

Citizenship and Civic Engagement Committee Government Response

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Executive Summary

On 29 March 2022, the House of Lords Liaison Committee published *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century – Follow up report¹* (5th Report of Session 2021-22 - published 29 March 2022 - HL Paper 179)

The Government welcomes the Committee's review of progress in relation to the key recommendations from its earlier report, *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century²*, published on 18 April 2018. The Committee's follow-up review focussed on cross-Government coordination and strategy; citizenship education; and the citizenship test (Life in the UK test). The Liaison Committee held three oral evidence sessions on 10 February 2022, during which they took evidence from Ministers from the Department for Education; the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities; and the Home Office.

The Government thanks the Committee for its follow-up report and for recognising the success of the measures already in place, such as the appointment of a Cabinet Committee to lead the levelling up policy; the work of the National Citizen Service to provide young people from all backgrounds with opportunities to become work-ready and world-ready and to increase young people's participation in volunteering; and changes made to the Life in the UK test, to address the issues the Committee had previously identified.

The Government agrees with the Committee that citizenship education and civic engagement opportunities are essential parts of a well-functioning democratic society; and that every young person should benefit from opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and values to prepare them for adult life and to make an active contribution to society throughout their lives.

The Government welcomes the important points raised by the Committee regarding how citizenship and civic engagement policy is coordinated across Government and will reflect on the best future approach to this. We also plan to update the Life in the UK Handbook and will set out our plans for that in the next 12 months. The Government is committed to ensuring all citizens achieve their full potential, as illustrated through the *Levelling Up White Paper³* which sets out the Government's plan for tackling geographical disparities and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

The Schools White paper, Opportunity for All⁴ demonstrates how our education system can also deliver on the Government's priorities of building back better after the pandemic and levelling up across the country through the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, founded on world-class literacy and numeracy. The Government recognises the importance of creating stability for schools following the

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5802/ldselect/ldliaison/179/17902.htm>

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/118.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-white-paper-delivers-real-action-to-level-up-education>

pandemic and has committed not to make any changes to the national curriculum for the remainder of the Parliament.

Citizenship forms a core part of the existing national curriculum and provides a rigorous framework for pupils to explore a range of important and complex concepts and global issues and to develop essential life skills to prepare them for adulthood. Active citizenship is a key concept that underpins the citizenship curriculum. The Government's National Youth Guarantee sets out that by 2025 every young person will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home, and opportunities to volunteer, supported by a £560 million investment in youth services.

The Government welcomes the important contribution by the National Citizen Service in helping to prepare thousands of young people for adulthood, through its programmes to develop skills for work and life and opportunities to make an active contribution to society. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will work with the National Citizen Service Trust to take a data-led approach to identify and support filling gaps in 'cold spots', in line with the Government's levelling up agenda.

Beyond the statutory requirements to teach citizenship at key stages 3 and 4, the Government strongly encourages schools to teach citizenship for all pupils and published a non-statutory framework for citizenship for key stages 1 and 2 pupils. We expect schools to structure the curriculum to enable pupils to build knowledge, through clear sequences of lessons and other activities schools may organise, such as visits and assemblies. The education pupils receive should help them to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society.

As with other subjects, the Government expects citizenship to be delivered by teachers who are suitably trained and supported. It is for headteachers to decide how best to deliver their curriculum through the effective use of teachers in their schools. Recruitment to citizenship initial teacher training courses is unrestricted, enabling initial teacher training providers to recruit future citizenship teachers without constraints from the Department for Education. Whilst the Department for Education currently publishes data on citizenship trainees as part an 'other' category, we will explore whether it is possible to extract more detailed course code information that can be used as a proxy for citizenship where needed.

The Government expects that citizenship education is considered as a significant part of Ofsted's routine inspections, but in a proportionate and efficient way. The Government is satisfied that Ofsted's current approach achieves this. The Department for Education will continue to engage with Ofsted over the continued impact of its inspection arrangements. Ofsted plans to undertake a review of personal development in schools in England this term; this will include a review of citizenship education.

