

## **Written evidence submitted by the National Citizen Service (NCS)**

### **Introduction**

1. NCS Trust has welcomed the opportunity to be involved in local Opportunity Area delivery as a Strategic Partner, given that social mobility is one of NCS' three foundation pillars. The NCS programme's successes in supporting young people to achieve social mobility, through positively supporting transition to adulthood, teamwork, communication and leadership skills, are well evidenced<sup>1</sup>. Our work in Opportunity Areas<sup>2</sup> has shown us how, by engaging with a wide range of partners on the ground, we can find new ways to make NCS more relevant to the needs of local areas. Opportunity Areas continue to prove essential in enabling all partners, including NCS, to deliver new ways of working and building relationships at a local level.
2. Aligning with NCS Trust's 5-year strategy, our approach in Opportunity Areas has been to focus on continued and sustainable growth, expanding our network of diverse partners and positioning NCS Trust as an independent accountable organisation with broad support. Our approach has been focussed on working alongside our network of regional and local providers with a wide range of local partners, many new to the NCS delivery chain, to develop and deliver changes that have real resonance to local issues. In this way, we have demonstrated how NCS can work with a much wider group of organisations strongly-rooted in local communities to ensure more young people, especially those under-represented to date on NCS programmes, are able to benefit long-term from this important national programme - and also how NCS can contribute to local priorities in those communities.
3. NCS Trust has committed to Opportunity Areas by providing new strategic resource in the shape of its Localities Team. Based in local communities, the team is equipped with an appreciation of local nuances, adapting the NCS offer to the needs and demography of individual areas as well as building local partnerships and unblocking local barriers to NCS participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos Mori Evaluations from 2013, 2014, 2015; and Kantar Public Evaluation 2016  
<http://www.ncsyet.co.uk/about-us>

<sup>2</sup> NCS Opportunity Area commitments are: Development of NCS Relationship with Local Government; Additional Support to schools; Working with local FE and 6th form colleges; Partnerships with local VCS organisations; Partnerships with local universities; Partnerships with local businesses; Support for the hard to reach; Listening to and supporting young people's voices.

4. NCS Trust has welcomed the opportunity to engage with Opportunity Area Partnership Boards<sup>3</sup> but would value increased, more regular engagement of this nature.
5. The remainder of this report will give some tangible case studies and examples, demonstrating how NCS is making an impact across Opportunity Areas.

### **Increasing local authority awareness and engagement**

6. Supported by DCMS guidance<sup>4</sup>, and models of local authority working developed through contracts with the National Youth Agency and Kirklees Council, NCS Trust continues to strengthen relationships with local authority organisations in all Opportunity Areas. Central to this work is engagement with identified local 'NCS Champions'. NCS Champion Officers are now established in seven Opportunity Areas, and NCS Champion Councillors in eight Opportunity Areas. As well as raising the profile of NCS through local authority and partner networks, NCS local authority Champions unlock access to a wide range of opportunities and connections, of mutual benefit to a wide range of local stakeholders.

### **Support from NCS Champions (West Somerset)**

7. In her role as the County Council's NCS Officer Champion, the Strategic Manager for Educational Improvement helped raise the profile of NCS within the local authority and enabled access to a range of local authority communication channels - using these to promote local NCS programmes. These included the Children & Young People's practitioner newsletter, SEND newsletter, schools newsletter, secondary headteacher forum and schools health and wellbeing event. NCS was given a free permanent online presence on the Council's website and plugged through its social media platforms. In addition, the Champion carried out Councillor engagement and signposted local NCS providers to the Council's numerous volunteering initiatives, which will be plugged on summer '19 NCS programmes.
8. Before supporting the Opportunity Area agenda, relationships between local authorities and NCS providers were often limited to seasonal awareness-raising with practitioners supporting vulnerable young people. NCS Trust has used Opportunity Areas to deepen and expand these conversations, aligning local authority priorities to all stages of local NCS

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<sup>3</sup> During early 2019, NCS Trust presented to Blackpool, Doncaster, North Yorkshire Coast, Oldham, Stoke, West Somerset,

<sup>4</sup> DCMS National Citizen Service Guidance for Local Authorities - October 2017  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-citizen-service-guidance-for-local-authorities>

programme recruitment and delivery. In Opportunity Areas, NCS Trust input has led to:

- a. raised awareness of NCS with Councillors, staff and local authority-supported young people
- b. development of locally-driven NCS programme content, aligned to local priorities
- c. recruitment of strategic-level support to the NCS programme itself (for example Councillors being judges on NCS social action panels)
- d. local social action opportunities being offered, again aligned to local priorities

### **Increasing public awareness (Hastings)**

9. East Sussex County Council publishes a quarterly magazine, "Your East Sussex", sent to all 239,000 households in the county. As part of engagement through the NCS Localities Team, an article on NCS was included, supporting increased awareness and participation for local summer 2018 programmes.

