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# Evaluation of National Citizen Service Pilots

## Interim Report



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**Date:** May 2012  
**Prepared for:** The Cabinet Office

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## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to a whole range of people within our own organisations, across government and most importantly amongst providers and NCS participants for making this study possible.

The evaluation team would in particular like to thank Rebecca Wyton and Sarah Butt for their regular support and guidance and also commitment to the project. We are also grateful to members of the internal working group and the external steering group for advice and expertise throughout the project. We would also like to thank the Pears Foundation for contributing to the funding of this evaluation.

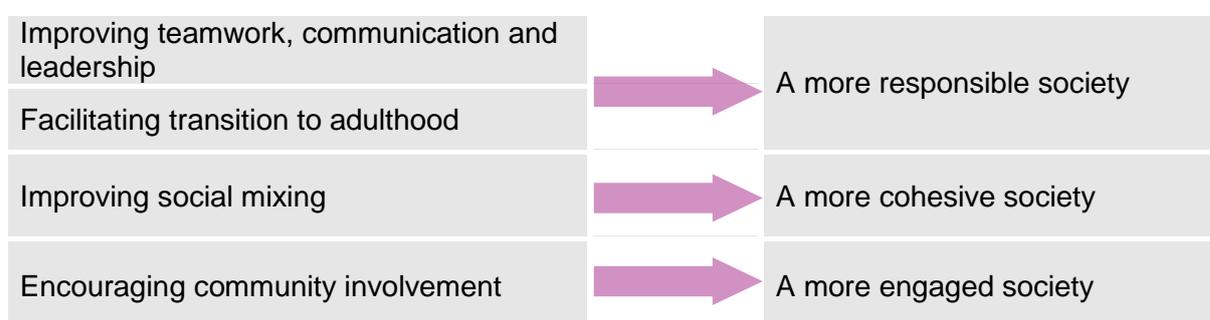
Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the staff and participants from NCS providers for their co-operation, support and patience in assisting and participating in this evaluation.

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## Executive Summary

National Citizen Service (NCS) is one of the Coalition Government's flagship initiatives for building a bigger, stronger society. The programme aims to be a rite of passage for all 16 year olds and help to promote a more cohesive, responsible and active society. It is a summer programme involving residential and at-home components in which young people come together as a team to design and carry out a social action project in their local area.

NCS had three broad aims at the outset of the programme: to make society more cohesive, more responsible and more engaged. The evaluation has identified impacts on young people in relation to four outcomes that contribute to these three core aims.



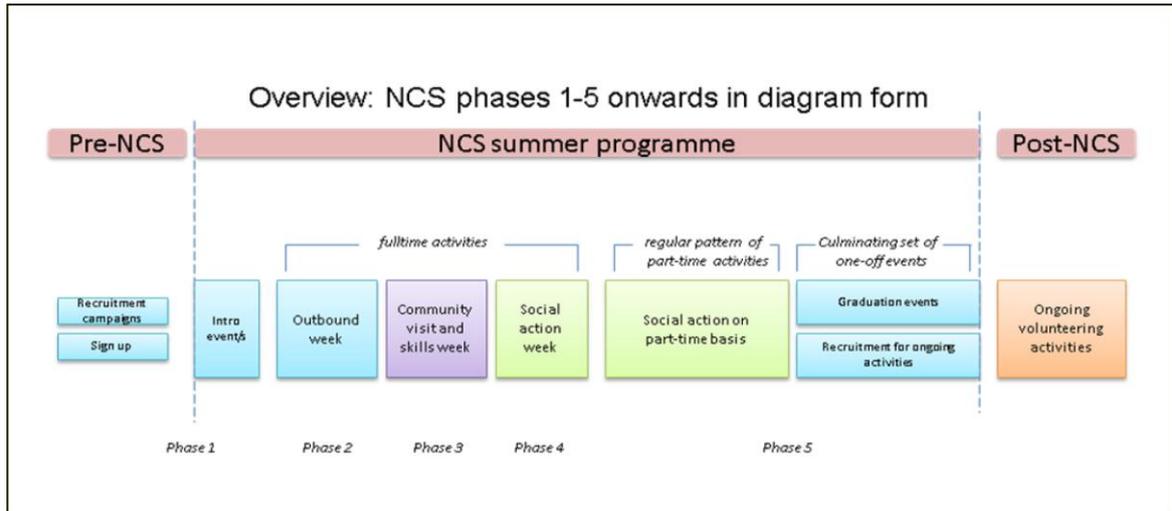
This report presents the findings of the independent evaluation of the pilot of NCS in 2011. The evaluation involved: a series of case studies assessing what worked in the delivery and implementation of the programme; before and after surveys with NCS participants and a comparable group of non-participating 16 year olds to measure the impact of the programme; and economic analysis of the costs and benefits of the programme. The evaluation aimed to:

- measure the impact of NCS on young people's attitudes and behaviours with regard to: social mixing; communications, teamwork and leadership; community involvement; and transition to adulthood
- estimate the value for money of the NCS programme
- inform development of NCS by identifying lessons for the design and delivery of the programme

It is important to note that the programme being evaluated is a pilot. Consequently, this evaluation does not provide the final word on the impact and efficacy of NCS but forms a key part of its development by identifying what currently works well and what could be changed in the future. It also only measures short-term impact at this stage; a further follow-up survey in the summer of 2012 will measure the sustainability of these impacts and any additional impacts that may emerge over a longer period of time.