The Government has carefully considered the Committee's 21 recommendations, which aim to strengthen the education and civic framework to provide a positive civic

journey for all citizens. This document sets out the Government's response, demonstrating our commitment to educating and empowering everyone to be active, informed and responsible citizens from a young age.

Cross-Government Coordination

Recommendations 1 to 6

1. The Government has implied that the Inter-Ministerial Group for Safe and Integrated Communities is a substitute for a Minister for Citizenship and Civic Engagement. Given that the group has not met for three years, it is clearly not a suitable mechanism for coordinating this policy area and strengthens the argument for the appointment of a dedicated Minister. (Paragraph 23)
2. Coordination of citizenship and civic engagement policy is insufficient. The Government should appoint a Minister with responsibility for Citizenship and Civic Engagement without delay. The location of this Minister is crucial, and the Committee believes that the Minister would have greatest impact if located in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) or the Cabinet Office. The new Minister should be given appropriate authority and remit to facilitate integrated policymaking across UK Government departments. This Minister should be a permanent member of the Domestic and Economic (Levelling Up) Cabinet Committee. (Paragraph 24)
3. The Committee is reassured to hear that the Government has appointed a cabinet committee to coordinate this policy area and does not doubt the commitment of the Domestic and Economic (Levelling Up) Cabinet Committee. Nevertheless, the Committee saw good intent in relation to the Inter-Ministerial Group for Safe and Integrated Communities and yet that group did not meet for three consecutive years. Whilst the Committee respects that the Government organises its business how it sees fit and has stated that it does not usually share details of the frequency of cabinet committee meetings publicly, the Committee would be reassured to see evidence of the scale of the work expected to be undertaken by the Domestic and Economic (Levelling Up) Cabinet Committee. (Paragraph 37)
4. Given the cross-cutting nature of the levelling up agenda, the Committee is surprised to see that the permanent membership of the Domestic and Economic (Levelling Up) Cabinet Committee does not span more departments. The Committee recommends that the Government consider making office holders within the Cabinet Office and the Department for Education (DfE) permanent members of the Cabinet Committee. (Paragraph 38)
5. The Committee hopes that the Domestic and Economic (Levelling Up) Cabinet Committee can address the issues identified with institutional memory and recommends that a community-led and data-led approach is taken to the coordination of citizenship and civic engagement policies. (Paragraph 39)
6. Citizenship education and civic engagement opportunities are essential parts of a well-functioning democratic society. The Committee finds it difficult to comprehend how the levelling up strategy could be effective without adequate investment in and coordination of citizenship education and civic engagement

initiatives. The Government should ensure that provision for citizenship education is included in the levelling up policy and consideration given to its role in addressing fake news, conspiracy theories and feelings of disenfranchisement. (Paragraph 40)

Government Response

Our vision for citizenship is building a United Kingdom where people have a sense of belonging to their country and local area. We know this is central to promoting tolerance, respect and understanding, while tackling social problems.

The Committee raises important points about cross-Government coordination. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that Government had to direct attention to responding to the public health emergency.

We are reflecting on the best practical ways to deliver citizenship and civic engagement policy across Government. We will share an update on this work with the committee in due course.

The *Levelling Up White Paper*⁵ set out a clear plan and mission-based policy framework for tackling spatial disparities and delivering levelling up through spreading opportunity more equally across the country and bringing left behind communities up to the level of more prosperous ones.

⁵ Levelling Up White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

Education

Recommendation 7

7. The Committee is reassured to hear that the Government is committed to ensuring the effective delivery of citizenship education within schools. If children are to be able to develop the skills required to become active citizens, they must be taught citizenship throughout their education. The Committee reiterates the 2018 recommendation that the Government should create a statutory entitlement to citizenship education from key stages 1-4. (Paragraph 55)

Government Response

The Government is committed to ensuring that all children leave school with the knowledge, skills, and values that will prepare them to be responsible, active and informed citizens in modern Britain. The Government agrees with the Committee that a high-quality citizenship education provides a very effective pathway for schools to prepare pupils to play a full and active part in society. The Government recognises the extraordinary challenges faced by schools during the past two years. For this reason, the *Schools White Paper – Opportunity for all*⁶, published in March 2022, set out the Government’s commitment to providing stability for schools to enable them to remain focused on recovery from the pandemic and raising standards of literacy and numeracy. To support schools to achieve stability, the Schools White Paper also confirmed that the Government will make no changes to the National Curriculum for the remainder of the Parliament.

