



# **NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST**

## **Business Plan**

**April 2020 - March 2021**

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 5 of the National Citizen Service Act 2017**

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National Citizen Service Trust is a not-for-profit organisation incorporated by Royal Charter and established to shape, support, champion and lead a thriving National Citizen Service. National Citizen Service Trust is registered in England and Wales with Royal Charter Body number RC000894.

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# Foreword - from the Chief Executive

I write these words in extraordinary times, with the country in national lockdown, but I also write with confidence that we will soon begin to recover and that NCS has an important role to play in a renewed focus on our country's values and togetherness.

Right now, we are all dealing with meeting the challenges of COVID-19 every day. The global pandemic has taught us valuable lessons for the future, many of which have informed this Business Plan. While the primary focus of this document is on what we want to achieve over the next year, we cannot ignore that our world has changed irrevocably and that recovering from COVID-19 is likely to be a long journey.

It's important to me to acknowledge that one thing remains constant and at the very heart of why we exist: our passionate commitment to the young people of the country. Our vision is to create a country of 'connected, confident and caring citizens where everyone feels at home'. We want to improve social cohesion by providing an opportunity for every teenager to grow and flourish, to be more confident and engaged, to feel part of our society with a lifelong commitment to being an active member of it - to be truly a national citizen.

In summer 2020, we will focus on reaching as many young people as possible digitally through our Staying Connected, Keep Doing Good and Moving Forwards initiatives, as we cannot run our usual NCS programme.

The Plan outlines our commitment to developing pilot programmes to test themes such as an arts-based variant, as well as exploring different programme lengths and participants' ages, with the aim of increasing impact, improving social mix and further reducing the cost to the taxpayer.

Working in partnership with schools, government and the wider youth sector on these pilots and the programme as a whole remains a priority, particularly as we strive to reach those young people at the margins of society, playing an important role in the government's critical levelling-up agenda.

Our recent network recommissioning has put NCS Trust on an excellent long-term footing. Our network is strong, resilient and innovative, working alongside us to ensure we continue to support young people through this challenging summer. Together we will launch physical NCS programmes again as soon as we can.

While much will change over the course of this year, our desire to make a difference will not. NCS will play its part in the recovery of our country and in helping young people find what they have lost during lockdown. We will work to give them a sense of life-long purpose and the confidence to succeed through good times and bad.

The Trust fully understands that it, like so many organisations, will need to operate under increased budgetary constraints. We lay out here our plans to deliver greater value for money and to reduce unit and operating costs without compromising programme quality. We want to reach more young people every year so they can benefit from a life-changing experience, and do so while living within our means.

This is a Business Plan with long-term ambition. We cannot be just about a one-off programme, however pivotal it may be, or about how many young people take part each year. Our long-term success will be gauged by the number of NCS alumni still actively involved in helping their communities years after their 'No We Can' summer, and by our recognition within society for the work we do.

This is my first Business Plan as CEO of NCS Trust. I have chosen to join a successful organisation, full of talented and dedicated people, committed to delivering NCS for the young people of this country. The future for the organisation is bright.

I will lead collaboratively with my Senior Leadership Team, the Board of the Trust, DCMS and all our stakeholders to deliver the very best experience for young people from all backgrounds.

NCS exists to bring people together, cross divides, build confidence and equip young people for adulthood. This Business Plan details how we plan to make this happen. Circumstances may change some of the practical ways we do it, and may indeed inspire us to do it differently, but our vision and our mission remain unchanged.



Mark Gifford, Chief Executive



# Who we are

National Citizen Service (NCS) is the country's flagship youth programme for 16-17 year olds, bringing young people from different backgrounds together at a pivotal moment in their lives, on the cusp of adulthood, with a commitment to improving social cohesion, social mobility, and civic engagement in our country.

## Our Vision

A country of connected, confident, and caring citizens where everyone feels at home.

## Our Mission

To inspire generations of citizens through a meaningful shared experience that develops character and bridges social divides.

NCS Trust is funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which, alongside our Board, holds the Trust to account for its performance. Further information about NCS and NCS Trust can be found on our website: [wearencs.com](http://wearencs.com)

The below diagram summarises the Trust's Vision, Mission, Offer and Operating Model:



## Our programme

NCS encourages social cohesion by bringing young people together in common purpose for an experience which challenges, motivates, and inspires them to celebrate difference whilst being active members of their community; in essence, to become true national citizens. During the programme, NCS participants take part in outdoor activities, meet local charities and entrepreneurs and take part in a social action project in the local community. Afterwards, NCS graduates can join Local Action Groups to continue making a positive difference in their community, and have exclusive access to a variety of work and volunteering opportunities. NCS is a unique chance for teenagers to live away from home, often for the first time, developing key life skills and building bonds with people from different backgrounds.

