

# Independent review of Full-Time Social Action

Steve Holliday

January 2018

Dear Minister for Sport and Civil Society,

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport commissioned an independent review of Full-Time Social Action (*currently defined as 16 hours a week or more, for 6 months or more*) for young people (*aged 16 - 25*). I was elected as the Chair to work with the following panel of experts: Saeed Atcha, Andy Haldane, Charlotte Hill, Sue Maguire and Veronica Wadley.

As a panel, we believe that the best way to support Full-Time Social Action (FTSA) programmes, and the young people taking part in these valuable activities, is to build the social action journey both feeding into, and following on from, the National Citizen Service (NCS), whilst strengthening the evidence base.

**Our headline conclusions are:**

- Committed forms of social action over an extended period have been shown to play a critical role in developing a young person's life chances, improving job prospects and wellbeing. They can add value to government supported programmes such as the NCS, International Citizen Service and commitments to the #iwill campaign. There is an enhanced role for government to support the private sector, statutory services, and civil society in embedding social action into the lives of all young people in the United Kingdom.
- FTSA plays a central role in achieving wider government priorities; in particular, achieving greater social mobility and social inclusion for young people. Cross-departmental work in this area is key, and we would like your support in further driving this by bringing together a Ministerial group to bring together the interests of all government departments in optimising the value of youth social action.
- Young people from the poorest backgrounds tend to be the least likely to access structured social action opportunities, even though they may benefit significantly from participating. The increased level of time and potential cost required for FTSA is a significant barrier for this group, as well as knowledge about and access to local opportunities. There is some evidence of FTSA engaging disadvantaged groups, but more action needs to be taken to involve young people in the design and delivery of programmes.
- The evidence base relating to FTSA is not strong enough at present to recommend legislative change to widen access, given competing government priorities for Parliamentary time. The current legal status for young people taking part in FTSA is not ideal and there is more that government could do without legislative change to unlock the role of the private sector, statutory services and civil society in order to embed FTSA into life in the UK, and ensure that the least advantaged young people are able to take part.

## Executive Summary:

In the course of this review, we have found that the opportunities presented by FTSA are not easily understood by many across sectors, and as a result, there have been mixed responses to the concept. When engaging with young people, they told us that social action is about lasting change, tackling the big issues, and bringing communities closer together. They also made it very clear that taking part is much easier for those who can afford and be supported to do so. Young people are fantastic contributors to their communities and their efforts and achievements deserve to be recorded and rewarded.

Other countries that offer government-backed FTSA have developed new language (eg Service Year in the US<sup>1</sup>, Service Civique in France) to mark out the offer clearly for young people as distinct, special and separate from other forms of volunteering. These countries have created a distinct legal status for FTSA participants and seen a huge increase in young people who give up their time in the service of others. The UK has no such legal status or frame of reference, and this has probably contributed to the range of responses to the review. Furthermore, the small numbers of young people taking part in FTSA in the UK has made evidence gathering difficult. However, we have seen promising evidence of impact from experienced providers.

Due to this mixed response and limited experience, we believe that more evidence is needed before the government could instigate a major drive to increase social action programmes that are over 16 hours a week for 6 months or more. As a point of comparison, recent proposals by the Universities Minister for promoting 2-year degrees have cited evidence about the experience and performance of 2,500 current participants a year who already undertake 2-year degrees, whereas there are only 1,000 young people who participate in FTSA on an annual basis, and none of these take place through a public institution. More work is needed to increase the number of young people in FTSA to similar numbers, and will be needed to provide the evidence case for wider policy and legislative change.

However, this does not mean that the status quo is sufficient. The review has found ample evidence to suggest that short term action is needed by government to ensure that participants in FTSA are adequately supported, encouraged and recognised for their participation. The rapid expansion of National Citizen Service (NCS) will see increasing numbers of young people who wish to progress onto more committed forms of social action. This may make the current situation untenable in the future by exacerbating problems that have been identified by charities that provide these opportunities.

These are all good reasons to act seriously on the recommendations submitted here to collectively ensure we are creating many more opportunities for young people, and additionally to encourage continued debate and review of whether the UK has need of a FTSA offer that resembles those available in America, Germany and France.

We very much look forward to hearing your views on these recommendations which we believe – with your support – alongside your existing commitment to the National Citizen Service and the #iwill campaign- could transform the involvement of young people in their communities, and add considerable value to the work of your department supporting wider government priorities.

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<sup>1</sup>Full-Time Social Action Review ‘call for evidence’: City Year UK response  
[https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678472/Consultation\\_evidence.zip](https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678472/Consultation_evidence.zip)

## Our vision

The future is going to look very different. Young people are entering a labour market that is defined by rapid innovation and change. Technology is moving at such a pace that the way we communicate, how and what we learn and the sort of jobs available are evolving too. The Prime Minister recently commissioned Matthew Taylor to undertake a Review<sup>2</sup> to look at employment practices in the modern economy. He states that:

*“Technology – like robotics and machine learning – is going to have a big impact on jobs and the tasks that make up those jobs. As we seize these technological opportunities – as we must – we should do so with the aim of making working lives better, taking away the drudgery and leaving the human contact and creativity that machines can’t provide. If we want citizens who are engaged, responsible, active, who – to coin a phrase – ‘take back control’ we should encourage those same virtues in the workplace. Our idea of what it is to be a respected citizen should not stop at the office or factory door.”*

Matthew Taylor’s Review demonstrates the importance placed on ‘soft’ skills for the future world of work, a view widely held by the business community. Our view is that the ability of all young people, both now and in the future, to develop motivation, resilience and self-confidence is not a soft skill but a fundamental requirement. The value and demand for these attributes and skills is ever-increasing.