The Government strongly encourages all schools to teach citizenship as part of a broad and balanced curriculum offer and the current arrangements provide a strong basis for this. Citizenship forms a core part of the statutory national curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 and primary schools can choose to teach citizenship at key stages 1 and 2, following the non-statutory framework for citizenship. This provides a rigorous framework for pupils to explore complex concepts and global issues such as poverty, homelessness, sustainability and climate change; and the need for mutual respect and essential life skills to prepare pupils for adulthood.

As with other areas of the curriculum, the Government does not prescribe how citizenship should be taught but we expect schools to develop a curriculum that meets the need of their pupils, drawing on the expertise and support of subject associations and other organisations that produce and quality assure resources. Much of the knowledge and skills detailed in the framework can be used flexibly by schools to incorporate into other lessons, themed activities, projects and assemblies.

The Department for Education is strongly committed to supporting schools to teach a high-quality citizenship curriculum and continues to engage with key stakeholders to

⁶ Schools White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

understand and meet school support needs. For example, in November 2021, the Minister for School Standards provided forewords to *Financial Education Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools in England*⁷, published by The Money and Pensions Service. In March 2022, the Minister for School Standards attended a *roundtable hosted by the Association for Citizenship Teaching*⁸, to discuss a wide variety of citizenship topics with pupils studying for a GCSE in Citizenship Studies and their teachers.

The Department for Education has also recently published additional resources to support high-quality teaching of citizenship content. The *Political Impartiality in Schools* guidance⁹, published in February 2022, aims to support teachers in tackling sensitive issues in the classroom in a politically impartial way. In April 2022, the Department for Education published *Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems*¹⁰, to support schools' teaching of important topics related to the environment, including within the citizenship curriculum.

The Department for Education is currently reviewing its non-statutory guidance, *Teaching Online Safety in Schools (2019)*¹¹, about how to teach about all aspects of internet safety, to help schools deliver this in a coordinated and coherent way across their curriculum, including the media literacy content of the citizenship curriculum.

⁷ <https://maps.org.uk/2021/11/11/financial-education-guidance-for-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england/>

⁸ <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/news/08032022-1621/round-table-minister-school-standards>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>

Recommendation 8

8. The Committee looks forward to the publication of the Schools White Paper and was reassured to hear that it will contain the Government's plans for citizenship education policy. The related recommendations in this report should be addressed through the white paper. The implementation timetable should be published within six months. (Paragraph 56)

Government Response

The Schools White Paper sets out the Government's long-term vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential by ensuring that they receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Our plans to secure high standards of curriculum and to ensure that there is targeted support for every child that needs it to help them to progress are especially relevant.

The teaching of a broad, ambitious, knowledge-rich curriculum is essential to the task of spreading opportunity and levelling up. In order to provide stability for schools and enable them to remain focused on recovery from the pandemic and raising standards of literacy and numeracy, the Schools White Paper confirmed that there would be no changes to the National Curriculum for the remainder of the Parliament. Citizenship already plays an important role in the delivery of a broad and balanced education. The citizenship curriculum is organised around core knowledge about democracy, Government, how laws are made and upheld, the need for mutual respect and essential life skills to prepare pupils for adulthood. Active citizenship is a key concept that underpins the citizenship programme and includes opportunities for pupils to undertake school and community-based volunteering, encouraging young people to come together to tackle the local issues they care about within school and in the wider community.

To provide additional support to schools in all areas of the curriculum, the Schools White Paper announced the establishment of a new curriculum body which builds on the success of Oak National Academy's work in the pandemic. It will work with thousands of teachers to co-design, create and continually improve packages of optional, free, adaptable digital curriculum resources for all subjects, including citizenship at key stages 1 to 4, to help teachers deliver a high-quality curriculum that is informed by the best available evidence.