The main programme is typically three to four weeks long and takes place during the summer holiday. There is also a shorter two-week version of NCS in the autumn term. NCS supports communities in every part of the country, and is delivered by a family of over a hundred grassroots organisations, each with unique local expertise and a passion for expanding opportunities for young people.

## Our scale

- » Over half a million young people have now taken part in NCS.
- » Currently, around 1 in 6 of the eligible cohort of young people participates in NCS.
- » NCS is inclusive - 23% of participants are eligible for Free School Meals, compared to 14% nationally.
- » NCS is diverse - 29% of participants in 2019 were BAME, compared to 25% nationally.

## Our impact

- » NCS enables individuals to unlock their potential and is an important part of the effort to level up communities across the country, as evidenced by several studies:
  - Kantar Public and London Economics (forthcoming)<sup>1</sup> shows that every £1 spent returns £1.90 of social benefit. It showed a range of positive impacts<sup>2</sup>, including:
    - Greater confidence leading a team (+19%pts net benefit, relative to a control group of non-NCSers),
    - Improving young people's belief that they can impact the world around them (+15%pts),
    - Greater feeling of responsibility towards their local community (+15%pts),
    - Increased knowledge of how to deal with problems in their local area (+14%pts).
  - Jump x Mime (forthcoming)<sup>3</sup> find that “the combination of mixing young people from different backgrounds, alongside a core curriculum of activities focused around social and democratic engagement, has a positive impact on young people who participate in the NCS programme.” Importantly, it also shows:
    - The effect of the programme is greater for participants who start from a lower base across the majority of the measures examined - i.e. those who start with the lowest level of social engagement and cohesion travel the furthest distance as a result of attending NCS.
    - The impact of the programme is greater on key measures for a number of groups, including more vulnerable and marginalised young people - particularly female, those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled and BAME participants.

<sup>1</sup>Kantar Public, & London Economics on behalf of DCMS (forthcoming). NCS 2017 Evaluation. Note: This report is awaiting publication subject to DCMS approval

<sup>2</sup>Impact shown is for summer programme participants only

<sup>3</sup>Jump X Mime on behalf of NCS (forthcoming). In the Mix with NCS. Note: This report is awaiting publication subject to DCMS' publication of the NCS 2017 Evaluation, on which the report draws



- Laurence (2018)<sup>4</sup> showed that:
  - NCS has a positive impact on warmth towards other ethnicities, perceptions of local community cohesion, and frequency of positive social contact with people of other ethnicities.
  - There are greater impacts on those young people from more disadvantaged communities and those which have higher levels of residential segregation.
- Jump x Simetrica (2017)<sup>5</sup> showed that:
  - Participating in NCS led to higher university access rates (+4%pts) after controlling for other variables <sup>6</sup>.
  - Moreover, the impact and value of NCS participation is significantly higher for young people living in areas of low and medium entry into higher education.

- » Our NCS national citizens have contributed over 14.5 million hours of social action on NCS programmes (with over 2 million hours in 2019 alone), helping support their local communities.
- » Many alumni stay involved post-programme, doing work experience, carrying out social action projects and supporting the programme so others can benefit from the experience.
- » NCS has an ongoing impact on the number of hours young people volunteer in their communities relative to non-NCSers (+6 additional hours for NCS Summer programmes, +7 additional hours for NCS Autumn programmes)<sup>7</sup>.
- » NCS has a significant impact on young people's intention to vote, with a 9%pt increase in young people stating that they are certain to vote after completing the programme <sup>8</sup>.

## Our network

- » NCS is delivered by a diverse network, including over 120 locally embedded organisations, the majority of which are charities, football clubs, local councils or colleges.
- » This diversity is critical to our success, as we enable those organisations to use their local knowledge to deliver the most relevant and effective programme for the young people in their communities.
- » In addition to our partner network, NCS Trust works in coalition with other youth sector organisations such as the Back Youth Alliance, in order to develop a coherent voice on the needs of young people.

<sup>4</sup>Laurence, J. (2018). Meeting, Mixing, Mending - How NCS Impacts Young People's Integration. (Online) NCS. Available at <https://wearencs.com/sites/default/files/2018-10/Social%20Integration%20Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Jump x Simetrica. (2017). If you could bottle it: A wellbeing and human capital value for money analysis of the NCS 2015 programme. (Online) NCS. Available at [https://wearencs.com/sites/default/files/2018-10/NCS%20Wellbeing%20and%20Human%20Capital%20Valuation%20-%20Jump\\_0.pdf](https://wearencs.com/sites/default/files/2018-10/NCS%20Wellbeing%20and%20Human%20Capital%20Valuation%20-%20Jump_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>Variables controlled for gender, ethnicity and POLAR3 classification (the proportion of the young population that participates in higher education)

<sup>7</sup>Kantar Public, & London Economics on behalf of DCMS (forthcoming). NCS 2017 Evaluation. Note: this report is awaiting publication subject to DCMS approval

<sup>8</sup>ibid

## Case Study:



### Kai

Despite leaving secondary school at 16 with no GCSEs, hanging around with the wrong crowd and finding himself in trouble with the police, Kai, from Felling, has changed his life around.

