



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport



# National Citizen Service

**Guidance for Local Authorities**

**October 2017**

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## **Summary**

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport. It has been produced to help local authorities to embed NCS into local areas and increase the number of young people from all backgrounds and circumstances taking part in the programme.

## **Expiry or review date**

This guidance will be reviewed before October 2018.

## **Who is this publication for?**

This guidance is a guide for local authorities in England. Where appropriate, a combined authority may use this document to provide a strategic view of NCS in their area.

## **Main points**

This document sets out seven key actions for local authorities to take which can help young people get involved in NCS. This guidance covers each recommendation in more detail, and offers case studies and reflections from local authorities to illustrate how each of these actions can increase NCS take up.

# Executive Summary

[National Citizen Service](#) (NCS) is a part-residential youth programme that builds the skills and confidence of young people. NCS is founded on the three key principles of social cohesion, civic engagement and social mobility.

NCS is something that every young person should have the chance to do, regardless of circumstances or any additional needs they may have. Independent DCMS-commissioned annual surveys of NCS participants consistently show the positive impact of the programme on young people<sup>1</sup>. Local authorities have rich networks and a deep understanding of their areas. That is why the government is asking local authorities to help ensure more young people sign up for this life-changing experience.

The recommendations set out in this document follow detailed consultation with local authorities, youth workers, NCS providers, and young people – but are not designed to be exhaustive. Your NCS provider will always work with you to make sure NCS is delivering the best outcomes for your area in a way that is right for you.

NCS Trust is also working with local authorities in six of the Government's social mobility Opportunity Areas, with the support of the National Youth Agency, to test and develop models by which to ensure the most effective ways for NCS providers and local authorities can engage to support each others' priorities. NCS Trust will share the insights from this innovation project with the local government community.

This document recommends the following actions to ensure young people in your area get involved with NCS:

1. **Assign a responsible officer for NCS** – we recommend that every local authority identifies a senior designated officer to lead on NCS and act as the main point of contact for the NCS provider locally.
2. **Get to know your NCS provider** – we recommend that the local authority's NCS lead arranges a meeting with the local NCS provider(s) to discuss ways to maximise the impact of NCS in your area. This meeting will ensure that the provider understands the local landscape and the needs of the community. Please email [policy@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:policy@ncstrust.co.uk) to be put in touch with your local NCS delivery partner.
3. **Establish local priorities with your NCS provider** – every NCS participant undertakes 30-60 hours planning and delivering social action projects, which represents a significant potential investment in local areas. Many local authorities

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<http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/sites/default/files/NCS%202013%20YO%20Evaluation%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>  
<http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

work alongside NCS providers to direct this extra resource towards activities that their community needs most.

4. **Connect your NCS provider(s) with local stakeholders** – local authorities may wish to involve local community and voluntary sector partners, business leaders, and the wider education landscape in NCS locally.
5. **Promote NCS to all young people** – local authorities have relationships with young people who may benefit from participating in NCS. Local authorities can help to raise awareness of NCS to young people with disabilities, and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
6. **Include NCS in your local strategies** – this guidance focuses on how NCS can support the strategic priorities of your local authority. Some local authorities have chosen to formalise this by embedding NCS in their corporate strategies.

This guidance document covers each of these recommendations in full.

For more information, please email [policy@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:policy@ncstrust.co.uk).

# Introduction

“NCS changed my life from the moment I got on the bus. It gave me the opportunity to recognise who I really was. I no longer doubt myself or what I’m capable of.”

**Keely, NCS graduate, Telford**

## What is NCS?

[National Citizen Service](#) (NCS) is a youth programme available to 15-17 year olds in England<sup>2</sup>. NCS is founded on three key principles:

1. **Social cohesion:** bringing our country together by building stronger communities and fostering understanding between young people of all backgrounds.
2. **Social mobility:** building essential skills for life and work, investing in our country’s future talent
3. **Civic engagement:** engaging young people in social action in their communities and the democratic process, building their understanding of their role as citizens.

Young people work in diverse teams, take part in outdoor adventure activities, learn life skills and contribute to their community. So far, over 375,000 teenagers have taken part in NCS.