The curriculum body will lead a broad and inclusive national process, involving national centres of excellence, as well as others in the education resources market, teachers, schools, school trusts and subject associations in the design, delivery and continuous improvement of example curricula. These resources will ensure high quality lessons, including those in citizenship, are available nationwide for the benefit of all children. We will provide further information on when the new resources will be available in due course.

Our ambitions to ensure a richer school week and to ensure pupils have targeted support both recognise the importance of active citizenship and sets out the

Government's commitment to ensuring that there are more opportunities for young people to be involved in schemes that are aimed at developing and strengthening active citizenship and other life skills. These will include supporting the Government to achieve the *National Youth Guarantee*¹², through increasing opportunities in school by promoting volunteering and expanding access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Cadet schemes.

The Department for Education is committed to ensuring young people have access to extracurricular clubs and activities as these are an important part of a rich education experience and can provide wide benefit, including to mental wellbeing and social and life skills. Schools have the flexibility to design an enrichment offer best suited to the needs of their pupils. To support them to do this, the Department for Education intends to work with schools and Multi-Academy Trusts with broad enrichment and extracurricular offers to develop a handbook for schools focused on enrichment and extracurricular activities.

More widely, the National Youth Guarantee sets out that by 2025 every young person will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer, and is supported by a £560 million investment in youth services:

- Investing £368 million from 2022, through the Youth Investment Fund, to deliver up to 300 new and redeveloped, youth spaces and services in left behind areas (building on the £10 million available from the end of FY21-22);
- Funding a transformed National Citizen Service programme for the next three years, with a year-round offer for thousands of young people;
- Offering The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme to every state secondary school in England;
- Tackling current non-military Uniformed Youth Groups' waiting lists for teenagers; and
- Providing £4 million to the #iwill fund creating tens and thousands of youth volunteering opportunities.

¹² National Youth Guarantee: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people?msclkid=97267644d05711ecbf182c70e14049e5>

Recommendation 9

- 9.** The evidence received demonstrates that Ofsted is misinterpreting the Government's policy and assessment criteria for Citizenship. The Government must outline how it will address this discrepancy and monitor Ofsted's assessment of Citizenship moving forward. (Paragraph 73)

Government Response

The Government does not agree that Ofsted is misinterpreting its policy in relation to the assessment of citizenship education.

The Government expects that citizenship education is considered as a significant part of Ofsted's routine inspections, but in a proportionate and efficient way. It is satisfied that Ofsted's current approach achieves this. It sees evidence on citizenship education being considered in every inspection, which is not the case for national curriculum subjects more generally.

The Department for Education will continue to engage with Ofsted over the continued impact of its inspection arrangements.

Recommendation 10

10. Citizenship is a curriculum subject and should be treated as such. Ofsted should use 'Quality of Education' when inspecting and assessing citizenship education. Regular deep dives should be undertaken. Ofsted should ensure that citizenship is not conflated with PSHE. Effective delivery of Citizenship education should be considered when awarding school ratings, including practical as well as theoretical delivery. (Paragraph 74)

Government Response

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, who is responsible for Ofsted's framework and handbook arrangements for school inspections.

Ofsted Response

Citizenship is not a statutory subject in key stages 1 and 2 and there is no requirement for any school to teach it in those stages. Despite this, every single Ofsted school inspection looks at the extent to which the school is preparing pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, including looking at relationships education, citizenship, and developing pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values. It would be extremely difficult for a school to be graded good, and impossible for it to be outstanding, where citizenship education was found not to be effective. So Ofsted's expectations on citizenship provide an additional layer of scrutiny on top of what the law provides.

We do not believe that citizenship is confused or conflated with personal, social, and health education/ relationships, sex and health education or other aspects of personal development. Rather, we consider these as different parts of what makes a well-rounded individual, prepared for life after school. Evidence about citizenship collected as part of the personal development judgement may also feed into inspector's judgement on the Quality of Education.