“That summer my Mam pushed me to do NCS. Me being me I didn’t want to do it, but I’m so glad she persisted as it changed me for the better.

“It was the leaders that guided me - for the first time I felt that someone had faith in me - and the new mates I met which led me away from the dangerous route I’d been heading. We had to run our own community project and I helped raise donations for a local children’s hospital ward. It put a new perspective on life and I continued volunteering.”

Almost four years on Kai hasn’t looked back and is now employed as a seasonal staff member for NCS. As a Leader he helps participants aged 16-17 take on new challenges, build skills and give back to the community.

“If you told the 16 year old me what I’m doing now, I don’t know what they’d think!

“Although I left school with no GCSEs, I’m now a qualified level two mechanic and I’m going to Tyne Metropolitan College to do a course I will love and one which will help me continue giving back - youth work.

“I tell young people that anything is possible in life if you put your mind to it. Teenagers are often told that we can’t achieve anything, we can’t do this or that, and I think I fell into this in my younger years - but now I believe that, no we can achieve whatever we put our minds to.”



### Casey and Waj

Casey and Waj, both from Rotherham in South Yorkshire, met on the NCS programme in 2017. Despite coming from very different backgrounds, and living on opposite sides of town, they have since become firm friends.

“I’d never have met Waj were it not for NCS,” says 17-year-old Casey, who comes from a predominantly white British area of Rotherham. “We bonded during a massive hike up a mountain, and hit it off immediately.”

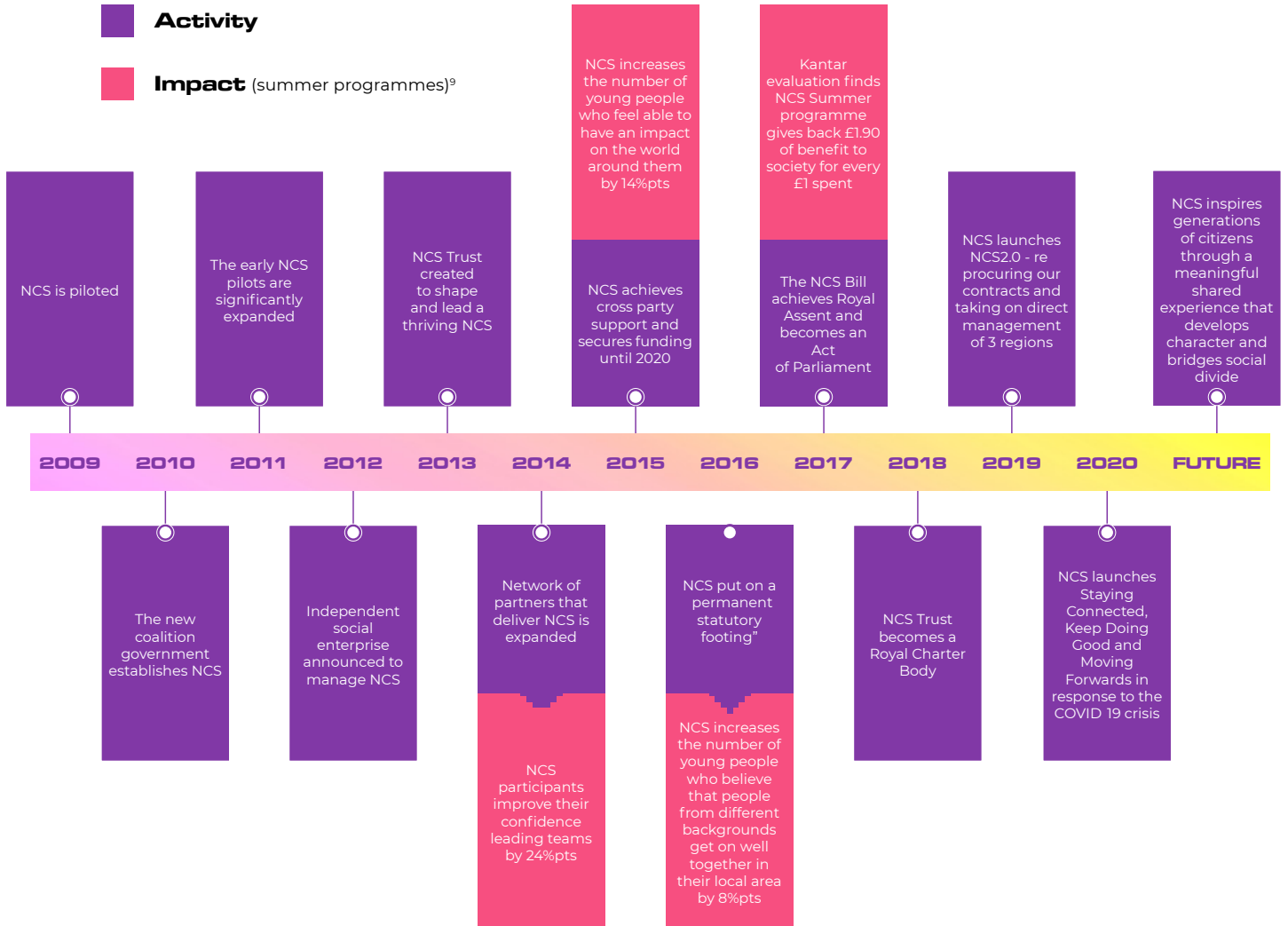
“Where I’m from, it’s not ethnically diverse,” she explains. “I’d not really interacted with people from different backgrounds, so meeting Waj was a new experience. On NCS, there are so many different groups of people, but it gives you those commonalities and talking points. For example, I didn’t know the ins and outs of what Halal meat was until I met Waj, and I remember asking her about her hijab, and whether she wears it at home.”