NCS summer programmes typically last for four weeks, two of which are delivered on a residential basis. Autumn and spring programme delivery employs a shorter version of NCS.

The NCS Trust is responsible for the delivery of NCS. Local knowledge is integral to the success of the programme: the NCS ecosystem includes over 300 organisations, mainly from the public and voluntary sectors.

NCS is a life-changing opportunity that can complement your local youth provision. The programme can build upon earlier youth activities and supports the wider youth social action journey for all 10-20 year olds under Step Up to Serve's #iwill campaign.

NCS subscribes to the core set of principles of youth social action set out by the #iwill campaign to make sure opportunities are youth-led, challenging, have a positive social impact, allow progression to other programmes, is embedded to develop a habit for life

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<sup>2</sup> Age eligibility differs by NCS season. Young people aged 16 or 17 on 31 August can take part in that year’s summer or autumn programmes (with the proviso that they do not turn 18 during any residential component of the autumn programme). Exceptions are in place for young people with disabilities, who may be able to access programmes to the age of 25.

and is reflective in how young people recognise their achievements. Social action not only helps young people to develop important life skills but it also helps to build stronger communities.

For a full breakdown of the activities NCS involves, see Annex A. Effective safeguarding is paramount on NCS – for a fuller picture, see Annex C.

## Why should your local authority get involved?

### NCS delivers for our communities

- Local authorities are key partners for NCS – you have the opportunity to shape how NCS works in your area.
- Every place on NCS represents a significant financial investment in your local area, and communities should feel the benefit of that investment as well as the participants.
- NCS graduates give back an average of up to seven hours more than non-participants to their communities each month<sup>3</sup>, building community capacity to address the issues that matter locally. Many NCS graduates go on to take up other opportunities for young people in their area.
- Local authorities can direct NCS volunteer efforts towards issues that matter to you. All NCS social action projects are youth-led and driven by the participants' interests. On NCS, participants should gain a genuine understanding of what their area needs, and many choose to design a social action project which responds to that.

### NCS provides practical skills for employment and life

- NCS gives young people a chance to develop the skills crucial in today's competitive job market, such as leadership, team building and problem solving.
- 7 in 10 NCS graduates feel more confident about getting a job as a result of NCS.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 4 hours per month per 2015 NCS Evaluation,  
<http://www.ncsy.es.co.uk/sites/default/files/NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>. 6.9  
hours per month per 2013 "One Year On" Evaluation  
<http://www.ncsy.es.co.uk/sites/default/files/NCS%202013%20One%20Year%20On%20Evaluation.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ncsy.es.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

- UCAS recognises NCS as something that students can include in their personal statement when applying to university.<sup>5</sup>

## **NCS is inclusive**

- NCS aims to be for young people of all backgrounds and circumstances.
- NCS is available to young people with additional needs – whether they are disabled, have Special Educational Needs, are financially disadvantaged, are young carers, are Looked After Children, speak English as an Additional Language, have been excluded from mainstream education, have a history of offending or require support to manage their behaviour<sup>6</sup>. Improving access to NCS is an area NCS constantly seeks to improve in, and engagement in ideas for ways to improve the number of young people with additional needs who can benefit from NCS are always welcome for discussion
- NCS brings young people together from all walks of life. 8 in 10 teenagers finished NCS feeling more positive about people from different backgrounds.<sup>7</sup>
- NCS attracts a greater percentage of young people eligible for Free School Meals and those from BAME backgrounds relative to the proportion of young people from those groups in the general population<sup>8</sup>.
- Independent evaluation demonstrates that many of the positive impacts accrue even more strongly for more young people who are eligible for Free School Meals.<sup>9</sup> A growing number of local authorities view the programme as an excellent resource for their more vulnerable young people, including those who have contracts as NCS Local Delivery Partners to enable them to directly cater for these groups .

## **NCS helps young people transition into adulthood**

- NCS gives young people a taste of living away from home. NCS can support young people with their transition into work or further education.
- NCS programmes improved participants' confidence in leading a team, meeting new people, and explaining their ideas clearly, and practical life skills, such as getting things done on time and managing money.