Our vision is of a society where all young people (no matter what their background, where they live, what school they attend or educational achievements) are encouraged to participate in social action, and by doing so, create a habit for life. A habit of playing an active part in the community, of helping others, of developing skills and networks through service, and mixing with people from different backgrounds, which helps them understand the challenges of others. A significant body of evidence strongly suggests that young people who engage in social action are better prepared for the world of work and are happier in their lives.

It is self-evident that schools and colleges cannot be expected to meet this demand independently of communities, charities and the youth sector. FTSA is an effective way to widen social inclusion, and develop these core skills in an informal setting, whilst also making a significant impact on areas of high social need.

Some young people are already generating positive change in their communities by engaging in social action programmes. These include the Police Cadets, City Year, St. John’s Ambulance, programmes with The National Trust, volunteering in hospitals, youth work projects and the NCS to name just a few. Team London’s social action programmes<sup>3</sup>, now available in over 80 per cent of primary and secondary schools in London, have demonstrated a positive impact on both the social skills and educational performance of students.

These initiatives demonstrate that with the right support, young people can be active citizens, leading change in partnership with others. However, we know young people need to get the right information, advice, support and guidance to be able to participate.

Our vision is of a well signposted journey of opportunities for young people to take part in social action – starting as early as primary school, extending up to NCS at the age of 16, that leads on to more committed forms of social action which provides a transition pathway between school and employment. One option at the upper end of this journey, for those young people who graduate from NCS, should be an offer of a programme of FTSA, where young people who have been inspired to make a difference can commit themselves to serving

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/employment-practices-in-the-modern-economy>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering>

their communities in a dedicated way and earn a vital year of experience to count toward getting a job with the experience recorded.

As a new national institution, there is a case for NCS to act as a broker and quality assurance body for FTSA opportunities after NCS - ensuring that young people are recognised and well supported to take part in high impact social action, and that anyone from any background is able to do so. FTSA can help further leverage the investment in NCS, and create a new method of personal development and growth for young people - one that has service to others at its heart.

*“The youth sector was like a second home to me. Since I’ve been involved in a lot of volunteering with various charities from Save the Children to vInspired, Youth Employment UK to Young Women’s Trust. Both before, during, and after university I did different volunteering which would help me build my skills and experience for my future career....”*

-Young woman, aged 22

## Evidence and Outcomes

We have consulted with over 180 individuals and organisations across the legal, regulatory, economic and voluntary sector, holding focus groups with young people, workshops with experts, and launched a digital campaign promoting a Call for Evidence, gathering information from national and international partners.

A number of submissions outlined young people’s destination measures which include: personal development, employability and economic impact. NCS report 64 percent of graduates would consider engaging in social action in the future<sup>4</sup>. City Year report that 91 percent of young people had gained employment within three months of completing the programme, and that post-participation, young people are more likely to want to vote, take leadership roles within civil society, and improved their attitude towards other social groups<sup>5</sup>. If 10,000 young people a year continued to engage in social action full-time, Pro Bono Economics estimate that this could generate between £28 million and £119 million for the economy<sup>6</sup>.

The evidence demonstrating the impact of FTSA in contrast with part-time social action is currently very limited. Many organisations argue that quality of social action is more important than quantity. However, intuitively, the more a young person engages in voluntary activity, the greater the impact will be - although we need more research to substantiate this belief.

A paper on what works in involving young people in volunteering by the Careers & Enterprise Company, found good evidence that those who volunteer the most hours gained the most in skills development<sup>7</sup>. It also found that youth social action programmes can motivate young people to consider careers in industries that they may not have otherwise investigated and that this effect was strongest for young people who take part in full-time ‘service year’ programmes that last for longer periods of time.

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<sup>4</sup>Full-Time Social Action Review, Call for Evidence: NCS Trust Response

[https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678472/Consultation\\_evidence.zip](https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678472/Consultation_evidence.zip)

<sup>5</sup>Full-Time Social Action Review ‘call for evidence’: City Year UK response

[https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678472/Consultation\\_evidence.zip](https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678472/Consultation_evidence.zip)

<sup>6</sup>The Economic Value of Full-Time Volunteering: A report for City Year, Helen Dunn, Paul Gower, Mark Graham

[https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678472/Consultation\\_evidence.zip](https://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678472/Consultation_evidence.zip)

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/careers\\_enterprise\\_what\\_works\\_report\\_young\\_people\\_volunteering.pdf](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/careers_enterprise_what_works_report_young_people_volunteering.pdf)

The paper found that in addition to benefits for individuals, there are benefits for organisations hosting volunteers including: broadening the pool and diversity of their team, enthusiasm, creativity and dynamism, ability to bring fresh ideas and new perspectives, increasing capacity. From the point of view of resourcing, shorter spells of social action increase the burden on recruitment due to churn which is further evidence of the increased value when the quality and length of opportunity are also increased.

Young people who are currently engaging in FTSA experienced financial difficulties, shared safeguarding concerns and were unaware of their entitlements in relation to reduced job seeking requirements while claiming welfare support. Some experts in the field suggested that the barriers preventing young people and providers from benefiting from FTSA programmes are unlikely to diminish by changing legislation. Instead, more focus should be directed towards promoting current opportunities, supporting young people before, during, and after their social action journey and improving incentivising.

In America, France and Germany, FTSA is delivered through a 'Service Year', largely funded by government. These programmes are expensive to deliver and require legislative change to allow projects to deliver without fear of legal challenge. However, they have helped thousands of young people to reshape their communities and gain valuable employment experience. When seen as part of a wider social action journey, starting from primary school age and continuing through to adulthood, evidence shows these opportunities are proven to add value.