“I think there’s often a lack of understanding about different cultures. You don’t really learn about it in school, but being aware of and accepting other people’s cultures makes you a more rounded person.”

“To begin with, our conversation was mostly about our differences, which meant we learnt from each other,” agrees fellow NCS graduate Waj, 16. “People think difference will tear people apart, but it actually brings people closer together, and that’s powerful.”

“Integration is really important,” continues Waj. “We’re such an ethnically diverse country, so it’s great when people get to meet people from different backgrounds, like at NCS. For me, having friends from different races and religions means you get to learn different things every day. It makes you more knowledgeable and well informed. And you get to try lots of different foods!”

## Our history



<sup>9</sup>Relative to a control group of YP who did not attend NCS

## Our board



**Brett Wigdortz  
OBE**

Founder & Honorary President of Teach First and CEO of tiney.co, Chair



**Lord McNicol of  
West Kilbride**

Former General Secretary of the Labour Party



**Tristram Mayhew**

Founder, Chief Gorilla and Chairman of Go Ape



**Nddi Okezie**

CEO, UK Youth



**Dame Sally  
Coates**

NCS Trust patron and Director of Academies United Learning



**Dame Julia  
Cleverdon DCVO  
CBE**

Co-Founder and Trustee of Step Up To Serve and #iwill campaign, Chair National Literacy Trust and Trustee Careers and Enterprise Company



**Ashley  
Summerfield**

Global Leader, Board Consulting Practice, Egon Zehnder



**Paul Cleal**

Non-Executive Director and Advisor to organisations including vice-chair at Kingston University



**John Maltby**

Chairman of Good Energy Group PLC



**Ian Livingstone  
CBE**

Co-Founder of Games Workshop and Non-Executive Director of Sumo Group PLC



**Jermain Jackman**

Board's Representative to the National Youth Board

# NCS 2020 Delivery: Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting us all in a variety of ways - from essential workers taking extraordinary risks to enable our society and economy to continue, to the vulnerable who cannot see their loved ones and the young people missing school and friends. The fight against the disease is multi-faceted, and has demanded an unprecedented response. For many people, it has been profoundly isolating - never before have our social lives been so deeply impacted. We're having to be more innovative and imaginative than ever to maintain and nurture the relationships that matter to us most.

That's why it's crucial that during this challenging time NCS remains true to its vision of helping create a country of connected, confident, caring citizens. As an organisation dedicated to helping people connect and enhancing social cohesion, we are well placed to support the country to overcome the difficulties caused by social distancing and lockdown. We believe in the power of young people to help themselves and others in times of crisis, and in the power of NCS to galvanise the wider youth response to local needs.

Although our Summer 2020 programmes will sadly not be able to go ahead in the traditional format, the Trust is determined that young people don't completely miss out on their NCS experience. We would still like to create the opportunity for young people to have a summer that turns 'No You Can't' into 'No We Can'. We have therefore worked closely with DCMS to identify options to re-purpose the NCS programme to meet the needs of young people now within the limits of social distancing. There are 3 phases of our proposed plan, set out in detail below:

1. Staying Connected
2. Keep Doing Good
3. Moving Forwards

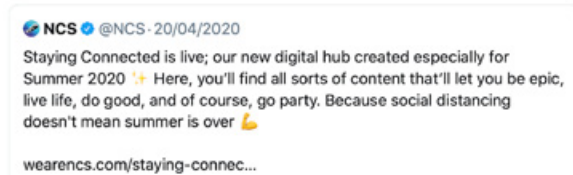
Clearly, this is a rapidly evolving situation, and it is possible that these plans will need to change over the coming months. What will not change is our commitment to our vision, and to doing whatever we can to support the young people of the UK.

