

Full-Time Social Action Review ‘call for evidence’: City Year UK response

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

City Year UK is a youth social action charity which challenges 18 to 25-year-olds to tackle educational inequality through a year of full-time voluntary service. As mentors, tutors and role models in schools, they support pupils growing up in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK, ensuring that no pupil falls behind owing to their socio-economic background.

City Year UK launched in London in 2010 and has since expanded to the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. The organisation has partnered with almost all types of primary and secondary state schools, including academies, free, local authority and faith schools.

Since 2010, over 750 of City Year UK’s full-time volunteers have collectively given over one million hours of voluntary service. This year, 142 volunteers are supporting pupils in 23 primary and secondary schools.

City Year UK volunteers become an integral part of each school, working in teams of between 6-10 supported by a paid volunteer manager, to help to make it an enjoyable place to be and a natural place to learn. They develop positive relationships with the children and support them through:

- one-to-one or small-group tutoring and coaching regularly late or absent pupils
- running before and after-school clubs
- in-classroom support
- being present on the school playground at break times
- organising and leading events, celebrations and projects to unite the school and community.
- coaching to encourage positive character traits crucial to success in future life e.g. responsibility, duty, optimism, perseverance, self-control, resilience and confidence.

City Year UK works alongside each school to identify 10 per cent of its population for closer support. Typically, these pupils exhibit poor attendance, disruptive behaviour and low achievement in English and maths.

Impact on pupils¹

- ***Attainment:*** Targeted interventions by City Year UK narrows the attainment gap between Free School Meal (FSM) and non-FSM pupils. Pupils receiving these progressed faster than the national average; 81% of focus list pupils made progress, compared to 70% nationally.
- ***Attendance:*** The average attendance of focus list children increased to 95% from 93.2% between the start and end of the year.
- ***Behaviour:*** Positive behaviour incidents doubled across our partner schools.
- ***Attitude:*** Teachers reported that over 80% of the 1,479 focus list pupils were: more confident expressing their ideas and opinions; had built better relationships with their peers and had been able to follow the positive example set but their City Year UK mentors.

Consequently, City Year UK has been praised in eleven OFSTED reports since September 2013.

Impact on full-time volunteers²

Full-time social action helps develop the transferable skills vital for transitioning from education to

¹ City Year UK impact analysis (available on request)

² City Year UK impact analysis (available on request)

employment. In an end of year survey, volunteers reported improvements in 19 of 20 skill areas. Most noticeable were leading a team (46% increase) and communicating ideas and opinions (42% increase).

Independent research of City Year UK alumni from our first six years found an unemployment rate of 3%, dwarfing the national figure of over 12% nationally.³ Furthermore, 91% are in employment or full-time education within just three months of finishing the programme.

Volunteers also report impressive attitudinal shifts over the course of our programme such as an increased likelihood to vote and take a leadership role in civil society and improved attitude towards other social groups (age, socio-economic, ethnicity and religion).

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

This question has the potential to be the subject on a research paper in its own right and to thoroughly answer would likely need to be the subject of a randomised control trial.

However, City Year UK does not accept the premise of the question. It is a false dichotomy to pitch full-time social action against part-time. It simply is not a zero-sum game; quite the opposite.

Full-time volunteers provide charities with extra capacity to recruit, train and deploy part-time volunteers. For example, last year 80,000 AmeriCorps members recruited, trained, and supervised more than 4 million part-time volunteers for the organisations they serve.⁴

There is evidence from AmeriCorps programme in the US that full-time social action also helps inspire young people to go on and do part-time volunteering post their service. E.g.

- 79 per cent of alumni are involved or plan to become actively involved in their community post-service, compared to 47 per cent prior.⁵
- 80 per cent of alumni feel confident they can create a plan to address a community issue and get others to care about it.

Evidence suggests the same is true in a UK context. A 2015 study of City Year UK alumni⁶ which compared their attitudes and behaviours to civic leadership with that of those who had not completed the programme but had taken part in the 2013 national Community Life Survey (CLS), showed that City Year UK alumni were far more civically engaged than their counterparts. For example:

- By and large, the alumni are 9 times more likely to complete a paper or online questionnaire and 10 times more likely to be involved in a face-to-face or online group about local services or problems in your local area than a young person from CLS.
- Similarly, 74 percent of the alumni, compared with 37 per cent of young people from CLS (2013) believe that they can influence decisions affecting their area.
- City Year UK alumni are three times more likely than a young person who has not done a 'year of service' to volunteer.

Moreover, a recent survey of full-time volunteers found that it had inspired 65% to go on to do part-time volunteering.⁷

³ Renaisi: Shaping Civic Leaders: The impact on City Year UK alumni, 2015

⁴ AmeriCorps factsheet: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/fact-sheets/ameri-corps>

⁵ Corporation for National and Community Service: AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study, 2016.
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/AlumniMediaBriefingContent-01122017-1541_0.pdf

⁶ Renaisi: Shaping Civic Leaders: The impact on City Year UK alumni, 2015.