## Barriers to achieving our vision

This review found that young people are often facing multiple barriers to participate in FTSA programmes, while providers are struggling to deliver them. The common difficulties reported by providers are; the funding required to provide young people with the right training and support to thrive in social action programmes, and frustrations navigating the current legal framework. For young people, awareness and access are the initial obstacles they face, as signposting and infrastructural support is not currently strong enough. These barriers accumulate for young people when long hours of voluntary engagement are required from them and when they incur travel and subsistence costs. Therefore, FTSA programmes as defined in the Terms of Reference do not appear to currently accommodate the needs of most young people, particularly those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

The key barriers identified by the review include:

- **Awareness:** Young people are unaware of the opportunities already available to them, their rights and entitlements, and how to access advice / support services prior to engaging in social action.
- **Cost:** FTSA is expensive for both young people to access and providers to deliver.
- **Access:** Young people struggle to access opportunities as they are not delivered in their local areas, they do not have upfront funds to pay for their transport and subsistence, they have multiple barriers that are not met by organisations, and lack the confidence to engage.
- **Legal framework:** The existing legal framework is difficult for both young people and organisations to navigate and leaves young people wrongly recorded as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Those who choose to participate risk loss of benefits or support and programme providers risk legal challenge.
- **Opportunity structures:** Current social action programmes are not inclusive of the needs of all young people, particularly those who are disabled, who have

unrecorded or unknown destinations or who are defined as NEET.

- **Recognition:** Young people feel that this is an important area for development that will encourage participation. Young people are often given little to no reward or accreditation from most education establishments, charities or businesses for their time spent engaging in social action. Equally, in some cases, despite extended involvement in social action, young people may not be able to articulate the value they have brought and the skills and behaviours they have developed.

*“...I was soft-homeless throughout my 6 months at the charity, sofa-surfing with friends, family and sleeping in the office. I ran up a significant amount of debt which has taken a long time to undo, and disconnected with family and friends....I do not regret the time I spent volunteering, but would personally not recommend anyone take a voluntary position unless they have significant financial backing or they are going to be adequately supported by the charity or otherwise.”*

- Young man, aged 20

## **Recommendations to enable our vision:**

- 1. Establish a Ministerial Group:** To bring together the interests of all government Departments in optimising the value of FTSA, led by your department.
- 2. Work with the Department for Work and Pensions:** To ensure that social action is accessible to all, we recommend that the Department for Work and Pensions supports Job Coaches, to proactively inform young people who are Universal Credit claimants of their right to reduce their job-seeking hours up to 50 percent to participate in voluntary activities. We also favour extending this right to all benefit claimants and ask that the crucial role of volunteering is better recognised by this department. The Department for Work and Pensions should explore this and report back on implementation plans within 12 months.
- 3. Work with the Department for Education:** To fully understand the crucial role of FTSA in engaging those young people furthest away from the labour market, this department should investigate the value of full-time social action as a route to work-readiness and social mobility and in particular, for those young people who face social or economic disadvantage, as part of its work in the social mobility opportunity areas and to reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are NEET. We also recommend the DfE consider piloting FTSA as part of the transition year initiative as proposed in the Sainsbury’s Report<sup>8</sup>. Such a pilot would significantly expand the evidence base for youth FTSA in a UK context and explore the strong links with volunteering and paths into employment.
- 4. Reinforce best practice via the Civil Society Strategy:** We recommend the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) should lead an activity with NNVA, Volunteering Matters, the Association of Volunteer Managers and V-Inspired to develop non-mandatory guidelines specific to 16-25 year olds with support and encouragement from government. This could include of ‘out-of-pocket’ expenses, setting realistic targets, good recruitment and safeguarding processes and reiterating that completion of social action programmes does not guarantee employment. Furthermore, they should develop a plan that encourages charities to operate transparently with young people,

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/report-of-the-independent-panel-on-technical-education.pdf>

and encourage charities to provide better information, advice, guidance and support to young people during their social action journey.

5. **The Careers and Enterprise Company:** To include FTSA as part of their toolkit of opportunities when Enterprise Advisors are working with young people. They should also work with the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) to formulate ways in which the skills young people develop through social action are more widely acknowledged and evidenced, helping businesses to assess young people's capabilities beyond their academic attainment and employment history.
6. **Our asks of the private sector:** Business in the Community should coordinate businesses commitment and support to youth projects in their community and promote good practice e.g. bus companies providing free transport to young people taking part in volunteering, or local businesses providing food and training to participants. Employers should also consider changing their recruitment practices to recognise the skills young people have developed through social action and supported by the CIPD to draw up guidelines.
7. **National Citizen Service:** NCS should explore the option to act as a broker and quality assurance body for FTSA opportunities ensuring that young people are recognised and well supported to take part in high impact social action. NCS can help further by signposting opportunities to their graduates.
8. **Develop an improved evidence base:** As FTSA programmes are still in their infancy in the UK, the evidence does not yet demonstrate a strong argument to justify expansion. More research and wider evidence are needed on their impact. We believe this can be derived from evaluating the performance of current practice and innovation across the UK. Future research should be commissioned and managed by DCMS. The obvious links between FTSA and getting young people into work should be considered by The Big Lottery when distributing dormant asset funding. The impact FTSA could have in opportunity areas, to provide local solutions to community issues, needs to be fully understood and is an excellent opportunity to meet government objectives.