## Staying Connected:

The lockdown has forced almost all organisations to experiment and innovate, finding new ways to reach their audience. Our lives have gone digital, with a greater range of services available than ever before. However, with so much content, navigating through it can be overwhelming. NCS will aim to be at the forefront of offering young people a meaningful online experience by focusing on skills and life lessons not learnt in the classroom, with opportunities for active participation throughout. Although not physically mixing, users will be part of a single national online community going through a shared experience, with the ability to listen to and learn from others across the country.

We'll deliver this through our preexisting digital channels, building on our established brand and great audience engagement. For example, a recent email from NCS Trust to NCS graduates drove over 5,000 young people to the online form to register as an NHS volunteer. The Staying Connected 'hub' is also live on the NCS website, providing a mixture of entertaining and supportive content (e.g. how to help out and be productive during lockdown, where to find mental health support) including podcasts, interactive engagement and user generated content. In the first two weeks since the launch of the hub, there have been over 50,000 unique views, with a higher average dwell time than we typically see. The content already available is being received positively by young people, as evidenced by the responses on social media we are seeing:

I am obsessing over this. It's so much better than I expected and loving the inclusivity.. @NCS, I want to thank you for all of this! It's a great collection of resources to get the young individuals thinking and giving back!



Additional content will be added over the Summer focused around the main phases of the NCS programme. This will be targeted at young people aged 13+ and available to all.

Through a comprehensive communications plan integrated across owned, earned, shared and paid channels, we will distribute the content on the hub to drive usage and active engagement amongst our target audience, and amplify the voice of young people so they can have their say in these extraordinary times.

Through the aggregation of case studies and user generated content (UGC), and the commissioning of young people as content creators for our online platforms, we will increasingly bring to the fore stories from young people that shine a light on their personal experiences, views and values. These stories will spark others to interact, engage with and understand how other young people live their lives across the nation.

Objectives:

1. To support young people and their families to adapt to a new way of living throughout the period of lockdown and social distancing.
2. To ensure that young people still get to experience a flavour of the NCS experience this summer in a safe, scalable & sustainable digital format.
3. To begin to equip young people with the necessary skills, advice and guidance to be active in their local communities and a leading force in our nation's recovery from COVID-19, when the time is right.

Measures of success:

- » Number of visits / time spent engaging with the Staying Connected hub.
- » Feedback from Young People on the content of the hub.
- » Evidence of learnings via promoting national mixing through digital content.
- » Engagement levels around interactive and UGC on the hub.

### Keep Doing Good:

Faced with such difficult circumstances, people across the country have responded by showing the depth of their compassion and kindness. Thousands of local mutual aid groups have sprung up to enable communities to support their most vulnerable members. As social distancing guidelines begin to be lifted, young people will be keen to do their bit to help get the country back on its feet, and NCS will be right by their side enabling them to do it. We will support young people who have signed up for Summer 2020, alongside NCS graduates and alumni, to mobilise as volunteers or find other ways of doing good in their communities, helping restore and rebuild our society as we begin to adapt to a new normal.

This activity will be facilitated by the existing network of NCS partners. One example is young people being supported by an NCS leader in small groups during their social action, in line with the standard NCS model. This will ensure that the youth contribution is safe and properly supported. This activity will only be launched once it is deemed clinically safe to do so, and there may be a phased approach based on specific needs or locations. The regional and local reach of NCS, embedded in national systems, will make this possible.

**Objectives:**

1. To engage young people in sustained social action to support the country's recovery post COVID-19.
2. To use the NCS network to deliver opportunities in every Local Authority area and to engage and bring together young people to support their communities.
3. To support young people to get involved now through the provision of self help advice and guidance.

**Measures of success:**

- » Number of hours of doing good through volunteering and social action.
- » Feedback from young people involved.
- » Number of and feedback from organisations benefiting from NCS activities.

**Moving Forwards:**

As social distancing lifts, there will be big questions about how we should rebuild, and what normal should look like. In order to move forwards, it will be important to reflect and to learn; NCS Autumn 2020 programmes could provide young people with the space for these reflections, as well as an opportunity to come together, learn skills for life, and help rebuild their local communities. The Moving Forwards programme will also seek to support schools wherever possible, as they help young people recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and reestablish school communities. The Trust will hope to use this period as an opportunity to wherever possible innovate and test new models of delivery, including an Arts-focused programme, depending on the extent of lifting of the lockdown by government.

Through engagement with DfE and other relevant organisations the Moving Forward programme will prioritise the most vulnerable by actively targeting young people in Opportunity Areas<sup>10</sup>, schools with a high percentage of young people receiving free schools meals (FSM) and alternative provision such as Pupil Referral Units, Special schools and provision for those not in education or training. It should be noted that this phase of activity assumes that schools and colleges are able to reopen for the academic year 2020/21.

**Objectives:**

1. Deliver a safe and meaningful NCS Autumn 2020 Programme if possible.
2. Support vulnerable young people through their return to education by identifying schools in most need of support and through the delivery of a demand based solution.
3. Ensure value for money from our network of partners, through repurposing existing payments made for Summer delivery and increasing participant numbers where possible.
4. Explore opportunities to run NCS innovation pilots.
5. Collaborate with schools and colleges to ensure they are supported to bring young people back together when they reopen.