⁷ A survey of 85 past and present full-time volunteers - data available on request

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

Barriers exist for individuals to participate in full-time social action and for organisations wishing to create and/or sustain a full-time social action programme.

Barriers for full-time volunteers

Full-time volunteers are in legal limbo. They do not have a legal status and are therefore categorised as NEETs (not in education, employment, or training). Below are a number of barriers they face to participate:

- **Not entitled to Class 3 National Insurance Credits (NICs):** They actively contribute to the economy, yet because they have no recognised status they are unfairly punished by not being automatically granted the NICs. This means their state pension eligibility is cut by the length of time they serve. Contrastingly, those looking for work while on benefits do qualify.
- **They can't receive expenses if they're ill or suffer a bereavement:** Charities are forbidden from paying expenses if volunteers are unable to serve at any point during the duration of their programme. Therefore if they are sick, have to care for a loved one or they suffer a bereavement they are denied the financial support vital for them to sustain their volunteering commitment.
- **Finance and lack of incentives:** While City Year UK reimburse volunteers with a flat rate 'living stipend' and travel⁸, organisations are not obliged to pay full-time volunteers a particular level of expenses. This can make full-time social action unaffordable, particularly for those from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Loss of benefits:** Under existing Department of Work and Pensions rules anyone volunteering for over 16 hours is not entitled to out of work benefits from the Government.
- **Awareness of opportunities:** Domestic full-time social action is relatively unheard of in the UK and might be understandably cautious about undertaking such a programme as they may not see it as legitimate.

A recent survey of full-time volunteers prioritised the following as the measures (in ascending order) that would make full-time volunteering more accessible⁹:

- Free communal housing
- Allowed to be paid expenses when off sick/caring for a loved one
- A flat rate of expenses paid each week above the level of out-of-work benefits but below national minimum wage
- Public sector and commercial discounts on travel, clothing and food
- An educational/entrepreneurial grant for completing a programme
- Free travel
- Government recognition and accreditation of full-time volunteering

Barriers for delivery organisations

- **Complexity of legal situation:** The voluntary worker exemption to the National Minimum Wage Act is far too vague which disincentives charities from setting up programmes. The law is unclear on the level of support a charity can provide a full-time volunteer in looking for jobs at the end of their programme, even though career progression is a major motive for taking part. Fear of recrimination for offering too much support disincentives charities from providing personal development training.

⁸ Contact City Year UK for more information.

⁹ A survey of 85 past and present full-time volunteers - data available on request

- **Reputational risk:** As full-time social action is not supported or celebrated by the Government in the UK, those using (or indeed planning to use) full-time volunteers, leave themselves open to accusations of exploiting young people.¹⁰
- **Lack of funding:** Lack of awareness of full-time social action makes it hard to attract corporate and statutory support for programmes.

All these barriers above can be significantly reduced, if not eliminated completely, should the Government create a legal status for full-time volunteers and a national programme of full-time social action. We explore this in our response to question 5.

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

Yes, there must be an expansion of full-time social action in the UK.

Demand from young people

National Citizen Service (NCS) has laid a formidable foundation upon which to build a domestic full-time social action programme. NCS has been incredibly successful in inspiring 16 and 17 year-olds to volunteer through their four-week summer programme. It now engages over 100,000 young people per year and 90% of graduates say that they want to stay involved in NCS through a social action project or mentoring. For this reason the NCS Trust supports our call for an expansion of full-time volunteering opportunities through the creation of a legal status.

Polling of 2,002 people conducted by Censuswise on behalf of City Year UK in December 2016 found overwhelming support for a recognised programme of full-time voluntary 'civilian national service' for young people in Britain:

- Over half of 16-25 year-olds polled (1,000 in total) say it should definitely be an option for them and nearly a third would consider signing up for such a programme, if it had a proper Government-backed status.
- Over 90% of those polled think a recognised programme of full-time voluntary civilian national service should be on offer for young people in Britain.

A survey of full-time volunteers also showed that 95% would recommend full-time volunteering to a friend and 97% think there should be an expansion of full-time volunteering opportunities for young people.¹¹ Furthermore, 95% believe there should be an official programme of full-time volunteering supported by the Government (like National Citizen Service or International Citizen Service).

Unmet need

Evidence of unmet need is woven into the fabric of our society. It's in our overburdened NHS, overpopulated and under-staffed education system, youth employment figures (still double adult unemployment), poor careers advice and exploration opportunities,¹² ageing environmental work force, under-resourced heritage sector, any survey of business' perspectives on young people's readiness to work^{13 14}, our lack of social integration¹⁵ and the continued lack of civic engagement by

¹⁰ The Guardian: National Trust criticised for using unpaid interns to do admin jobs, 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/11/national-trust-criticised-for-using-unpaid-interns-to-do-admin-jobs>.

¹¹ A survey of 85 past and present full-time volunteers - data available on request

¹² Reports from the Education Select Committee, Ofsted, the Fair Education Alliance, Sutton Trust and the Association of Colleges to name just a few.

¹³ CBI and Pearson: The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016, July 2016.