In summary, connecting FTSA into the work of The Careers & Enterprise Company, National Citizen Service, the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas, the Department of Work and Pensions and wider government investment, will ensure it is accessible to all young people.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Holliday". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Steve Holliday

## Appendix A | Panel Members Biography

 A portrait of Steve Holliday, a middle-aged man with short dark hair, wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, a white shirt, and a light blue tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Steve Holliday</b></p> <p>Steve is a businessman and engineer. He is currently Deputy Chairman of Convatec, Chairman of German company Senvion. He chairs the charity Crisis and is Vice Chairman of the Careers and Enterprise Company which helps young people find their best possible future. He previously chaired the National Grid's Young Offender programme which provides work-based training to offenders coming to the end of their sentences.</p>
 A portrait of Andy Haldane, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He has a neutral expression and is looking slightly to the side.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Andy Haldane</b></p> <p>Andy is the Chief Economist and the Executive Director of Monetary Analysis and Research &amp; Statistics at the Bank of England. He is the founder and a trustee of Pro Bono Economics, a charity which brokers economists into charitable projects, and a trustee of National Numeracy.</p>
 A portrait of Charlotte Hill, a woman with short blonde hair, wearing a dark blue top. She is smiling broadly and looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a blurred logo that says "iwill".	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Charlotte Hill</b></p> <p>Charlotte became Chief Executive of Step Up to Serve in April 2014 in the first year of the Campaign. She was previously CEO of UK Youth and worked at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) as their Parliamentary Advisor.</p>



### **Saeed Atcha**

Saeed is the youngest charity CEO to lead an organisation to receive Her Majesty the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. At 21-years-old, Saeed leads Xplode Magazine, a Greater Manchester youth charity that bridges social good and productivity to foster a promising future for young people. A trustee of a local Counselling organisation and HRH Prince Charles' #iwill campaign, Saeed holds youth voice close to his heart. Graduating last year in PR and Marketing, Saeed has been active in the media industry as a broadcaster for the Wireless Group since he was 15 years old. Saeed also holds numerous awards including the Prime Minister's Points of Light Award.



### **Sue Maguire**

Sue Maguire is an Honorary Professor, Institute for Policy Research, University of Bath. A particular focus of her research is youth transitions of disadvantaged groups, in particular young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Sue is an Associate Fellow at the University of Oxford's Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE).



### **Veronica Wadley**

Veronica is Chair of Arts Council London and board member of Arts Council England. She was instrumental in setting up Team London which won the European Volunteering Capital 2016 for its work with young people. She is co-founder and trustee of the London Music Fund and on the Board of City of London Education, the Yehudi School and Royal College of Music. She was awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours.



## Appendix B | Examples of submissions from the Call For Evidence

[Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

[Pro Bono Economics](#)

[National Citizen Service](#)

[City Year](#)

[National Council For Voluntary Organisations](#)

## Appendix C | Evidence Bank Report

### Call For Evidence

The Full-Time Social Action Review launched a Call For Evidence from 01/09/2017 until 13/10/2017. In total, 48 pieces of evidence were submitted by various charities, businesses, young people, and youth sector stakeholders.

#### What experience have you had of full-time social action / volunteering, either as a young person or as a provider for young people?

- 25 submissions had experience of delivering full-time social action
- 7 organisations had engaged young people as part of their submission

#### What impact does full-time social action / volunteering have on young people and providers in comparison to part-time social action / volunteering?

11 submissions argued that full-time social action had more of an impact than part-time social action because young people:

- Gain a better understanding of an organisation and develop 'brand loyalty'
- Are more engaged with aims and objectives
- Have a greater sense of responsibility and belonging
- Benefit from being fully immersed in an experience and learn new skills faster
- Are more likely to get a job and have greater impact to the organisation

7 organisations did not favour full-time social action over part-time social action because:

- Impact on communities is more important than the number of hours
- Legislation for full-time social action would be burdensome to organisations
- Young people are more likely to disengage if hours are full-time
- Full-time and part-time social action are both impactful dependent on individual circumstances
- Lack of compelling evidence that full-time social action has more impact than part-time social action

#### What are the barriers to full-time social action / volunteering and can you give examples of how these might be overcome?

- 16 submissions stated : Young people losing their benefits, lack of funds and National Insurance Credits contributions
- 8 submissions stated : Providers of full-time social action need more money
- 5 submissions stated : Legal complexity and reputational risk was discouraging
- Lack of flexibility, lack of accessibility, categorising full-time volunteers as NEET, time constraints and lack of awareness and understanding were all cited

#### Overcoming barriers

- 10 submissions asked for legislative change and criticised the current framework
- Increased funding and government backed programmes, more front-line staff to signpost young people to opportunities, better access for disabled young people, awareness raising and removing benefit restrictions were all popular examples

#### Should there be an expansion of full-time social action / volunteering opportunities for young people, and do you have any evidence of unmet need or demand?

- 11 organisations were in favour of an expansion
- 6 organisations were against an expansion
- 1 organisation provided evidence of unmet need

#### If you were to propose up to three things to enable more full-time social action / volunteering, what would they be?

- 10 submissions proposed : More funding for providers
- 8 submissions proposed : Government to reconsider the relationship between full-time social action and benefits
- 5 submissions proposed : A legal status for full-time volunteers
- 5 submissions proposed : Financial incentives for young people
- 3 submissions proposed : Further research into impact of full-time social action
- Improved signposting, marketing of opportunities, and flexibility were also mentioned.

## **Consultation With Young People**

Five focus groups were delivered in Sheffield, Gateshead, Devon, Birmingham and Central London. In total, 77 young people took part.