**Measures of success:**

- » Number of NCS participants and their feedback (including number of vulnerable young people taking part and number of participants in Opportunity Areas).
- » Participant and parent/guardian NPS.
- » Ability to overcome constraints of COVID-19 to develop and deliver Autumn NCS programmes if possible.

<sup>10</sup>There are 12 Government Opportunity Areas across England; these were selected using the Social Mobility Index and Achieving Excellence Areas Index to identify areas facing a range of challenges and lacking opportunities

Each of these activity strands will be underpinned by an overarching strategy focused on 'Getting Our Voice Heard'. This will seek to amplify the recovery efforts of young people and our network of partners, enabling them to take a prominent role in the nation's response to COVID-19 and reinforcing the role that NCS plays in empowering, inspiring and getting the voices heard of a generation of national citizens ready to speak up and speak out.

Overall measures of success:

- » Customer feedback, satisfaction and engagement.
- » Proportion of the supplier network continuing to deliver NCS in 2021.
- » Delivery of measurable value for money within a considerably reduced cost envelope.
- » Improved metrics around awareness and understanding of NCS across all audiences - young people and their families, government and society at large, with an uplift in consideration and brand love measures.



# NCS 2021 Delivery: Building for the future

Although the financial year 2020/21 does not cover the Summer 2021 programmes, much of the activity undertaken in this year is to recruit and prepare for that delivery. COVID-19 has already taught us a lot, including:

- » The enormous potential for new kinds of online experiences, and ever increasing importance of digital skills.
- » The opportunity for building trust based on mutual aid.
- » The importance of local organisations in supporting their communities.
- » The inequalities in health, home environments, and job security that mean young people from disadvantaged communities have been hardest hit.
- » The need for support in bringing people and communities back together, and making the transition to recovery and the new normal.
- » The importance of innovation in delivering our vision.
- » The value of deep connection with schools to make sure we have the biggest possible impact.

The plans below assume that Summer 2021 and onwards are able to run without restrictions on physical movements, and show how we will build on both the successful launch of our new operating model (NCS 2.0) and the lessons we have learned from COVID-19.

## Strategic Pillars

The Trust's plans are based around our six strategic pillars, which together will enable us to achieve our vision of a country of caring, confident, connected citizens.

## Continued and sustainable growth

Although 2020 programmes will not go ahead in the normal format, we are aiming to reach as many young people as possible in 2021. In our first 10 years, over 500,000 young people took part in NCS. Whilst that's an impressive trajectory, we know that we have to go further to give as many young people as possible the chance to experience NCS and all it has to offer. We also need to broaden our reach to further engage young people at the margins of society, to play an important role in the government's levelling-up agenda. Future targets will be set in line with government priorities and resources.

Successes last year:

- » Refreshed the brand and communications platform, positioning ourselves as a champion of young people's ability to change the world and to have their say on a future that will be theirs.
- » Built on the success of the single website launch to develop the NCS Community, enabling young people and their families to access information about their summer programme and also to stay connected in the time of COVID-19.
- » Expanded the school coordinator pilot and worked to build deeper relationships across all schools across the education sector.

Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Capitalise on the increasing importance of our digital offering, using learnings from our digital engagement with young people in response to COVID-19, as we further develop the online NCS Community by:
  - Enabling functionality so that young people and parent/guardians can find the programme information they need online.

- Enhancing e-commerce offer to drive shift from offline to online booking journey, improving conversion levels and reducing attrition and offering a better, more seamless customer experience.
- » Use recently developed advanced analytics tools to improve retention of young people after they have signed up to the programme.
- » Improve customer journey by enabling new ways to pay (eg. Apple Pay, PayPal) and researching whether new payment structures could lead to lower attrition rates.
- » Build on the launch of the Inclusion Fund to support providers in making programmes accessible for those with additional needs, and enabling hard to reach young people to participate, whilst collaborating with organisations who are actively engaged with those young people.
- » Continue to drive our marketing activities towards behaving more like a media or platform owner ourselves, building on successes of a digital summer, podcasts and UGC.

#### Measures of success (Summer 2021):

- » Number of participants signing to up and benefitting from the NCS experience.
- » Improved conversion rates and lower levels of attrition.
- » Social mix and diversity of young people attending.
- » Improved brand metrics and enhanced brand reputation.

## Improved programme quality & impact

The changes we have had to make for 2020 delivery have encouraged us to accelerate our thinking about new ways to achieve our vision. Although social mixing and cohesion will remain core to our offer once restrictions have been lifted, we're using this time to test and innovate different models. Some of this we will carry forward, so that our programmes of the future combine the best of our traditional delivery models and the experimental approaches we are running now. Our strategy lays out objectives for broadening the programme, improving its consistency, and ensuring that opportunities to deepen our long term impact are available to all our graduates.