Recommendation 11

11. The Committee does not agree with Ofsted's assertion that evaluating citizenship through the personal development metric is appropriate. Ofsted's intention to review citizenship education provision through its upcoming review of personal development is insufficient. The Committee reiterates its 2018 recommendation that Ofsted should undertake a review of the current provision and quality of citizenship education in schools and highlight best practice. This should be followed up with long term monitoring of the impact of citizenship education as a standalone curriculum subject. (Paragraph 75)

Government Response

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, who is responsible for Ofsted's framework and handbook arrangements for school inspections.

Ofsted Response

Although we evaluate citizenship largely within the personal development judgement, this should not be taken to mean that we do not have high expectations for citizenship in schools. As with other subjects, we expect citizenship to be delivered by teachers who are suitably trained and supported. We expect the curriculum to be structured to enable pupils to build knowledge, through clear sequences of lessons and other activities schools may organise, such as visits and assemblies. We expect teachers to support pupils to remember and understand what they have been taught. The education they receive should help them to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society.

As set out to the committee, we plan to undertake a review of personal development in schools in England this term. This will involve analysis of inspection evidence bases and culminate in the publication of a national report on personal development, expected later this year; this will include a review of citizenship education. This will be similar to reviews that we have published for other subjects.

Recommendation 12

12. Ofsted must recognise the importance of citizenship education, particularly in the light of the challenges facing young people today and the acute need for them to develop political and media literacy skills. Furthermore, there are clear links between the Government's levelling up agenda and citizenship, and an opportunity to ensure that this policy is successful could be missed, should schools not provide pupils with the appropriate foundation for civic engagement. The Government should outline what steps will be taken to improve Ofsted's understanding of the wider context of citizenship education and ensure that Ofsted refrains from side-lining the subject. (Paragraph 76)

Government Response

As set out above, the Government is satisfied that the focus given to citizenship within Ofsted's school inspections aligns with the Government's broader policy on citizenship and inspection.

The Department for Education will continue to engage with Ofsted over the continued impact of its inspection arrangements.

Recommendation 13

13. Ofsted should review the support and training given to their inspectors and should ensure that the inspectors are able to understand and effectively assess citizenship as a curriculum subject. (Paragraph 77)

Government Response

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, who is responsible for the training of Ofsted inspectors.

Ofsted Response

Through our training and support, all Ofsted inspectors understand the high expectations Ofsted has for personal development, and the design of our framework supports the best possible standards in citizenship.

Recommendation 14

14. The Committee is disappointed about the lack of investment in citizenship teaching. The Committee recommends that the following recommendations are included in the Government's forthcoming schools white paper. (Paragraph 85)

Government Response

The *Schools White Paper*¹³ was published on 28 March 2022, before the publication of the Liaison Committee's follow-up report. The *Schools White Paper* sets out our long-term vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential by ensuring that they receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time – founded on achieving world-class literacy and numeracy. To achieve this, the Government will ensure that there is an excellent teacher for every child, including delivering world-class training and professional development at every stage of their career. The response to recommendations 15 and 16 below sets out the Department for Education's approach to the recruitment of citizenship teachers, and publication of initial teacher training data.

¹³ Schools White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

Recommendations 15 & 16

- 15.** The Government should reinstate bursaries for citizenship teachers for the 2023–24 academic year. The citizenship bursaries should remain in place until there are equivalent numbers to ensure that there is at least one trained specialist in every secondary school. The Government should also set a target for having at least one trained citizenship teacher in every primary school. (Paragraph 86)
- 16.** The Committee is concerned to hear that the Government is no longer collecting data on citizenship trainee teachers. The Committee does not see any reasonable explanation for this. The Committee recommends that the data collection resumes without delay. (Paragraph 87)

Government Response

The Department for Education has to make difficult decisions regarding bursaries for initial teacher training. We continue to focus bursaries on English Baccalaureate subjects, particularly those experiencing teacher shortages, to secure as many applicants as possible in the subjects where schools are likely to devote the most teaching time. Citizenship trainee teachers are eligible for a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan to support their living costs.