- A short survey was used to gather data from participants and provide an anonymous space to give views and opinions
- 4 of the sessions were designed and delivered by youth organisations with a professional background in participation and voice work, observed by the Secretariat
- The final session drew together full-time volunteering experts past and present and invited them to explore their vision and messages for the panel
- A digital campaign ran throughout the consultation period that posted videos on Facebook and Twitter promoting The Call for Evidence and to raise awareness of the review amongst 16-25 year olds
- Youth projects from Local Authorities, Social Enterprise, Mutuals and the Charity sector were all represented

### **Headline Figures**

- 77 young people took part in focus groups
- 61 young people completed the survey
- Videos promoting the FTSAR reached 84,544 young people
- The Call for Evidence gov.uk page had 3,180 views

### **What is the difference between social action, volunteering and work experience?**

- Social action was a familiar term to 75% of young people, but only half were able to define it
- Social action is distinct from work experience and volunteering. It is about creating lasting social change on big issues that matter to young people and their communities. It can be used to address inequalities, challenge racism, and improve women's rights. It is often personal to each young person, and that is the biggest motivating factor to getting involved.

### **The National Citizen Youth Board told the review that they sometimes felt a stigma from volunteering, and that claiming expenses was difficult:**

- There is pressure to earn money and some participants felt being involved in social action projects was not always understood by parents/carers
- Parents / carers can be supportive as long as other commitments are not negatively impacted like studying, paid employment or parenting responsibilities
- Parents / carers often don't have the time / money to support participation
- Young people often don't have the money upfront to pay for travel and food
- It can be difficult to ask for reimbursements, especially if other young people don't have to ask or it's unclear who you need to speak to.
- A small percentage of young people said their parents didn't care what they did with their time and 1 young person did not have any family or support network.
- Most young people from the full-time volunteers focus group were living independently from parents / carers and responsible for paying rent.

- Systems for claiming expenses is not always clear and can be off putting.

### **Barriers that young people face**

*\*In order of importance*

#### **Housing**

- To be able to volunteer full-time, young people need somewhere to live rent free as private renting is too expensive and it is difficult to pay parents / carers even a small amount.
- If you have social housing, you lose the tenancy if you leave the country to volunteer internationally. When you return, you don't have the money for a bond and a month's rent upfront when you get back, leaving you homeless if you do not have family members who can help.
- It is difficult if not impossible to meet your benefit claimant agreement and volunteer full-time
- Messages and decisions from work coaches are inconsistent and young people felt the benefit system was distressing and confusing to navigate.
- Young people can ask to have their claimant commitment work search hours reduced by 50% if they are volunteering - but only young people in the North East session knew about this.
- Some evidence suggested that young people are not being truthful with job coaches in order to engage in full-time social action and claim benefits.
- Some evidence suggested that young people do not have the right information and advice before agreeing to volunteer full-time, and do not know what they are entitled to.

#### **Lack of Money**

- All young people who were full-time volunteers in the UK said that that they were not motivated by money, but wanted enough to cover basic living costs (however, their expenses did not cover this). They had all asked for free benefit / financial / budgeting advice before considering full-time social action.
- Young people stated that transport was too expensive and that they did not have the upfront cost. They also commented on the lack of public transport choice between their home and their social action programme.

#### **Study Commitments and Caring Responsibilities**

- Most young people studying full-time didn't feel they had 16+ hours spare to give as they are also working part-time or searching for part-time employment. They also use their spare time for leisure activities, sport, driving lessons and hobbies.
- Young people are often committed to looking after ill / old family members, children, and themselves.

#### **Access**

- Young people identified that disability programmes are not set up to be inclusive, and that you do not get onto social action programmes if you declare mental health needs. They further stated that there is a perception that only the most academically able are recruited for programmes, and this can make young people not feeling good enough and worry about the recruitment process.

### **Key Points / Messages to inform the 'Vision' of the Panel**

- Full-time volunteers were clearly focused on getting a good job and saw social action as one of the few routes into the VCSE sector. Nearly all of them had a degree, but felt they were not worth very much without additional experience.
- Full-time social action opportunities should not be available to only the privileged, and instead young people should be means-tested as individuals, not as part of a family.
- Full-time social action routes into employment should at least cover basic living costs, and access to free budgeting advice would help reduce numbers of young people getting into financial difficulty.
- 'Voluntourism' is an issue for young people, and full-time social action opportunities need to have greater impact, led and developed by the communities they work within.
- The safeguarding of full-time volunteers needs to be prioritised over reducing costs and saving money. Some young people felt exploited by the charities they worked for and said they didn't care enough about their welfare.

### **Case Study 1**

"I volunteered full-time for a charity from October 2015-Feb 2016 before taking a fixed term contract for 2

months with the charity and then moving onto the Financial Times and the Institute of Directors. I studied a Law degree at the University of Nottingham, graduating in 2015. During my studies I wrote a dissertation on the Modern Slavery Act and whether it would reduce instances of modern slavery in the UK. When I left I decided that I wanted to contribute to the anti-trafficking efforts in the UK, so took a 6 month unpaid voluntary position with an anti-slavery charity, running a large seasonal fundraising appeal. As a positive, this volunteering served as the platform on which I have built my early career, and directly connected me in with the opportunities I have taken.

I thoroughly enjoyed my volunteering experience, in terms of the day-to-day work and the opportunities and experience I was exposed to during my time at the Charity. However, on balance, it would be a struggle to say it was worth it, by virtue of the short and long-term personal and financial repercussions. The position was unpaid and the travel expenses offered were insufficient to allow me to get to and from the office 5 days a week. Admittedly I should probably not have taken the position or looked into the possibility of flexible working: I took it anyway.