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<sup>5</sup> Link to website: <https://qips.ucas.com/eip/national-citizen-service-ncs>.

<sup>6</sup> Additional support needs of participants may be assessed in advance of signing up to the programme. Your local provider can advise on support arrangements in your area.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ncsyas.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/National-Citizen-Service.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ncsyas.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>



- NCS programmes also have a positive impact on plans to study for a degree or other higher education qualification.
- NCS programmes have an impact on at least two of the four ONS wellbeing measures, improving life satisfaction and having a positive impact on feelings of anxiety.

### **No cost to you**

- There is no financial cost to local authorities or schools that get involved with NCS.
- The programme is backed by the government, so participants never pay more than £50 to take part. Financial support is available for those unable to meet the cost.
- NCS 2016 participation data shows that 17% of NCS participants were eligible for Free School Meals compared to 8% of the general population.

“For me, the thing that sets NCS apart from other programmes is the social mixing it delivers. I’m a key worker for young people in the care system, and I have been referring some of the young people I work with on to NCS.

A lot of people are judged and stereotyped, but on NCS people from all different backgrounds are thrown together and those barriers get broken down. I’ve seen the young people I’ve referred graduating with more self-confidence, more independence, and an understanding of where people come from.”

**Barry Clark, Key Worker, London**

## **How to get involved with NCS?**

Every young person should have the chance to do NCS. Dozens of local authorities across the country are already engaging with NCS, whether as NCS providers, or by including NCS in local strategies. Alongside this Guidance, NCS Trust has published a number of case studies of excellent local authority engagement with NCS. This document sets out ways to maximise the benefits of NCS for your area.

The subsequent recommendations follow detailed consultation with local authorities, youth workers, NCS providers, and young people. However, they are not exhaustive. Your NCS provider will work with you to make sure NCS is delivering the best outcomes for your area.

NCS Trust is also working with local authorities in six of the Government's social mobility Opportunity Areas, with the support of the National Youth Agency, to test and develop models by which to ensure the most effective ways for NCS providers and local authorities can engage to support each others' priorities. NCS Trust will share the insights from this innovation project with the local government community.

To find out which NCS provider is local to you, please email [policy@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:policy@ncstrust.co.uk).

"We realise most local authorities do not deliver NCS like we do in Oxfordshire, but some things we are doing in as both a Council and an NCS provider are transferable to any local authority. Our top recommendations are:

**Raise the profile and understanding of the local offer of NCS** to embed it in the thinking of everyone who has a role in supporting young people and strengthening communities.

**Take a single system view of vulnerable young people** to connect and join services as a pathway of support. NCS can be an important contributor to strategic youth policy and intervention priorities.

**Information and connection with the local social care system** so they are well informed about the local NCS offer and opportunities. The resulting proactivity of social workers can lead to appropriate referrals in to NCS and relevant support during NCS participation as well as ongoing support post NCS.

**Recognise NCS as a PR and good news story** for local authorities. The profile of Oxfordshire County Council and how it is perceived by its customers has improved through both the parent and young people's good experiences of NCS."

**Ruth Ashwell, Early Intervention Service, Oxfordshire County Council**

## 1 Assign a responsible officer for NCS

- 1.1 We recommend that every local authority identifies a senior designated officer to lead on NCS. It is up to local authorities to identify the most appropriate person, but we recommend that the NCS lead should be Assistant Director level or above, and may have wider responsibility for youth opportunities in your area.
- 1.2 The NCS lead should use this document as a guide for maximising the impact of NCS in your local area.
- 1.3 Once a lead for NCS has been identified, please inform the NCS Trust by emailing the Trust's Policy Team on [policy@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:policy@ncstrust.co.uk). This will enable the NCS Trust to support and communicate with you.

## 2 Get to know your NCS provider(s)

- 2.1 We recommend that the NCS lead arranges a meeting with the local NCS provider(s) to discuss ways to maximise the benefit of NCS in your area. This meeting will ensure that the provider understands the local landscape and the needs of the community.
- 2.2 The subsequent recommendations in this document should be used to inform the discussion in the strategy meeting.
- 2.3 To better understand your area's current levels of NCS participation, you can use the tool found here: <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/ncs-in-your-school> on the NCS website. The tool allows you to view data on NCS participation in individual schools, as well as schools across the country.

