The vast majority of MPs agree that developing a sense of moral values is as important for school children as good GCSE and A-level results, and may consequently therefore agree character education should be taught in schools. This is also supported by MPs' division on whether young people are leaving school without a strong enough sense of moral values.



**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Jubilee Centre should seek to build on the firm support for character education by continuing to monitor attitudes in the run-up to and the aftermath of the 2015 General Election. In order to build support for character education among MPs, the Jubilee Centre will need to gain a better understanding of MPs' attitudes and perceptions, specifically regarding the values that character education endorses.

Although MPs overall are favourable towards character education for the professions tested, Conservative MPs are more likely to be sceptical towards the idea than Labour MPs. Fewer than one in six Labour MPs disagree that it is important that those working in any of the professions tested have had training in character education, but at least a third of Conservative MPs say the same.



**RECOMMENDATION 2:** As party attitudes exhibit stark differences, the Jubilee Centre will need to engage more thoroughly with Conservative MPs to gain a better understanding of reservations towards character education for the professions tested. A targeted communications campaign, testing specific messages of character education, would provide the Jubilee Centre with the necessary, robust insight.

**NEXT STEPS:** Having successfully established a benchmark for character education in Westminster, ComRes can support the Jubilee Centre in developing a grounded understanding of MPs' perceptions. The Jubilee Centre should continue to monitor MPs' views, as well as develop a proactive communications campaign that tests the appeal of character education while strengthening support.