The Department for Education uses a Teacher Workforce Model to estimate the demand for teachers at a national level based upon the number of pupils, and the take-up and teaching time dedicated to each subject. These estimates are used to calculate national initial teacher training targets, having made an assessment of both outflows from, and inflows into the workforce. Modelling teacher supply at a national level allows us to best reflect the changing circumstances and demands of the system. Setting targets on a school-by-school basis would be extremely vulnerable to short-term data changes in such small modelling cohorts. Teacher recruitment is not limited by the Teacher Workforce Model nor our initial teacher training targets. Recruitment to citizenship initial teacher training courses is unrestricted, as it has been in previous years. This means initial teacher training providers are free to recruit future citizenship teachers without constraints from the Department for Education. It is for headteachers to decide how to best deliver their curriculum through the effective use of teachers in their schools.

The Government is committed to collecting data on initial teacher training. The Department for Education publishes the number of new entrants to initial teacher training broken down by subject studied in the annual initial teacher training Census; and the initial teacher training outcomes broken down by subject studied annually in the initial teacher training performance profiles publications¹⁴. Citizenship trainee numbers are not published separately and are grouped into the 'Other' subjects

¹⁴ Initial teacher training performance profiles publications as found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-teacher-training>

category, in line with historic publications. We provisionally recruited 497 new entrants to start postgraduate initial teacher training in 'Other' in 2021/22, which is 25% of the Postgraduate initial teacher training target for this subject.

In the academic year 2019/2020, the codes used to record subjects were changed and as a result the data classification for citizenship changed, although all 'Other' subjects still remain reported under 'Other' in the initial teacher training publications.

Whilst the Department for Education currently publishes under an aggregated 'Other' category, we are also exploring whether it is possible to extract more detailed course code information that can be used as a proxy for citizenship where needed.

The National Citizen Service

Recommendation 17

17. The Committee was reassured to hear that the NCS is committed to improving “its relationship with the youth sector, Local Government Association [LGA] and others.” It agrees that the NCS could use its resources to amplify and support the work of other organisations, and this is in line with the Committee’s view that civic engagement programmes must be tailored to their specific audience. In the light of the evidence received on the importance of early engagement with citizenship education, the Committee recommends that the NCS expands its target audience (currently 16–17 year olds) to key stages 3 and 4 (11–18 year olds) and develops its partnership working with organisations set up to work with children at key stages 1 and 2 (5–11). (Paragraph 101)

Government Response

It is the Government’s ambition that every young person should benefit from early engagement with citizenship education. However, as per the National Citizen Service Act and Royal Charter which were granted in 2017, National Citizen Service Trust’s primary function is to provide and arrange for the provision of programmes for 16 and 17 year olds in England. The Royal Charter allows the National Citizen Service Trust, from time to time, to include 15 year olds and any person who has attained the age of 18 and is under the age of 25.

The Government absolutely recognises the importance of early engagement with citizenship and supports a significant number of organisations and initiatives set up to work with wider age groups. The Department for Education and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are working together to offer The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award to all state secondary schools in England, expanding into more schools in the most deprived areas of the country. In addition, the Cadet Expansion Programme gives more young people the transformative opportunity to join the cadets and develop key life skills.

National Citizen Service Trust is part of this wider ecosystem and, over the next three years, it will play an important role in preparing thousands of young people for adulthood, through a range of programmes to develop skills for work and life and opportunities to make an active contribution to society.

Recommendation 18

18. The Committee was pleased to hear that the NCS is strengthening its partnerships. The Committee recommends that the NCS continues this practice and that the DCMS takes a data-led and outcome focused approach to monitoring the effectiveness of these partnerships. (Paragraph 102)

Government Response

The Government is committed to supporting National Citizen Service Trust's partnership working with educational institutions and encourages these connections. Activities in and out of schools have shown great impact for young people and National Citizen Service Trust will continue to monitor the output of its offer. In addition, National Citizen Service Trust will transform its approach to commissioning, focusing on outcomes rather than on prescribed activities so that a network of providers can offer a diverse range of impactful experiences.