To cut a long story short, I was soft-homeless throughout my 6 months at the charity, sofa-surfing with friends, family and sleeping in the office. I ran up a significant amount of debt which has taken a long time to undo, and disconnected with family and friends. Whilst my family could and would have helped, I didn't tell them how bad things had gotten, partly because I hadn't appreciated the situation at the time and partly out of pride. A year and a half on, I have now moved into London, and have largely undone the significant debt I placed myself in during the time. I do not regret the time I spent volunteering, but would personally not recommend anyone take a voluntary position unless they have significant financial backing or they are going to be adequately supported by the charity or otherwise.”

- *Young man, aged 20*

### **Case Study 2**

“I grew up on a council estate in Bristol, in a single parent household. As I became a teenager my Mum started getting ill, eventually being diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, amongst other health problems. As she was my sole carer this meant I became a young carer. I first got into volunteering by chance at 13, when I saw a stall for the UK Youth Parliament elections in Bristol. I signed up and got elected, serving 3 years as part of UKYP. Through this time I had to look after myself for periods when my Mum was in hospital, and we were living on the breadline constantly.

The youth sector was like a second home to me. Since then I've been involved in a lot of volunteering with various charities from Save the Children to V Inspired, Youth Employment UK to Young Women's Trust. Both before, during, and after university I did different volunteering which would help me build my skills and experience for my future career, often coming up against financial obstacles, as well as the threat of losing benefits which I relied on whilst job hunting, because I was volunteering 'too much'. I've also suffered from poor mental health, after my mother died, which has been another barrier to volunteering, affecting my anxiety and confidence to varying degrees during my teenage years.”

- *Young woman, 22*

### **Case Study 3**

How FTSA helps particularly in the cases of vulnerable young people:

- Confidence building - especially self worth.
- Distractions from personal problems.
- Lets you have a sense of community which is essential in mental health recovery.
- Good part of rehabilitation.
- Gives life some structure.
- Opportunities to get professional experience you would not have had otherwise.
- Positive life experience if you've grown up with mainly bad experiences.

- Fully funding vulnerable people to volunteer, such as ICS, is much cheaper than the costs of incarcerating young people:
    - Jailing one young criminal costs the taxpayer as much as £140,000 a year, a report says today. Locking up young offenders makes them more likely to commit further crimes and be unemployed later in life, the New Economics Foundation says.
    - So three months for ICS programme is £42,500.
    - It costs £65,000 to imprison an adult in this country once police, court costs and all the other steps are taken into account.
  - It helps break the cycle of poverty.
- *Young woman, aged 21*

#### Survey Data

Male	Female	Other	*16 did not answer the question
30	30	1	

Aged 12- 14	Aged 15 - 17	Aged 18 - 20	Aged 21 +	*16 did not answer the question
6	25	11	19	

Employed	Unemployed	Full-Time Education	Full-Time Volunteer	Prefer Not To Say	*18 did not answer the question
16	5	25	9	4	

Disability	No Disability	*18 did not answer the question
8	51	

Paid Social Action	Unpaid Social Action	Not Engaged in Social Action	*17 did not answer the question
2	45	12	

## Consultation With The Sector

The Full-Time Social Action Review held three roundtables: Employment and Regulation, Economy and Cost, and Providers.

### Employment and Regulations

Key Points	Barriers For Young People	Barriers For Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current framework can be problematic for organisations</li> <li>● There is clear guidance for charities but further clarity is needed</li> <li>● National Minimum Wage legislation requires volunteers to be paid a minimum wage (£5.60p/h) if the role is considered to be the same as an employee</li> <li>● Changing the status for full-time social action requires primary legislative change</li> <li>● DWP support volunteering as long as claimants meet their job search requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Caring responsibilities</li> <li>● Lack of money to support themselves</li> <li>● Lack of interest in opportunities available</li> <li>● Lack of travel facilities</li> <li>● Lack of parental support</li> <li>● Lack of knowledge on how to navigate the system</li> <li>● Potential loss of benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grey area between expectations and obligations of what roles and responsibilities to give to full-time volunteers</li> <li>● Pressures of young people wanting full-time volunteering to directly lead towards paid employment</li> <li>● Pressure of appearing to take on full-time volunteers as 'job substitution'</li> <li>● Pressure of only attracting young people from more affluent backgrounds, and not engaging the 'hard-to-reach'</li> </ul>

### Economy and Cost

Key Points	Barriers For Young People	Barriers For Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organisations need to improve the way they monitor outcomes for young people engaging in full-time social action in order to increase participation</li> <li>● Full-time programmes should only be delivered if organisations can recruit, train and deploy young people on a large scale</li> <li>● The definition of 'full-time' should be amended to 37 hours a week, 5 days a week, in line with what people currently understand full-time employment to be</li> <li>● The language used to describe 'volunteering and social action' should be reviewed in line with young people's understandings</li> <li>● Improve how young people's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of interest in opportunities available</li> <li>● Lack of awareness of opportunities</li> <li>● Lack of parental support</li> <li>● Lack of financial support</li> <li>● Lack of knowledge on how to navigate the claimant system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Young people are not always needed by an organisation; sometimes they need money to improve facilities / delivery of programmes</li> <li>● Difficulties defining and prescribing skills based social action opportunities</li> <li>● Full-time social action programmes are expensive to deliver</li> </ul>

