



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Government Response to the Full-Time Social Action Review for Young People

July 2018

Government Response to the Full-Time Social Action Review for Young People from Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Civil Society

Ministerial Foreword

I am grateful to all the work, time, energy and enthusiasm that Steve Holliday and the expert panel have committed to the Review of Full-Time Social Action for Young People and am pleased to respond to the report on behalf of the Government.

We know that participation in social action from a young age has a profoundly enriching effect on young people's lives. Social action enables young people to develop a range of skills and outlooks such as problem solving, cooperation, grit and resilience, empathy and an enduring sense of community¹. The 2017 National Youth Social Action Survey showed that young people who had participated in social action in the past 12 months had stronger personal networks and higher life satisfaction than those who have never done any social action. It also highlighted that young people who take part in social action experience a range of further benefits - 61% took part in more sport and exercise and 81% stated a belief of improved future job prospects.

By taking part in social action, young people are given the opportunity to discover more about themselves, their peers, their communities and the world around them while giving something back to their local areas. Social action brings communities together, fosters greater understanding between young people from different backgrounds and gives young people a stake in society.

We therefore want to increase the breadth and quality of social action opportunities available and encourage more young people to participate, give back to their communities and continue their social action journeys into adulthood.

The #iwill campaign coordinated by the charity Step Up To Serve is one of the key ways in which we will realise this ambition. Over 850 partners have pledged to support the movement and offer opportunities for young people to engage in social action. The £40 million #iwill fund, jointly funded by Government and Big Lottery Fund, is designed to provide financial backing to these aspirations and build on the commitments made.

I want to thank all the individuals and organisations that engaged with the Review consultation, especially the young people who took the time to reflect on their own experiences of participation in social action on both a full and part time basis, providing us with an invaluable evidence bank.

These young people have painted a divided picture of full-time social action opportunities. For some, full-time social action was a way of re-calibrating their futures and making positive changes to their lives and outlooks. Respondents reported that full-time social action was 'confidence building', a 'distraction from personal problems', and was a 'good part of rehabilitation'.

However, young people also highlighted the barriers that they faced when taking part or considering whether or not to take part in full-time social action opportunities.

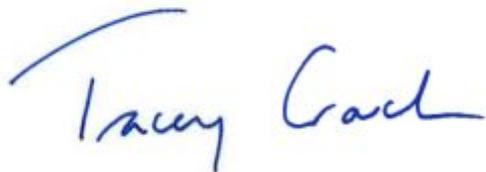
¹ <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/evaluating-youth-social-action-final-report/>

Young people cited a lack of adequate financial support to cover living costs, implications for social housing and study, and caring commitments as impediments affecting their ability and desire to take part in full-time social action.

Based on this feedback from young people, I welcome this report, which sets out a series of steps that Government, the VCSE sector and business can take to change the environment to make full-time social action opportunities more accessible and to remove the barriers discouraging participation, but has not called for large scale change at this stage.

Beyond the response here to the recommendations of the review, I will be setting out the Government's vision for social action and the role of Government in creating the right conditions to support social action to flourish as part of the forthcoming Civil Society Strategy. The Strategy will articulate a long term plan to help shape the future of the country we want to live in.

I will continue to monitor how other Government departments and organisations named in the Report follow up on the review, and remain committed to ensuring that young people from across England can take part in a continuous social action journey, a journey that may include full-time opportunities where appropriate, and develop a habit for life.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracy Crouch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

TRACEY CROUCH MP
Minister for Sport and Civil Society

Background

The Full-Time Social Action Review for Young People was formally announced in December 2016. The Review was designed to look at how to increase young people's participation in full-time social action by considering the challenges and benefits for young people and the experiences of organisations supporting them.

Steve Holliday was appointed to chair the review in March 2017, and in September, following the election, an online consultation was launched. In total, over 180 individuals and organisations were consulted and 48 pieces of evidence were submitted by the VCSE sector, businesses, young people, and youth sector stakeholders, many of whom also participated in subject-specific panel discussions and roundtable events. Roundtables were held for providers, economists, employment and regulation specialists. 77 young people took part in focus groups, 61 young people completed the survey, and videos promoting the review reached 84,544 young people.

The Review's report published in January 2018 identifies a number of barriers that young people face before, during and after their participation in full-time social action. The report highlights 'financial difficulties' as an impediment for young participants, and reflects that "*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*".