#### Successes last year:

- » Expanded our safeguarding policies and procedures to cover key Government concerns such as County Lines and Prevent.
- » Rolled out a national curriculum framework to ensure consistency in programme content across the country, including eight distinct core activities to be included in each programme.
- » Scaled up the number of independent quality assessments by c.50%, based on our quality framework.

#### Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Continue to put safety and safeguarding first in all programmes.
- » Pilot new programme models to broaden and deepen our impact by reaching new groups of young people, by:
  - Testing new themes, such as NCS Create, an Arts-focused programme with less emphasis on the 'outward bound' aspects of the traditional model.
  - Working closely with schools to test the potential of term time delivery models that support young people's education and enable them to take part in NCS.

- » Review how we define social cohesion and measure our impact, so that we can improve how we demonstrate positive outcomes for young people and society.
- » Continue to improve social mixing on the programme.
- » Launch and embed Local Action Groups in every Local Authority, to provide opportunities for NCS graduates to continue to drive change in their communities year round.
- » Further develop the opportunities we offer to NCS graduates.
- » Conduct a strategic review of our product portfolio, with particular focus on the role of our Autumn programmes.

Measures of success (Summer 2021):

- » Net Promoter Score (NPS.)
- » Results of quality assessments.
- » Social mix.
- » Impact survey results.<sup>11</sup>

### Lower unit cost and higher value for money

We recognise that following the unprecedented government response to COVID-19, demonstrating value for money is of even greater importance. We had already set ourselves ambitious targets to continue to reduce unit cost year on year, and we continue to look for further savings at the Trust. The renegotiation and revised design of our new contracts with our partners means that we are already paying a lower unit price, which will drive increased value for money. Our new payment mechanism also protects the taxpayer from the risk of wasted payments for unfilled places. Furthermore, we are developing partnerships that will allow us to offer high-quality content to our participants, and better value for money to the taxpayer.

Like most organisations, COVID-19 has made it very challenging to prove that every penny spent in 2020 is delivering the impact we strive for - benefitting young people. Some money was spent in preparing for an ambitious Summer 2020 programme that will not be delivered in the way we originally envisaged. However, we worked hard to minimise waste, and repurposed the programme to ensure that we are able to offer young people a valuable and meaningful experience. We will also use the learnings from this extended period of remote working to inform our future workforce strategy and drive further efficiencies.

Further information regarding our funding envelope and spending can be found on our website.

Key successes:

- » Commissioned and implemented new contracts as part of NCS 2.0, which are forecast to reduce unit cost in real terms by c.30% by 2023/24 from 2016/17 levels and will improve our ability to make a bigger impact on young people.
- » Deployed a new operating model for NCS Trust, creating a leaner delivery organisation which reduces duplication in Direct regions.
- » Centralised booking of accommodation to improve value for money, reducing costs by c.£10m.
- » Changed our payment mechanism to reduce risk to the taxpayer.
- » Launched a new pricing and promotions strategy to increase self generated income and reduce attrition.
  - Promotions targeted at driving particular behaviour (such as early purchase) rather than widespread price discounting.

<sup>11</sup>Subject to NCS Trust and DCMS joint impact review, which is looking at the methodology for 2021

#### Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Conduct a zero based review of the cost base to maximise opportunities for driving efficiency, particularly in central costs.
- » Build on the learnings from Summer 2020 and innovation plans for Autumn to test new models of NCS delivery, with a clear focus on further improving value for money.
- » Strengthen strategic partnerships through developing stronger relationships with businesses.
- » Build on engagement with the Government's Places for Growth programme to evaluate how to best meet our workforce needs, looking in particular at the potential of regional offices and remote workers to reduce cost and minimise our carbon footprint.

#### Measures of success (Summer 2021):

- » Unit cost to the taxpayer<sup>12</sup>
- » Unit cost of unfilled places

### A diverse network of high performing partners

Our ability to respond to COVID-19 and repurpose Summer 2020 NCS programmes has been driven by our diverse, locally embedded network. It's through building on their strength that we are best placed to deliver a high-quality programme to the broadest spectrum of young people. Broadening our network was a key aim of our recommissioning project, which resulted in us increasing the number of partners we have to over 120, the majority of which are charities, football clubs, local councils, and colleges. We have invested in our core systems to make sure they are well placed to deliver a great experience for young people, and will continue to roll out improvements over the next year.

#### Key successes:

- » Increased the number of partner organisations in our network, and on-boarded them for delivery in 2020.

- » Deployed the new operating model (NCS 2.0) including taking on management of three Direct regions.
- » Appointed and onboarded a new Accommodation Partner to centralise residential bookings.
- » Developed a new 'pulse' measure for checking the satisfaction of all our partners, allowing continuous improvement in the role of the Trust.
- » Established communities of practice within the NCS network to drive best practice and maximise the diversity of partners.
- » Completed the final phases of our IT system upgrade, Salesforce Next Generation, and rolled out training to ensure safe and compliant use across our network of providers.
- » Delivered the NCS Partner Portal to support our new network and share information.
- » Delivered a new dashboard to enable providers to monitor their progress on KPIs.

#### Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Ensure robust contract management of the new network, including three new Direct regions.
- » Develop and roll out further dashboards so that all partners have access to up to date, reliable data from a single source of truth that better enables them to understand and manage performance.
- » Develop and maximise the communities of practice and partner involvement.

#### Measures of success (Summer 2021):

- » Delivery partner pulse survey, which gives an indication of the Trust's contract management capability.
- » Proportion of the partner network continuing to deliver NCS.

<sup>12</sup>Note: It will only be possible to measure unit cost at the end of FY21/22

## An independent, accountable and respected national institution

The country that emerges from the current crisis will need strong national institutions to help it get back on its feet. Our ambition is for NCS to become a celebrated and loved part of British society, enabling young people of different backgrounds to meet, challenge themselves and engage with their local communities.

This is more important than ever, as COVID-19 has begun to spark conversations around what is important to us as a society. NCS will seek to be a prominent voice in defining what a strong civil society should look like for the future, working closely with others from the youth sector. The NCS Act of 2017, and our Royal Charter Body (RCB) status, ensure that we are transparent, independent and accountable - and, through this, better placed to serve the country.

Furthermore, NCS Trust is committed to championing the voices of young people and making the organisation truly youth powered. NCS graduates have been involved in helping to shape our re-purposed Summer 2020 and will continue to be engaged as we further develop plans for 2021.

Key successes:

- » Embedding the new RCB Chair and Board, which entailed:
  - Rolling out the agreed corporate governance framework ensuring the four main Committees deliver appropriate Board oversight of key business drivers.
  - First Board Strategy Day held in Liverpool, delivering guidance on long-term strategic aims and key measures of programme impact for consideration within government policy.
- » Improving external governance processes with DCMS, working more closely and collaboratively on projects such as NCS 2.0.
- » Embedded the process and transparency changes required by our new RCB status.

- » Worked with other youth sector organisations in bringing the Government's Back Youth plans to life.
- » Designed and implemented a brand tracker, enabling us to measure and act on public awareness and sentiment.
- » Launched a podcast written, produced, and recorded by young people.

Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Use the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review to ensure that we are aligned with DCMS and that we are delivering on the government's priorities.
  - » Conduct a governance review, embed a stronger governance regime and implement a revised risk management and mitigation approach, in order to ensure NCS Trust meets all necessary external governance requirements and standards.
  - » Attract and appoint replacement Board members as part of succession plans.
  - » Continue to work in collaboration with the Back Youth Alliance to further develop a universal youth offer, which responds to the needs arising from COVID-19.
    - Provide research and analytical support to BYA members, on issues such as the impact of COVID-19 on young people.
  - » Review and refresh NCS approach to data protection.
  - » Improve engagement with young people, including NCS graduates, to continue building a youth movement and help make NCS more youth powered, for example by improving how our Youth Boards work with our executive and operational teams.
- Measures of success:
- » Public sentiment metric.
  - » Feedback from key stakeholders.

## Organisational health

Working through the COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous strain on millions of people. The Trust recognised that we had to put our people front and centre of everything we did in response. From launching a buddy scheme to combat isolation, to allowing employees to donate annual leave to those more in need, we supported our people through these difficult times and saw their resilience and determination shine through. As the Trust grows and matures, it is imperative that we build and protect a culture that supports our people to develop and do their best work for NCS. We are also focusing on building first class governance, to improve our decision making and make sure we have a robust and consistent attitude to risk.

Key successes:

- » Welcomed our new CEO and strengthened our Senior Leadership Team.
- » Implemented a new operating model in order to run three Direct regions.
- » Upgraded our systems and processes to enable full participation and inclusion of remote workers and other offices.
- » Maintained strong focus on health and wellbeing whilst successfully moving to full remote working in response to COVID-19, by:
  - Launching a holiday donation scheme to enable employees to share annual leave with those more in need.
  - Supporting teams and individuals through new forms of connection, including a buddy scheme.
- » Ensured that the new brand came to life across the Trust, embedding a 'No We Can' culture.

Key activities in 2020/21:

- » Improve our internal governance to enable better decision making, and to deliver continued improvements in performance.
- » Embed a more robust and consistent attitude to risk across the organisation; enhancing our strategy and defining our risk appetite.
- » Build on the work we've done defining our values to better embed them in the Trust.
- » Design and deliver key interventions as part of embedding NCS culture - including:
  - Developing a stronger career framework to support key talent and drive performance.
  - Ensuring the organisation is responsive to our employees' views by establishing an employee voice forum and relaunching our People Survey.

Measures of success:

- » Assessing performance based on a sense of overall organisational health.
- » NCS people survey results.
- » External feedback from stakeholders.