## 3 Establish local priorities with your NCS provider

- 3.1 NCS providers equip young people with an understanding of their local community. As a result, many NCS groups design a social action project which responds to the needs of their community.
- 3.2 Every NCS participant undertakes 30 hours of social action time, which represents a significant potential investment in local areas. Many local authorities are working strategically alongside NCS providers to direct this extra resource towards activities that their community needs most. Doing so fosters a sense of agency and belonging amongst NCS participants.

### Proposing social action projects

- 3.3 Local authorities can work with NCS providers to put forward suggestions for social action projects for NCS participants to deliver as part of their programme.
- 3.4 We recommend that departments with responsibility for the following may be involved in this process (note: this is not an exhaustive list; needs will vary across Local Authorities):
  - Communities;

- Volunteering;
- Youth services;
- Children and young people;
- School improvement;
- Adult social care;
- Cultural services;
- Contingency planning;
- Healthcare;
- Leisure and recreational services.

“Last year in Barnsley Council, we began thinking about how our Stronger Communities Department could improve the impact of NCS social action projects in the borough.

We began to engage with our NCS provider earlier in the cycle to ensure that our local statutory and voluntary partners could be more involved in the programme. This early engagement helped ensure that the NCS social action projects were really positive for NCS participants *and* were responding to what our community needs.

A successful meeting with our local NCS provider resulted in each of Barnsley’s ward alliances pledging to come up with an idea for an NCS social action project in their area.

These pledges led to diverse social action projects being undertaken by NCS’ers this summer – from an intergenerational gardening project in a Sheltered Housing Complex to turning derelict land into a picnic area on the Trans Pennine Trail. These great projects introduced many young people to the concept of service, and we feel NCS is a great foundation for growing that culture of service.

One of the council’s Key Performance Indicators is to establish 50 new volunteers per ward – a really challenging ambition. Linking this to NCS has made it far more achievable. This summer, 285 young people across the borough dedicated 8,550 hours of volunteering towards important causes.

We are delighted to have NCS and see that young people in Barnsley are now directly contributing to the delivery of Council and local community priorities.”

**Joe Micheli, Stronger Barnsley Locality Manager, Barnsley Council**

## 4 Connect your NCS provider with local stakeholders

4.1 Local authorities know their areas best and which stakeholders will be most relevant to involve. There are three broad groups that we would recommend connecting your NCS provider with:

1. Community and voluntary sector partners
2. Local business leaders
3. The wider education landscape

4.2 Suggested methods of making these connections include:

- Hosting a seasonal roundtable event, inviting relevant parties and your NCS provider;
- Inviting your NCS provider to existing community forums that you host;
- Introducing NCS providers to stakeholders by email;
- Communicating the benefits of NCS to local stakeholders

### 1. Linking to community partners

4.3 The benefits of NCS social action do not end after the 3-4 week programme. Rather, NCS is just the start of a wider social action journey. NCS evaluations show that NCS graduates feel more able to make a difference to the world around them and at least two-thirds of participants said they were more likely to help out in their local area.<sup>10</sup>

4.4 Working to create connections between your local NCS provider and local charities, youth organisations and business partners should result in:

- Community and voluntary organisations inputting on NCS social action projects;
- Follow-on volunteering opportunities for NCS graduates.

4.5 We recommend making links between your local NCS provider and:

- The Council for Voluntary Service;
- The Volunteer Bureau;
- The Youth council;

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ncsyoes.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

- Faith groups;
- Schools, multi-academy trusts, further education colleges;
- Health services and providers;
- Fire and Police forces;
- The military;
- Local Resilience Forums;
- Libraries;
- Your local housing association;
- Inclusion charities (such as mental health services);
- Appropriate outward-bound delivery sites in your area.

In many areas, there are existing fora involving such groups with which local NCS representatives can be engaged.

“In Essex County Council Youth Service we don’t consider NCS a four-week programme: it is part of a wider development journey for young people. The strength of the relationships we have with the community enables us to ensure that NCS kick-starts more volunteering opportunities for the young people who take part, and empowers them to become more active in supporting their communities.