engagement is recognised		
<b>Providers</b>		
<b>Key Points</b>	<b>Barriers For Young People</b>	<b>Barriers For Providers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early intervention is a key factor for influencing young people to engage</li> <li>• Young people need to be supported before, during and after their volunteering experience</li> <li>• Perhaps a points based system can be introduced where young people can exchange their voluntary hours for reduced student debt</li> <li>• Perhaps a points based system can be introduced where young people can travel between voluntary organisations instead of making one longitudinal commitment to one organisation</li> <li>• Mixed views regarding changing the legal status of a full-time volunteer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time social action is not always appealing</li> <li>• Full-time social action and full-time employment are not equally valued</li> <li>• Quality of social action is sometimes more important than quantity</li> <li>• Most people describe themselves as volunteers because it is something they engage with in their spare time as opposed to a formal commitment</li> <li>• Unfair to have a young person on a paid 6 week internship (35 hours a week, 5 days a week) and a young person on an unpaid full-time social action scheme (16 hours a week for 6 months or more)</li> <li>• Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are still taking part in social action but the gap in participation seems to be narrowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations may be breaking the law when taking on full-time volunteers because of existing legislation</li> <li>• Current legal framework could cause tensions amongst paid members of staff</li> </ul>

## **Consultation With International Stakeholders**

The Full-Time Social Action Review liaised with stakeholders in America, France and Germany to explore how social action opportunities are delivered overseas. Data was gathered from an interview with a stakeholder in Germany, a written response from a stakeholder in America and France, and desk research conducted by the Secretariat.

### **America : Americorps**

- Government support for social action
- The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act was signed into law in April 2009
- Young people are provided with training in public management, first aid, CPR, public safety and disaster response prior to beginning their placement

**NCCC Programme:** Strengthen communities and develop leaders

- Young people respond to 'community needs' in each state
- Activities include: running youth development activities, assisting in constructing low-income housing, developing emergency plans, educating people on sustainability, ensuring disabled access and many others

**VISTA Programme:** Builds the capacity of an organization and enhance its ability to serve the community

- Typically, projects are capacity building rather than direct operational delivery programmes
- Approximately 8,000 VISTA members are placed in communities each year, in about 1,100 projects

#### **Full-Time**

- 10 - 12 months

#### **Rights**

- A modest living allowance
- Health benefits
- Childcare
- After completion, members can choose an Education Award, or a post-service stipend.
- Accommodation, health care, living allowances (\$4000), uniform and equipment
- Education Award of minimum \$5,730 to pay for college, graduate school or pay back qualified student loans

#### **Engaging Young people**

- A recruitment programme is used to inform young people of opportunities available to them. Teachers and employers are educated and trained in advertising and recruiting young people on a service year.

### **France : Service Civique**

- Introduced by the law on the 10th March 2010, forming part of a youth policy aimed at national cohesion and social mixing
- More than 22,000 young people have already volunteered for Service Civique

**Volontariat:** Volunteers who can receive payment for their time or actions

**Benevoles:** Volunteers who do not receive payment for their time or actions

- 25% of French 16 - 25 year olds are Benevoles
- Young people awarded a certificate after completing their mission
- A young person is neither an employee nor an intern or volunteer; when completing documentation, they must tick the box "other case", and specify their status as a volunteer in Civic Service

#### **Full-Time**

- 6 - 12 months (Average : 8 months)
- A contract must be signed prior to embarking on a Civic Service mission

#### **Rights**

- Indemnity financed by the State - €470.14 per month regardless of the weekly duration of the contract
- Host organisations provide €106.94 for subsistence, equipment, accommodation or transportation
- Compensation for sick and maternity leave
- Pension insurance
- 2 days leave per month (3 days if aged 16 - 18)
- Able to keep their housing benefits whilst volunteering (young people do not have to declare their mission to French benefits system)

#### **Engaging Young People**

- The Civic Service has a number of partners who promote the year of service on a local, national and international level by working with businesses, charities and educational institutions.

### **Germany : Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr**

- Voluntary social year is recognized as a military service
- Young people have a similar legal position as a trainee
- Young people awarded a certificate after completion of service

**Full-Time**

- 35 - 39 hours per week, minimum 6 months, maximum 24 months (average 12 months).
- A contract must be signed prior to embarking on a year of service.

**Rights**

- Travel expenses / discounts
- Accommodation is at the discretion of the organisation
- Meals are at the discretion of the organisation
- Child benefit
- Health insurance
- Social care
- Pension insurance
- Maternity leave
- 24 days holiday for 12 months service (12 days for 6 months)
- Young people can have a part-time job but allowances may be taken away / taxed
- Leisure allowance for overtime

**Engaging Young People**

- Representatives from organisations who deliver social action programmes for young people go into schools and youth hubs to advertise opportunities available.

## Government Response

### Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recognises the value of volunteering. Such activity can be particularly useful for someone who has been out of the labour market for some time and is looking to build up their confidence and their CV. The following responses to the consultation questions are in respect of volunteering activity undertaken by benefit claimants. While this consultation asks about young people, DWP's view is that people of all ages can gain from volunteering opportunities.

Engaging in voluntary work can help unemployed people on benefits to preserve, develop or enhance their work-related skills, building their confidence and motivation, whilst doing activity that benefits local communities and wider society. More generally, benefit claimants are supported by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches to address any barriers they have to finding work, such as through referrals to work experience or training. Volunteering can be beneficial in helping to develop the 'soft' employability skills sought by employers and help someone to prepare for work.

For volunteering to be recognised by DWP, a benefit recipient must be volunteering in association with an organisation or group. Volunteering is defined in benefit regulations as: "...work for an organisation the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit, or work other than for a member of the claimant's family, where no payment is received by the claimant, or the only payment due to be made to him by virtue of being so engaged is a payment in respect of any expenses reasonably incurred by him in the course of being so engaged..."