### **Digital skills education (West Somerset)**

10. Through NCS Localities Team engagement, Somerset County Council's Library Service pledged ongoing support to NCS by offering library buildings countywide (including the 5 in the Opportunity Area) as a physical base to support Phase 3 social action planning. The Library Service also offered to provide Phase 2 digital skills sessions, along with the ability to try out innovative technologies, including drones, coding equipment, tablets, 360-degree cameras and robotics; which could then be used to support innovative delivery of NCS social action projects. In return, NCS could encourage more young people to be brought into libraries, enabling them to showcase their existing youth offer.

### **Increasing "other" community organisations' awareness and engagement**

11. A joint CEO letter from NCS Trust and the Office for Students in April 2018 has led to NCS Trust partnering locally with universities and colleges running National Collaborative Outreach Projects (NCOPs). NCOPs are tasked with providing education outreach to increase the number of young people from underrepresented groups going on to higher education. NCS Trust has now established working NCOP relationships within six Opportunity Areas, supporting: joint recruitment and promotional events targeted at young people under-represented in higher education; incorporation of FE/HE taster activity on NCS programmes; and, development of local FE/HE opportunities for participants.

**National Collaborative Outreach Programme partnership (North Yorkshire Coast)**

12. Working collaboratively through a locally developed partnership agreement, NCS Trust and Future Higher York (the local NCOP) have established:
- a. a joint series of school tutorial workshops, staff training and school trips for Yrs 10 & 11 aimed at raising awareness of FE/HE opportunities alongside the NCS programme - supported by former NCS participants;
  - b. two new NCS programmes developed specifically for students from Scarborough 6th Form and Scarborough Tech (reaching an additional 50 young people);
  - c. Phase 2 sessions on progression opportunities across work-based learning and HE have been delivered by NCOP outreach staff
  - d. Data sharing agreements between the local NCS provider and NCOP have also enabled targeted tracking of NCOP learners to sign up to NCS.
13. As part of a national pilot, NCS Trust has also introduced a School Coordinator model to a total of 130 schools across all Opportunity Areas. This initiative involved placing a member of school staff as the central hub for all NCS related activity and recruitment in participating schools to test the impact of the model on recruitment, participation and follow-up activity. DfE and local Opportunity Area networks have been a key enabler in supporting access to schools to support this approach, particularly in Blackpool and Stoke. Initial evaluation of the School Coordinator initiative<sup>5</sup>, completed in November 2018, indicated a statistically significant (5%) increase in NCS turn-up rates in those schools with an NCS School Coordinator, as well as a 24% increase in turn-ups from young people in receipt of Free School Meals. Additionally, 31 schools in Opportunity Areas have to date achieved Champion Schools status, rewarding them with an Ofsted-recognised plaque for their efforts in supporting students' extra-curricular learning.

**Enhanced voluntary and community sector engagement (Doncaster)**

14. NCS Trust and Doncaster Foundation organised a local NCS information event, to raise awareness of NCS to local VCS organisations. The event, due to take place this April 2019, will include live testimonials from NCS Grads and from charities previously supported by local NCS social action activity. It will highlight the benefits of supporting NCS, and how working together supports social mobility and local social impact. This collaboration is expected to enable NCS providers and young people to engage more readily with local charities, both on NCS and beyond; to

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<sup>5</sup> The Behavioural Insights Team - 2018 NCS School Coordinator Programme Evaluation

reach and support a wider range of local initiatives; improve sustainable engagement between parties; and ensure young people are able to select NCS social action projects which directly support local community priorities.

15. NCS Trust's national partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) was agreed in summer 2018. This has led to NCS Trust gaining access to Cornerstone employers, key organisations in Opportunity Areas with a formal role supporting the Government's social mobility agenda. We are now in discussions with nine Cornerstone employers who are expected to support Summer 2019 NCS programmes in Opportunity Areas. They will be offering locally-tailored employment skills input and workplace experiences, as well as promoting local apprenticeship and employment opportunities to NCS participants.

### **Butlin's business partnership (West Somerset)**

16. A local partnership between NCS and Butlin's Minehead has been established. Butlin's now offers a guaranteed interview to any young person who has completed NCS. They promote NCS at local school careers sessions and recruitment fair as a preferable path for young people to have taken *before* seeking a Butlin's job or career. Butlin's has given a commitment for a cross-section of Butlin's staff to attend Summer '19 NCS programmes to talk about their career journeys and prospects, apprenticeships, training packages and to deliver engaging supporting activity to increase awareness and interest. A post-NCS Butlin's career experience is also being shaped for local NCS Graduates, offering an opportunity to do some work-shadowing, try out a number of Butlin's roles and test real life practical application of the skills they've learnt on NCS.