At Essex County Council, innovative Youth Service is based around developing and sustaining volunteering opportunities and building community capacity, as well as encouraging and supporting young people to deliver their own provision.

NCS fits naturally into this approach. Therefore, we have designed a diverse NCS follow-on: our Young Volunteer Programme. This programme is aimed at training young people in basic youth work skills so they are able to sustain their social action by volunteering for a variety of community-based provision across Essex.

Because of NCS and the Young Volunteer Programme citizens are delivering for other citizens’ programmes and activities that are meeting the priorities that young people across Essex have identified.”

**Tracey Spear, Youth Work Commissioner, Essex County Council**

## 2. Connect your NCS provider with local business partners

4.6 We recommend linking your NCS provider with local businesses, who may be able to offer work placements and/or training opportunities to NCS graduates. Business people may be able to offer skills workshops during the NCS programme. Creating these links may be of particular interest to local authority teams with responsibility for Economic Development and Employability Skills and Strategy.

4.7 In order to promote the benefits of NCS, we recommend connecting your local NCS provider with:

- Local businesses leaders;
- Careers and Enterprise Company’s Enterprise Advisers
- A Business Connector or your local Business in the Community representative;
- Local Enterprise Partnerships;
- Chambers of Commerce.

### 3. Connect your NCS provider with the wider education landscape

- 4.8 The majority of young people first hear about NCS through their school or college. Providers undertake regular school visits to inform students about the opportunity of NCS.
- 4.9 Local authorities can ensure that your NCS provider has a complete list of the schools, colleges and alternative provision in your area.
- 4.10 Local authorities have a significant role to play in helping NCS providers to access schools not currently engaged with NCS. We recommend that local authorities work alongside NCS providers to promote and embed NCS within maintained schools, academies, colleges, training providers, alternative provision and Special Educational Needs Schools.
- 4.11 Local authorities can facilitate introductions between NCS providers and key decision making bodies, such as Head Teacher forums, the Regional Schools' Commission, Multi-Academy Trusts, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and other school forums.
- 4.12 A separate guidance document has been published alongside this document, intended for schools. Please refer to [include link to schools guidance]

"In Salford, we believe that the local authority has a critical role to play in making sure every young person has the chance to take part in and benefit from NCS. This year, we have begun work across council teams to make this happen.

Our Raising Participation team has identified the period between leaving school and starting college as a risk point for young people in danger of becoming NEET. The summer NCS programme, which develops young people's confidence and motivation can help avoid young people becoming NEET. We recognise the importance of softer skills in helping young people to become active citizens. Plus, the personal development, skills and experience gained on NCS can help feed into vocational study programmes.

NCS is an accelerated period of learning for young people – it leaves them really motivated to do more. We are now thinking about how we can capitalise on that motivation and sustain it after NCS. We have an excellent understanding of the issues in our city, and we would love young people to keep tackling these through continued social action projects – a legacy for the participants and for the community."

**Tim Rumley, Senior Youth Work Manager, Integrated Youth Support Services and Jack Loughlin, Head of 14-19/ Raising Participation, Salford City Council**



## 5 Promote NCS to all young people

- 5.1 Schools mix is central to NCS and great care is taken to ensure that, wherever possible, young people of all backgrounds and circumstance are able to take part in the programme. This includes those with additional needs – whether they are disabled, have Special Educational Needs, are financially disadvantaged, are young carers, are Looked After Children, speak English as an Additional Language, have been excluded from mainstream education, have a history of offending or require support to manage their behaviour.<sup>11</sup>
- 5.2 Your local NCS provider(s) will be able to explain in detail the arrangements in place to support young people with additional needs to take part. NCS has funding to provide support to ensure no young person misses out on this opportunity.
- 5.3 NCS improves young people’s confidence and resilience. The independent evaluation shows that these impacts are greater for young people who are eligible for free school meals compared to the general cohort.<sup>12</sup>
- 5.4 Local authorities have information about young people who may benefit from participating in NCS. These young people may be disadvantaged, disabled, isolated or vulnerable. Local authorities can help to raise awareness of NCS to those individuals supporting these young people.