Not all claimants are required to search for work. If someone is claiming health-related benefits, volunteering will not trigger a Work Capability Assessment.

DWP policy is that any job-search requirements for those receiving benefits should not present unnecessary barriers to claimants wishing to volunteer. Benefit claimants are in no way prevented nor discouraged from volunteering. Unemployed people claiming benefits can volunteer while receiving benefits, but need to manage

combining voluntary work with other work-related activities. This gives benefit claimants the best chance of moving into sustainable work as soon as they can. Where DWP benefits are paid on the basis of unemployment, a balance must be struck between the desire to volunteer and the requirement to find work. Those who wish to commit to full-time volunteering activity must therefore decide whether they will be effectively removing themselves from the labour market and thus be ineligible to receive government support and benefits designed for jobseekers.

Unemployed people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit are required to spend a certain number of hours engaged in activity to find work. Claimants can engage in volunteering for as many hours as they like outside of these hours. In UC, claimants can have their required weekly work-search hours reduced by up to 50 per cent to accommodate voluntary work.

There are some flexibilities to benefit rules for claimants who are volunteers. People claiming benefits on the basis of unemployment are usually required to be immediately available to attend job interviews and start work. Claimants who are volunteers are permitted 48 hours' notice if attending a job interview and a week's notice before starting work. This is to give volunteers time to rearrange their commitments where it affects their availability for work. Claimants who are volunteering must also be able to attend Jobcentre interviews where required. Any income a claimant receives is taken into account when determining entitlement to benefits. However, payments of expenses incurred when engaged by charity or voluntary organisation is usually disregarded. A claimant should never be out of pocket if they decide to take up volunteering.

DWP does not collect evidence of unmet need or demand for volunteering placements. DWP has no objection to more full-time volunteering opportunities being made available.

The Department has no plans to change benefit rules in respect of claimants participating in volunteering.

### **Providers Roundtable**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Paul Buddery	Volunteering Matters
David Hedges	Volunteering Matters
Bijan Hakimian	Year Here
James Probert	City Year
Ornella Nsio	The Scouts Association
Asa Gurden	The Scouts Association
Chloe Keen	The National Trust
Emma Boggis	The Sport and Recreation Alliance
Anna Lay	Helpforce
Tristram Hooley	Careers & Enterprise Company
Martyn Lewis	Previous involvement with NCVO
Jerone Sable	NCS
James Cathcart	Previous involvement with BYC

Rahim Hassanali	International Citizen's Service, VSO International
Lyndsey Draper	International Citizen's Service, VSO International
Mairi Allan	British Red Cross
<b>Economy and Cost Roundtable</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Clair Coutinho	KPMG
Androulla Michael	Department of Health
Julia Grant	Pro Bono Economics
Anjelica Finnegan	Charity Finance Group
Danya Long	DCMS
<b>Employment and Regulations Roundtable</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Stephanie Bennion	DWP
Ben Harrison	DCMS
Jonathan Pearce	Baites Wells Braithwaites
Aysha Harwood	DfID
Anthony Karabinas	DCLG
<b>Government Responses</b>	
Department for Work and Pensions	
<b>International Engagement</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ulrich Beckers	Erasmus Plus - Germany
Mackenzie Moritz	Service Year Alliance - America
Cecile Rousseau	French Embassy - France
<b>Young People Focus Groups</b>	
Space (Devon)	
Birmingham Local Authority	

Birmingham Positive Impact
Mentoring
NCS Youth Board
Myplace Network
Youth Focus North East
British Council
City Year
<b>Call For Evidence Submissions</b>
Base 51
NHS England
Brook
Institute of Directors
Careers England
Dorset Youth Association
Community First
Community Works
YouthLink Scotland
Volunteer Police Cadets
Canal and River Trust
Banados
City Year
HFT
Youth Sports Trust
V.Inspired
National Trust

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
The Prince's Trust
National Deaf Children's Society
Leonard Cheshire Disability
St Johns Ambulance
Rathbone Training
Devon Wildlife Trust
Rosanna Reed
Girlguiding UK
The Scouts Association
Sport and Recreation Alliance
Scope
Our Bright Future
The Heritage Alliance
VSO International (ICS)
National Youth Agency
British Council
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
James Cathcart
Bolton CVS
NCS
Depaul
Norma Hornby
NCVO
Volunteering Matters
Voluntary Service Overseas
Emily Kemp

Graham Phillips	
Big Lottery Fund	
Loughborough University	
Pro Bono Economics	
NNVIA Q&A	
Name	Organisation
Linsey Winter	Volunteer Mobilisation British Red Cross
Ruth Leonard	Macmillan Cancer Support
Rosie Farrer	Spice Time Credits
Rose Evans	NACRO
Rashpal Saini	Royal College of General Practitioners
Pippa Marking,	Guide Dogs
Phoebe White	MS Society
Nikki Squelsh	National Childbirth Trust
Nikeesha Gosal	St John's Ambulance
Megan Preston	Scope
Martin Jones Louise King Duncan Tree Oonagh Aitken Christina Vlahakis	Volunteering Matters
Mark Restall	Citizens Advice
Lynne Regan	Turn to Us
Kerryn Wotton	Girlguiding UK
Jane Ide	NAVCA

Flora Nicholson	Cancer Research UK
Dame Hilary Blume	Charities Advisory Trust
Bryan Precious	Age UK
Gethyn Williams	Contact a Family
Chris Wade	Motor Neurone Disease Association