

## *In the Service of Others*

### **A vision for youth social action by 2020**

Dear all,

In June the Prime Minister asked us: *how can Government, business, the voluntary and education sectors work together to support young people to engage in social action between the ages of 10 and 20?*

Our interim report addressed this question and provided our recommendations to achieve our vision. **Our vision for 2020 is that all sectors will have contributed to making our country a place where the majority of young people are involved in social action and are encouraged, recognised and valued for their contribution to society.** We have defined social action as **practical action in the service of others.**

#### **The time has come for this vision**

Attitudes to the Olympics and the Jubilee. This has been an unforgettable year for our country and we believe there is an historic opportunity to build on the goodwill generated to bring social action into the centre of young people's lives. This will provide the long lasting legacy that the Olympics aims to achieve by "inspiring a generation".

There are three other strong platforms which we believe add to the historic opportunity. The first is National Citizen Service (NCS) which has achieved impressive evaluations and delivered up to 30,000 places for young people this year. We believe that the principles and ethos of NCS, and its ambition to be a rite of passage, are central to realising a culture change amongst young people and achieving our vision. The second platform could arise from the considerable opportunities offered by proposed changes to the education system. The plan for a new "A-Bacc" and the raising of the participation age have the potential to create a positive foundation for social action within the education sector and we would like to work with the Department for Education on the development and implementation of these plans. The third platform is the support that the Government has given to establishing more Cadet units in schools, and the support that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has given to increasing the impact of uniformed organisations in disadvantaged communities.

To answer the question we have consulted widely, both locally and nationally, talking to many individuals and organisations across the voluntary, youth, education, faith and business sectors. We have held workshops with business leaders, teachers and young people. Many organisations have supported us with examples of best practice and presented impressive evidence of existing successful programmes. In addition, the sector rose to the challenge of garnering the views of young people and conducted surveys on our behalf which showed how young people's engagement in social action brings huge benefits to society.

We have been encouraged that all those consulted have identified significant benefits from young people engaging in social action. **The benefits to young people** will come from them having the chance to be valued, having opportunities to tackle difficult social challenges and being recognised

for their positive contribution – **“to be seen as the solution not the problem”**. **Businesses** are highly supportive of a focus on academic achievement, but are clear that character development and social action are critical to improving young people’s employability and ‘work-readiness’. **Communities** will thrive as social action builds connections across social backgrounds and generations and gives young people a stake in the well-being of their neighbourhoods and their future. The **youth organisations** and **VCSE sector**, in which we have seen so much drive and energy, will benefit as they will further innovate to ensure that young people have a range of choices and opportunities to engage.

### **The major barriers to realising this vision**

Despite the historic opportunity that exists, our consultation identified a number of major barriers to our vision being realised:

- **Little sense of progression for young people between social action opportunities.** By further working together, youth organisations could help define a sense of a journey for young people so that when they finish one opportunity there is a better transition to another. There are also sections of the decade, such as the transition between primary and secondary school, where there is a shortage of initiatives to engage young people in social action.
- **Businesses and schools want to be more supportive, but are often confused by the range of initiatives and are unclear which programmes are the best.**
- **Social action opportunities are often not promoted to young people in the most attractive way.** Many are unengaged and social action is not a prominent part of youth culture. In other countries, the media helps to celebrate social action; we have heard widespread concern that young people are negatively portrayed by the British media. Young people do not feel that their participation is sufficiently recognised by society, be that business, the media or the education system.
- **Absence of a long term vision that inspires the public.** Achieving culture change on this scale requires all sectors to have a sense of long-term certainty before they invest and get behind something.

### **Recommendations to achieve the vision for 2020**

- **Work with youth organisations to create an easy to navigate “service journey” for young people.** This would identify existing quality opportunities for young people from 10 to 20 and organise them around the three key transition stages in a young person’s life: 10 to 14, 14 to 16 and 16 to 20. It would encourage collaboration between organisations and use technology to make the handover between opportunities more seamless and produce a sense of increasing challenge and progression. National Citizen Service at 16 would be a central universal moment in this journey, but one that is embedded in a decade of other opportunities.
- **Identify gaps in the decade “service journey” and encourage all sectors to provide or scale up programmes to fill these.** Raise and recognise the quality of social action programmes. By working with the sector to define and recognise good quality social action programmes at the three transition stages, this should provide a light touch way to drive up quality and spread best practice. It would also encourage all sectors to provide programmes which allow young people to develop and progress through the three stages. For example, an award was recently launched by

BITC to identify best practice from the employers' perspective. The challenge is to create a framework which is credible and lends recognition as an "Intel inside" brand without being hampered by overbearing accreditation and bureaucracy. We will work with the different sectors to tackle this challenge as the framework is developed.

- **Embed social action in schools.** The plans for a new baccalaureate qualification at A-level involving voluntary work and the raising of the participation age have the potential to transform demand for social action opportunities within schools.
- **Ensure that social action is driven by young people.** Create an inspirational network to encourage and help young people to identify opportunities and provide support in the key transition stages from the ages of 10 to 14, 14 to 16 and 16 to 20. This will not only make social action more visible and attractive to young people, but will also encourage collaboration within the sector.
- **Develop a culture of celebrating social action by promoting and publicising across a variety of media platforms.** It is important to develop a culture where young people are not presented as a problem and where positive role models are encouraged. This could be achieved through a national TV celebration of the social action achievements by young people, as in Canada and Ireland.
- **Measure progress and benefits of investment in the 2020 vision,** We believe that much evidence of participation in social action already exists across the sectors. We hope to pull this together to enable progress over the next eight years to be tracked.

Having heard from the Prime Minister of his support for the recommendations we are excited to begin embedding social action in young people's lives. We will firstly commission the framework and collate existing data on current levels of social action activity. We will then plan to run pilots in 2013 followed by a national roll-out in 2014. We ask that you continue to support us as we move into the next phase.

**DAME JULIA CLEVERDON AND AMANDA JORDAN OBE**