### Connect your NCS provider with frontline teams

- 5.5 Local authorities may introduce NCS providers to relevant frontline teams. The teams may then give the provider the opportunity to promote NCS to the cohorts of young people with additional needs that they are responsible for. This may take the form of attending existing forums or setting up specific NCS meetings.
- 5.6 The following list is not exhaustive, but a starting point on the types of teams authorities may wish to consider linking up with local NCS teams. Teams responsible for:
- Looked After Children and Leaving Care Teams;
  - Social Work teams who are responsible for young people who are designated a Child in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan;
  - Teams with responsibility for Personal Budgets/information on young people with disabilities;

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<sup>11</sup> Additional support needs of participants may be assessed in advance of signing up to the programme. Contact your local provider to understand support arrangements in your area.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

- Independent Reviewing Officers;
- Local Authority and/or commissioned youth provision;
- Virtual Schools;
- Troubled Families teams;
- Early Help teams;
- Local Authority and/ or commissioned support for young carers;
- Youth Offending Teams;
- Specialist Alternative Provision, such as Pupil Referral Units;
- Special schools;
- Inclusion Advisers;
- Educational Psychologists;
- EHC (Education Health Care) Plan Teams;
- School Attendance Teams;
- Local Authority and/ or commissioned Careers Advisers and NEET Adviser Teams;
- Apprenticeship Teams.

“The core purpose of our Virtual School is to close the attainment gap between Looked After Children and their peers. We feel strongly that an important aspect of being able to make progress academically is focusing on the wellbeing and resilience of the children in our care. Without a doubt, NCS has helped us meet these objectives.

After hearing about NCS from our local provider, we asked our social workers, career advisers and designated teachers to promote NCS, and work with our NCS provider to recruit our young people on to the programme. For us, having the support of a local provider was key to getting our young people involved.

We chose to focus on trying to recruit our most vulnerable, most disaffected young people to NCS. I know of one young person in particular who has been transformed by his time on NCS. He was permanently excluded in year 11, and now NCS has given him far more confidence in himself. He knows he deserves a future, and he is now starting college in September.

2016 was the first year we’ve been involved with NCS, and 17 of our Looked After Children took part. Next year, we hope to identify even more children in the Virtual School to take part in NCS.”

**Deena Moorey, Senior Education Adviser, The Virtual School for Children in Care, Warwickshire County Council**

“As a Youth Offending Service, we work with young people whose lives are chaotic and who need a lot of support – you can’t simply ask one of our young people to sign up to a programme and expect them to turn up. Our NCS provider understood this completely.

We referred a young person to NCS, and he was assigned an NCS mentor to support him throughout the programme. His mentor worked closely with his case worker in advance to properly prepare him for the programme. It was this joint working that meant the programme was a success for this young man. He has since completed his referral order, and spoke about how NCS helped him. This is remarkable turnaround for a young man who was having a very difficult time and not engaging whatsoever before.

Not only is NCS a great programme, but it is free of cost to us, and it can be made to work for young people in the Youth Offending Service – this is something we rarely see, and we intend to make the most of it in the future.”

**Kathy Walker, Youth Offending Service Manager, Achieving for Children, Kingston**

## 6 Include NCS in your local strategies

6.1 This guidance focuses on how NCS can support the strategic priorities of your local authority. Some local authorities have chosen to formalise this by embedding NCS in their corporate strategies.

6.2 You may wish to include NCS in the following local strategies:

- Children and Young People Plans;
- Youth Strategy;
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy (and Board);
- Employability and Skills Strategy;
- 16-19 Strategy/Participation post-16;
- Early Help strategy;
- Strategic commissioning priorities;
- Communities and volunteering strategy;
- Social Value policy.

"Promoting NCS is a tough challenge in some parts of Redcar & Cleveland. Where parents and children share high aspirations within the family setting, getting young people to say 'yes' to the NCS is not that hard. But many families, for a whole host of reasons, do not have the same level of aspiration, and simply providing opportunities for young people to take part is not enough. For these young people, we have to try harder, to keep hitting home the message about how good NCS is, and how much fun, and how life-changing it can be for young people.