¹⁴ British Chamber of Commerce: Young people need more support to make transition from education to work, 2014.

¹⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government: The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration, 2016

young people. The evidence is everywhere and full-time social action can be part of the solution as it is abroad.¹⁶

A survey of full-time volunteers conducted by City Year UK showed that full-time volunteers believed they had a positive impact on the individual/institution they served¹⁷ and 72% believed this could not have been achieved without them.

Full-time social action abroad

Across the globe governments have recognised the value of full-time social action by creating full-time national community service programmes. These programmes have been able to attract a significant number of young people to participate. For example, In the USA, 80,000 young adults participate in full-time social action annually as part of 'AmeriCorps', in Germany, 60,000 are involved in the Federal Voluntary Year, and France's Service Civique is to expand to 150,000 places per year by the end of 2017.

If similar levels of support were provided in the UK to help organisation facilitate, and young people undertake, full-time social action, there is every reason to believe similar levels of participation is achievable.¹⁸ The creation and growth of the NCS and participation levels in Government-backed Germany, France and the USA demonstrated one thing above all else: ***build it and they will come.***

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

1. A legal status for full-time volunteers

The Government must create a distinctive legal status for full-time volunteers.¹⁹ This must address the issues raised in question 3.

Our proposals for legal recognition comprise six material requests:

- Positive, demonstrable legal status, via any kind of legislative definition
- Regulated, explicit list of approved operating bodies and programmes
- The ability to pay a living allowance that need not directly reimburse expenses actually incurred (i.e. could be used to cover accommodation or sick leave)
- The ability to provide benefits in kind (e.g. training not directly related to the volunteering role) and grants dependent on completion²⁰
- Clarity that neither of the above kinds of benefit (payments and training) constitute, or trigger, an employment relationship between operating body and participant
- Eligibility for national insurance credits on the part of participants

Programmes in Germany, the USA, France and Italy all have legal underpinning, which is the foundation of their programmes' ability to grow and be impactful on a nationwide scale.²¹ **If the UK is serious about growing full-time volunteering, it must follow this example.**

¹⁶ City Year UK has data which shows how our full-time social action programme is addressing all of the issues raised above - available on request.

¹⁷ A survey of 85 past and present full-time volunteers - data available on request

¹⁸ Pro Bono Economics: The economic value of full-time volunteering, 2017 - Pro Bono Economics estimated that participation levels of 50,000 may be reasonable in the medium to long-term (please note - this report is not yet out in the public domain).

¹⁹ City Year UK has drafted legislation to demonstrate how such a legal status might look, which it has shared with the Review panel.

²⁰ Upon completion of their service, members receive an education grant known as the 'Segal AmeriCorps Education Award' of up to \$5,815 from the federal Government as a 'thank you' for serving their country City Year UK believes a grant along these lines (and possibly one that also includes something for entrepreneurs and/or those pursuing an apprenticeship pathway) from the UK Government would act as significant incentive for participation and help those from underprivileged backgrounds to take up full-time volunteering.

²¹ Pro Bono Economics: The economic value of full-time volunteering, 2017 (please note - this report is not yet out in the public domain).

2. The creation of a Government-backed national full-time social action programme

City Year UK believes the Government should replicate the USA, France, Germany, Italy and other countries by establishing a national full-time social action programme.

Full-time social action is supported by these governments because, as well as its positive impact on public service provision, it improves youth employment, provides opportunities for career exploration, facilitates social integration and creates more active citizens.^{22 23 24}

These initiatives also provide value for money. Research into the impact of AmeriCorps found the economic benefits were at least four times higher than the money invested by the Government.²⁵ Pro Bono Economics demonstrated that this is likely to be the case in a UK context too.²⁶ They find that should the Government create a programme of 10,000 volunteers per year where they give NICs and contribute £3,000 per participant to help pay their expenses, such a programme might generate a net benefit to the UK economy of between £28 million to £119 million (and a cost benefit ratio of between 1.2 to 1.6).

3. Sustained Government funding

For such programmes to be successful, governments have needed to create a body through which they can evaluate and administer financial support to host organisations so they can reach scale. As demonstrated above, they do this because ultimately the programmes do provide great value for money.

Domestic full-time social action programmes have received no concerted statutory funding support which makes it difficult to set up, establish and grow programmes. Yet the Government already supports full-time social action, but only if a British citizen wants to do it abroad. Since 2012 the Government has spent over £125 million on 11,500 volunteers to serve full-time abroad through International Citizen Service.

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October 2017

²² Demos, Service Nation 2020, 2015

²³ Corporation for National and Community Service: AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study, 2016.
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/AlumniMediaBriefingContent-01122017-1541_0.pdf

²⁴ Rivière et al (Kantar Public): Follow-up of youth volunteers 'Service Civique' Service Civique Agency, December 2016.

²⁵ Belfield C: The Economic Value of National Service, Aspen Institute Franklin Project, 2013.

²⁶ Pro Bono Economics: The economic value of full-time volunteering, 2017 (please note - this report is not yet out in the public domain).