### **Improving social cohesion and inclusion**

17. In addition to social mobility, another of the three foundation pillars of NCS is social cohesion, cultivating stronger, more integrated communities by fostering understanding between young people from different backgrounds.
18. The focus of some Opportunity Area Delivery Plans has been to increase the number of NCS participants with targeted characteristics, such as those with SEND or free school meal recipients<sup>6</sup>. NCS has had strong

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<sup>6</sup> **NCS Trust data 2018:** 16% of young people who participated in 2017 claimed Free School Meals, compared to 12% of the comparable 16-17 year old population. 5% of young people who participated in 2017 were SEND, compared to 2% of the comparable 16-17 year old population.

representation (indeed, often over-representation) from such groups overall, although this has been subject to significant local variations. It is important to note that NCS is designed to be a universal offering, bringing young people from all communities together. For this reason, we have sought to avoid overly-skewing participation from such groups.

### **Pre-NCS support for vulnerable young people (Doncaster)**

19. Working with NCS Trust, YMCA and St Wilfrid's Academy, and supported with DfE funding, local provider Doncaster Foundation is running an inspiring condensed pre-NCS wraparound programme for young people at risk of NEET. Taking place over 12-weeks, from Feb - Apr 2019, 80 young people are participating in regular scheduled activity to prepare them to attend a main NCS programme this summer. Activity includes: trampolining and Laser Quest challenges; confidence-building sessions with former Olympian athletes; an industry tour of Amazon Iport; community engagement; and, a two-night residential with outdoor adventure activities. This is supported by home visits (where required), keep warm events, parents information evenings and celebration event.

20. However, the Opportunity Area agenda has been a catalyst for NCS Trust to improve our reach and depth in under-indexed communities, gain knowledge of local demography, NCS participation by social characteristics, and the channels and networks available to support strategic contributions in almost all Opportunity Areas. We have built new reporting structures - moving away from the standard schools-based and local authority-level reporting, in favour of postcode-based data - to paint a more accurate picture of the communities we seek to serve. Moving forward, this will ensure our focus in improving engagement with NCS from young people with specific characteristics, alongside mirroring the population of young people in those areas.

### **Engaging with alternative providers (Stoke)**

21. NCS Trust presented to the local authority's Alternative Provider Forum to give practitioners working with SEN and PRU students a greater awareness of local NCS delivery. Attendees were able to ask questions, provide feedback and gain in understanding of how NCS supports outcomes for young people with additional needs and how they can be individually supported on programme. Following the event, attendees expressed an increased probability of referring young people to NCS and, as a direct result of this engagement, NCS has also formed a new relationship with Abbey Hill School, supporting increased referrals from young people with SEN.

**Increased social impact and contribution to local areas**

22. By partnering with local authorities, businesses and VCS organisations, and working more closely with NCS providers at a local level, Opportunity Area delivery has enabled NCS Trust to forge partnerships aimed at increasing its social impact and contribution to local areas.
23. As a key element of the NCS programme and in supporting participants' confidence and leadership development, NCS social action activity is being identified that is tailored to the specific needs and priorities of communities. With a better understanding of local need, new knowledge is also being used to drive local NCS programme content. We are also able to tap into NCS youth voice, to support local strategy development and influence public agenda, which at the same time supports development of young people's communication skills in their transition to adulthood.

**Raising the profile of youth engagement (Bradford)**

24. Throughout 2018, with the support of the Bradford City Council Youth Commissioner, eight NCS graduates spoke at numerous local committee meetings across the Opportunity Area. This helped raise the profile of youth volunteering and social action projects, and also supported Local Authority ambition for more young people to engage directly with city councillors from across Bradford. Two of these graduates went on to speak to Bradford Council about how NCS can better support Bradford as a whole. This mutual support of both parties' objectives has led to a much stronger relationship between the local providers and the council, who now meet regularly to explore similar opportunities to grow youth voice in Bradford by linking NCS Graduates to the Youth Inspectors Programme and other Local Authority Listening Groups.

**Influencing local strategy (West Somerset)**

25. During summer 2018 NCS programmes, NCS participants took part in consultation activity to support the development of the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2019-22. This was a key opportunity for youth voice to influence the identification of local priorities, leading to local authority commissioning decisions which supported the vision for "all children and young people in Somerset to be happy, healthy and preparing for adulthood".

**Localising the NCS curriculum to meet local need (North Yorkshire Coast)**

26. In direct response to Scarborough being reported to have higher than average personal insolvency rates, NCS Trust has established a positive working relationship with the new Single Financial Guidance Body, resulting in high quality financial education being procured for inclusion in the NCS summer '19 programmes, as part of its focus upon resilience and response to local need. Discussions are also taking place nationally for inclusion across NCS in 2020.

27. During 2018, NCS participants within Opportunity Areas delivered in the region of 183,000 social action hours. This number is anticipated to increase dramatically from 2020 onwards, when new NCS provider contracts will require additional monthly post- NCS social action to be delivered, over and above the current on-programme requirements.

### **Sustainable social action (Doncaster)**

28. By partnering with Frenchgate Shopping Centre, 85 NCS Grads now volunteer weekly in support of their chosen local charity; Age UK Doncaster.

### **Sustainable social action (Fenland & East Cambridgeshire)**

29. A local strategy is being developed between NCS Trust and Cambridgeshire County Council, supported by DfE, to ensure young people can more readily engage in local volunteering and social action activity beyond the end of the NCS programme.

April 2019