Determined to boost take-up, our Council has brought together officials covering a range of functions and services to ensure a strategic approach. These are a few of the things that we think have really made a difference:

- A committed lead officer covering Schools, Careers Guidance, and NEETs Teams, able to champion the merits of NCS when in front of head teachers, as well as to draw in services for those young people not in the mainstream
- Using the Council's existing communications and marketing at a corporate level to get the message out everywhere – including the Council magazine delivered to every home in the Borough
- Joint sponsorship, with NCS North East, of a Record of Achievement for all Year 11 pupils in the Borough

In the last 12 months, we have seen the impact of this joined-up approach, with a doubling of the size of the Summer and Autumn cohorts between 2015 and 2016, including young people on Free School Meals, Looked After Children and those with Special Educational Needs. With NCS Graduates now becoming Ambassadors when back in school, the NCS brand is now more visible than ever, and all our secondary schools are now actively engaged with NCS. We aim to fully embed NCS in Redcar & Cleveland so it becomes a normal part of growing up for all young people in our area."

**Cllr Sue Jeffrey, Leader of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council**

# Guidance for Schools and Colleges

- This guidance document should be used in parallel with the NCS guidance for schools and colleges.
- This guidance will be published shortly and available on the Department for Education website.

## Future plans

### Place-based approach

In delivering its mission, NCS already engages hundreds of local partners at every stage of its programme. The NCS Trust wants to do more to work with local areas to ensure that growth is sustainable and inclusive.

The aims of the locality approach are:

- to ensure that the benefits of NCS can be accessed by all communities in society, enabling the majority of eligible young people in each local area to participate in NCS
- to ensure that NCS is able to work with and support the widest possible range of organisations in all communities
- to ensure that NCS fully understands the needs of all parts of the communities it seeks to serve, and can align its programmes sensitively to those needs

Success of the locality approach will be assessed against the progress made in delivering the following objectives:

- 1) To increase the extent to which NCS participants mirror the make-up of the target population within their locality.
- 2) To increase the engagement of local organisations with the NCS
- 3) To increase awareness of NCS within local communities, particularly those under-represented amongst NCS participants
- 4) To increase the social impact of and contribution to local areas of NCS

For more information, please email [policy@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:policy@ncstrust.co.uk).

## Annex A: Structure of the NCS programme

NCS is a part-residential experience focused around fun and discovery, with 30-60 hours committed to a local community project. Young people work in diverse teams of 12 to 15, building skills for work and life, taking on exciting challenges, making new friends, and contributing to their community.

The programme largely runs outside term time, with most young people taking part in the summer holidays after GCSEs finish.

All NCS programmes have three phases, detailed below.

Phase	Summer	Autumn
Phase 1 - Adventure <i>Outdoor team-building activities</i>	4 nights/5 days residential, >1 hour from participants' homes. Typically at an outdoor residential centre or campsite.	3 nights/4 days residential, >1 hour from participants homes
Phase 2 - Discovery <i>Skills development and community exploration</i>	4 nights/5 days residential, <1 hour from participants' homes. Typically in university-style accommodation, hostels etc.	3 days non-residential
Phase 3 - Action <i>Designing and delivering social action projects</i>	(a) 30 hours over 4/5 days, planning projects in conjunction with beneficiaries (non-residential).	30 hours, full-time or part-time, planning and delivering social action projects (non-residential)
	(b) 30 hours, either full-time or part-time, delivering social action projects (non-residential).	

### Celebration events

When NCS participants have completed their social action project, providers organise a celebration event. These events are attended by parents, carers, teachers and other local dignitaries, alongside press and other invited guests. During the events they receive a certificate signed by the Prime Minister.

### Next steps

The end of the NCS programme is not the end of the NCS experience. Participants will become part of a network of NCS graduates, giving them access to unique opportunities to stay involved, such as becoming a youth board member, an NCS Leader, or sharing their experiences with NCS graduates of the future. They can also access an online platform which contains a range of training, work experience and voluntary opportunities.