The report also states that "*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*". The Report therefore also acknowledges that more evidence is needed on the benefits and limitations of full-time social action opportunities before more ambitious recommendations to expand full-time social action programmes are developed.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Government Response
<p>Establish a Ministerial Group: To bring together the interests of all Government departments in optimising the value of full-time social action, led by your department.</p>	<p>All Government departments had a formal opportunity to contribute to this response before its publication. To keep momentum on this important issue and coordinate Government voices and policies on social action, DCMS will consider the issue of Full-Time Social Action at the cross-government Civil Society Directors group chaired by DCMS's Director of the Office for Civil Society. This group has brought together representatives from departments across Government, including the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions. This configuration of departments will lead to rich discussions and enable departments to share learning about social action initiatives. For example, the Government recognises the potential of social action to support its vision for building integrated communities, with the opportunities that social action provides enabling young people from different backgrounds to come together and mix socially through meaningful activity.</p>
<p>Work with DWP: 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.</p>	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions already recognises that volunteering can help people of all ages to develop vital skills for work and help them towards the job market. The labour market requirements linked to receiving unemployment benefits should therefore not preclude young people on benefits from volunteering. Unemployed people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit are required to spend a certain number of hours per week searching for work. Outside these hours, both types of claimants are able to spend as many hours as they would like volunteering. With other working-age benefits, there is no requirement to be</p>

	<p>available for work or search for a job, so claimants of these benefits can freely engage in volunteering for weekly durations of their choice.</p> <p>There are further flexibilities available to claimants who are engaging in volunteering activities. Individuals claiming benefits while unemployed are usually immediately required to attend job interviews and start work. However, claimants who are volunteers are permitted 48 hours' notice if attending a job interview and a week's notice before starting work. As such, claimants can rearrange their volunteering commitments and not affect their availability for work. Universal Credit claimants can also have their required weekly work-search hours (usually 35 hours) reduced by up to 50 per cent (i.e. up to 17½ hours) to accommodate voluntary work where a Jobcentre Work Coach agrees that the opportunity will improve their employment prospects. Crucially, the ability to reduce job seeking hours to accommodate volunteering is not a 'right', rather a 'discretionary flexibility' that may not be appropriate for every claimant. Work Coaches use their discretion and expertise to determine whether this flexibility would be a welcome avenue for young people looking for work and act to promote volunteering accordingly.</p> <p>DWP has a training package that work coaches can complete, as well as supporting day-to-day guidance which encompasses the above policy. All learning packages and supporting guidance products are subject to continuous improvement and regularly updated.</p> <p>The next iteration will be reviewed to enhance and strengthen messaging in line with the recommendation and this update will be cascaded to job centre staff.</p>
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<p>Work with the Department for Education: To fully understand the crucial role of full-time social action 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 full-time social action as part of the transition year initiative as proposed in the Sainsbury's Report. Such a pilot would significantly expand the evidence base for youth full-time social action in a UK context and explore the strong links between volunteering and paths into employment.</p>	<p>The Department for Education recognises the importance of youth social action. Engaging young people in social action is an important aspect of the department's Opportunity Area (OA) programme. The National Citizen Service (NCS) Trust is one of three national partners of the Opportunity Area programme. The NCS Trust has committed significant resource to increasing take up of the NCS programme in Opportunity Areas, particularly for more disadvantaged pupils who have not traditionally participated. The NCS Trust are also trialling innovative approaches to increasing participation of the hardest to reach young people and therefore increasing those young people's experiences of social action. There is also focus in the Ipswich Opportunity Area around how social action can contribute to the development of skills like confidence and resilience by supporting young people to work in a team in order to set and achieve clear goals that will benefit their community.</p> <p>The Department for Education encourages education and training providers to offer 16-18 year olds the opportunity to participate in social action as a part of their study programme, alongside qualifications, work experience, English and Maths. This broad programme aims to give young people the skills they need to progress to education at a higher level, or to employment.</p> <p>The Post-16 Skills Plan, published in July 2016, set out the Government's plans to transform technical education. In partnership with employers, new T Levels are being developed: rigorous, classroom-based technical study programmes at level 3, designed to support entry to skilled employment in technical occupations at level 3 and above. As part of these reforms, a transition offer will be developed to</p>
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	<p>ensure that as many young people as possible can complete T levels. The T Level consultation response, published in May 2018, confirmed that DfE would work with the Institute, providers and sector bodies during 2018 and consider how best to target the offer.</p>
<p>Develop an improved evidence base: As full-time social action 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 gathered by evaluating the performance of current practice and innovation across the UK. Future research should be commissioned and managed by DCMS. The obvious links between full-time social action and getting young people into work should be considered by The Big Lottery Fund when distributing dormant asset funding. The impact full-time social action 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.</p>	<p>DCMS already invests in an evaluation and evidence base on the impact of social action to build skills and change young people's lives for the better. The Learning Hub and #iwill fund bring together funders and the sector to learn about what works in youth social action and to promote collective best practice.</p> <p>The Government also recognises the importance of evidence for youth work, which is why we are making investments to build and strengthen the evidence base for open access, 'informal' youth provision. We fund the Centre for Youth Impact in its efforts to lead the thinking around the impact of work with young people and are investing £1 million in a three-year evaluation of open access youth provision through the Youth Investment Fund Learning Project, which aims to develop practical and relevant measurement approaches for open access youth services.</p> <p>DCMS will continue to monitor the evidence base on full-time social action and build up a picture of youth sector evidence as part of the Civil Society Strategy and considerations ahead of the next Spending Review.</p> <p>There may also be a possibility for organisations offering full-time social action opportunities to apply for funding from the £90m of dormant assets recently announced by DCMS, that will support disadvantaged and disengaged young people into employment. Further</p>