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport officials will also work with National Citizen Service Trust to take a data-led approach to identify and support filling gaps in 'cold spots', in line with the Government's levelling up agenda. The programme will be available to all, while targeting and grassroots partnerships will direct provision to those most in need.

Recommendation 19

19. The DCMS' decision to re-distribute funding for youth organisations more evenly amongst the youth sector seems appropriate. The Committee recommends that the DCMS and DfE continue to work closely with the NCS, with a focus on life-long civic engagement, political and media literacy. (Paragraph 103)

Government Response

National Citizen Service Trust can play a key role in encouraging civic engagement and long-term social action, – in addition to citizenship education – by providing volunteering opportunities, increasing awareness of local issues, and providing content on democratic engagement. National Citizen Service is found to have a positive impact on young people's formal and informal volunteering with 65% of participants reporting they are more likely to help out in their local area as a result of participating in the programme. In addition, National Citizen Service increases young people's participation in politics by 12%.

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Education officials will continue to work closely together to explore what more can be done to provide opportunities for young people to experience active citizenship and to ensure the education system promotes National Citizen Service as effectively as possible.

Recommendation 20

20. The Committee is pleased to hear about the NCS' renewed focus on supporting schools and delivering programmes such as the "skills booster" during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NCS should scale up its partnership working with schools, delivering practical citizenship education and opportunities for civic engagement at key stages 3 and 4. It should support partnership working with organisations that are set up to deliver programmes for key stages 1 and 2. The Committee believes that the NCS could add particular value in educational institutions with pupils who require additional support as part of the levelling up agenda. (Paragraph 104)

Government Response

It is the Government's ambition that every young person should benefit from early engagement with citizenship education. However, as per the National Citizen Service Act and Royal Charter which were granted in 2017, National Citizen Service Trust's primary function is to provide and arrange for the provision of programmes for 16 and 17 year olds in England.

National Citizen Service Trust works closely with hundreds of schools through the Skills Booster initiative to deliver, or help deliver, curriculum resources to support young people's personal development, volunteering and social action, thereby encouraging civic engagement. National Citizen Service Trust will continue its partnership working with schools within its legal remit.

The Government absolutely recognises the importance of early engagement with citizenship and supports a significant number of organisations and initiatives set up to work with wider age groups. The Department for Education and Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are working together to offer The Duke of Edinburgh's Award to all state secondary schools in England, expanding into more schools in the most deprived areas of England. In addition, the Cadet Expansion Programme gives more young people the transformative opportunity to join the cadets and develop key life skills.

National Citizen Service Trust is part of this wider ecosystem and, over the next three years, it will play an important role in preparing thousands of young people for adulthood, through a range of programmes to develop skills for work and life and opportunities to make an active contribution to society.

In parallel, National Citizen Service Trust will work to identify and support filling gaps in 'cold spots', in line with the Government's levelling up agenda. The programme will be available to all, while targeting and grassroots partnerships will direct provision to those most in need.

The Citizenship test (Life in the UK)

Recommendation 21

21. The Committee agrees with the Government that “the Life in the UK test should not be seen as a tick-box exercise”. The Committee is pleased to see that the test has been updated since 2018 and that some of the issues identified by the Committee have been addressed. Nevertheless, the Committee remains unconvinced that the test supports and measures active citizenship. The Committee recommends that the Government sets up an advisory group with a diverse and expert membership to review the content of and outcomes generated by the test within 12 months. The Committee can see no reasonable explanation to delay this work until after the completion of other immigration policy reviews. (Paragraph 116)

Government Response

The Life in the UK test for British citizenship ensures that those who wish to become British citizens demonstrate they have developed a sufficient knowledge of life in the UK.

We are pleased the Committee recognises we have updated the test to address the issues they previously identified and remain committed to continually improving the test. We also recognise the test material found in the Life in the UK Handbook was last significantly updated nearly 10 years ago and therefore intend to set out our plans for updating the handbook within the next 12 months.

The Government is keen to engage subject matter experts when reviewing the test content and will ensure stakeholder groups can input into the next substantive review of the Life in the UK handbook.