## **Annex B: The National Citizen Service Act 2017**

The National Citizen Service Act (NCS Act) is an Act of Parliament which forms part of a new legal framework for the NCS Trust, the programme's delivery body. The NCS Trust has been incorporated as a public body by a Royal Charter granted by the Queen. The NCS Act ensures parliament has oversight of the Trust and the programme as it continues to grow.

The NCS Act demonstrates the Government's commitment to NCS, and its manifesto commitment to ensure a place on NCS for every young person who wants one. The new legal framework has placed the Trust on a stable footing, helping to secure NCS for the future and ensure it is delivered transparently, efficiently, and effectively.

The Act allows government to provide grant-in-aid funding to the NCS Trust. The Trust works with hundreds of delivery partners, contracting with providers to run the programme. It will be responsible for commissioning these organisations to deliver the core outcomes of NCS.

The Act then requires the NCS Trust to publish a business plan at the beginning of each financial year, and an annual report at the end. These documents will be laid in parliament to ensure the Trust remains accountable for its performance. It will report on value for money, the number of participants, and the extent to which it has secured quality provision of the programme across its network.

The Trust will also publish its annual accounts. The National Audit Office is now the Trust's official auditor, and the Trust must report directly to government any financial difficulties experienced by NCS providers.

The NCS Act also gives Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) the power to send information to young people on behalf of the NCS Trust to promote the programme. Government believes NCS should be a rite of passage for teenagers in this country, and for every person to have the opportunity to take part as they transition into adulthood. Young people will receive a letter telling them about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the cost of which is almost entirely covered by government.

The NCS Trust, therefore, has been established as the central delivery body for the NCS programme, funded by government. It will promote the programme to young people, parents, carers, schools, local authorities and other public bodies. Government believes that NCS can build social cohesion, improve social mobility, and impact on the social engagement of our young people. The NCS Act puts that ambition in statute, and gives the NCS Trust the foundation on which to deliver the programme across England.

## Annex C: Safeguarding on NCS

This annex is designed to give schools an insight into the processes NCS has in place around safeguarding. However, it is not an exhaustive description of all safeguarding procedures. It is the responsibility of each individual school to ensure that they are satisfied with NCS providers' safeguarding procedures on an individual basis just as they would with any visitor to school.

### Safeguarding on the NCS programme

- All NCS staff undergo enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly Criminal Records Bureau) checks.
- Pharos Response (the NCS Trust's 24/7 incident response service) undertakes regular pre-programme & in programme health and safety checks of NCS regional providers. This initiative ensures that provider processes and procedures are of the requisite quality (including evidence checking) and that in practice, the actual programme delivery demonstrates the highest standards of health and safety.
- In 2016, NCS Trust commissioned the NSPCC to review all regional NCS provider safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure best practice was being observed and to instil a Safer Recruitment culture.
- The NCS Trust records the DBS status and number of all personnel working with young people on NCS programmes on a secure central database. In addition, Pharos undertakes pre-delivery checks of regional provider on NCS Trust's behalf to ensure that all providers are carrying out DBS checks and keeping up to date records regarding the current status of DBS approvals for all staff.
- All activities are comprehensively risk-assessed and overseen by carefully selected and trained instructors and mentors.
- All direct delivery staff complete mandatory online modules on Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Incident Handling and First Aid. This is supplementary to any online training delivered internally by the various NCS providers.
- An audit checklist tool enables NCS providers to assess and manage extended supply chain safeguarding practices.
- The NCS Trust partners with The Mix (formerly Get Connected & Youth Net) to provide all participants and staff under the age of 25 with a dedicated support helpline. The helpline offers anonymous counselling and advice to all under-25s on NCS programmes to ensure they receive the right level of support and fully enjoy their NCS experience.



## **Continual safeguarding updating and improvement**

- The NCS Trust holds quarterly safeguarding workshops with NCS provider leads to share best practice and discuss changes to programme policy and delivery.
- In 2016, the NCS Trust reviewed and re-developed existing safeguarding policy in conjunction with the NSPCC. All provider safeguarding procedures have been reviewed and amended by NSPCC auditors. The NCS Trust has a working relationship with NSPCC, to continually improve the safety of recruitment and training.
- Safeguarding briefings are mandatory all new NCS Trust staff.



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