	<p>announcements will be made about this later this year.</p>
<p>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 '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 and provide better information, advice, guidance and support to young people during their social action journey.</p>	<p>Government recognises that Civil Society organisations play a vital role in encouraging young people to contribute to their communities. A working group consisting of sector experts named in the review and additional members has been convened to explore best practice. The aim of this discussion is to bring out issues that are distinctive to full-time social action and identify gaps both in good practice guidance and evidence. NCVO hope to conclude this initial conversation before the end of June, at which point NCVO will know what is needed, whether that is good practice/ practical guidance, training or roundtables that will be delivered later in the year. DCMS will support this activity where appropriate and commit to publishing any guidelines produced on the DCMS gov.uk pages.</p>
<p>Careers and Enterprise Company: To include full-time social action 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.</p>	<p>The Careers & Enterprise Company and Step Up to Serve are planning to work on a toolkit of interactive resources which will support Careers Leaders, Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisers to embed social action in their whole school careers plans. This will be supported by training, and disseminated throughout the network of 2,000 schools and colleges. The Careers & Enterprise Company received match funding through the #iwill Fund, a £40m fund from Government and Big Lottery Fund for youth social action. This work is due to commence in September 2018.</p>
<p>Our Asks of the Private Sector: Business in the Community (BITC) should coordinate businesses commitment and support to youth projects in their community and promote good practice e.g. bus</p>	<p>Steve Holliday is leading on the implementation of this recommendation and liaising with Business in the Community (BITC). With the support of the national employers involved in BITC's Employment & Skills Leadership Team,</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>he is working to enable culture change in businesses recruiting young people, supporting them to place less emphasis on previous work experience or specific educational qualifications, and putting more emphasis on skills, attitude and the attributes that young people develop through social action. This helps to create more demand for the skills and experience young people gain through social action. BITC's Employment & Skills Leadership Team will be asking all of their members to sign up to the principles set out in the joint recruitment guidance created by Step Up to Serve and CIPD.</p>
<p>National Citizen Service: NCS should explore the option to act as a broker and quality assurance body for full-time social action 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.</p>	<p>National Citizen Service (NCS) Trust can not take up the role of a quality assurance body for full-time social action opportunities. This would be a significant departure from the current scope of the NCS Trust. The NCS Trust was set up to deliver the NCS programme and to achieve positive outcomes for participants across its threefold mission of improved social mobility, social cohesion and civic engagement. Additional responsibility as a quality assurance body would detract from these core functions.</p> <p>NCS Trust already plays an important role in signposting its graduate network to post-programme opportunities, including opportunities to take part in full or part time social action. This encourages NCS graduates to continue to develop their skills and give back to their local communities once the original programme has concluded. NCS Trust achieves this through an online portal accessible to all NCS graduates who have completed the programme. Graduates are able to filter opportunities based on their interests and location.</p> <p>Independent evaluations also show that NCS graduates give back 6 to 7 hours more to their local communities per</p>

	<p>month than their peers who have not completed the programme, indicating that NCS plays a powerful role in encouraging young people to start and or continue their social action journeys.</p>
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