### The NCS delivery model

The 2011 pilots consisted of five distinct phases of activity as illustrated in the diagram below. The phases are consecutive, with each aiming to build in team-building, planning and skills developed in the preceding phase. Participants should go through their NCS programme in teams of 12-16, which stay together throughout the programme.



The programme was delivered by 12 NCS providers. These comprised a range of organisations and consortia drawn from the voluntary and youth sectors and other social enterprises. Although providers were committed to delivering the programme to the above model, they also differed in a number of ways. Three provider typologies were identified and used as units of sub-group analysis throughout the report.

<b>Size, coverage and governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large national providers</li> <li>• Regional consortia</li> <li>• Small locally focused providers</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct delivery</li> <li>• Contracted out delivery</li> <li>• Mixture of direct and contracted out</li> </ul>
<b>Charging arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No charge to all participants</li> <li>• Variable charge (by discounts, refunds or bursaries)</li> </ul>

## The NCS participants

The impact survey and the monitoring information data provide robust information on the participation and retention of young people in the NCS pilots. As NCS is designed to challenge young people, it cannot be expected that all will go on to complete the programme. The data show that while all NCS places commissioned in 2011 were not filled, the programme showed good retention rates for a youth initiative of this kind. NCS participants were proportionately more likely to be drawn from disadvantaged and minority groups, compared to the population as a whole and also more pro-social in terms of their volunteering experience and attitudes towards helping out.

### Numbers starting and completing the programme

- Over 10,000 places were commissioned for the 2011 NCS pilots
- Around 8,500 participants took part in the programme
- 6,809 participants (81%) completed the programme and 7,901 (87%) started Phase 2
- Females were more likely to complete the programme than males
- Retention was higher amongst BME participants than white participants
- Participants who paid a fee to take part were a more likely to finish the programme as were young people who had previous experience of volunteering
- In terms of provider type, those delivering the programme directly had better retention rates (90%) while regional consortia had lower retention rates (71%)

An important element of the NCS model was achieving a social mix of participants. The evaluation collected data from NCS participants and a comparable sample of non-participating 16 year olds from maintained schools in relation to demographics, attitudes and behaviours.

### Profile of NCS participants

NCS participants were more diverse than the population from which they were drawn in terms of:

- Ethnicity – around 28% of participants were non-white, compared to 18% in the general population
- Disability – 16% of NCS participants had a disability or health problem expected to last more than a year, compared to 12% in the general population
- Socio-economic background – NCS participants were more likely to be eligible for Free School Meals (23% vs. 14%), less likely to live with their father (60% vs. 69%) or mother (89% vs. 95%), and less likely to have a parent in work.

### Engagement in volunteering activity

NCS participants were more likely than the general population to have undertaken pro-social behaviour such as volunteering and helping out at local clubs and associations:

- 80% of NCS participants had engaged in one or more of a list of pro-social activities compared with 67% in the comparison sample
- 79% of NCS participants (vs. 42% in the comparison sample) said they wanted to spend more time getting involved in these activities.

## The impact and experience of the programme

The evaluation aimed to be able to measure the independent impact of NCS and describe participants' experience of the programme. In the sections below we present three types of data on impact and experience for each of these four aims of NCS.

- Data from before and after surveys of NCS participants and a control group of non-participating 16 year olds from maintained schools to measure the independent impact of the programme. The control group was selected from a larger sample to match NCS participants in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and levels of pro-social behaviour. Our follow-up survey showed that the control group were also engaged in a range of activities in which they would have been expected to develop a range of skills over the summer. The survey measures only short-term impact at this stage; a further follow-up survey in the summer of 2012 will measure the

sustainability of any impacts found and any additional impacts that may emerge over a longer period of time.

- Data on impacts from the case studies collected through qualitative interviews with NCS staff and young people. Where measurable impact has been found by the survey data, this provides an understanding of what led to these impacts. Where measurable impacts were not identified this data maps the range of impacts observed at an individual level and helps explain why these were not more widespread.
- Data on the self-reported experience of young people collected in the survey of young people after their participation in NCS. Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements about the programme. This does not provide a measure of the independent impact of the programme, as it cannot be compared to a comparison sample.

### Summary of impacts and experience

The overall picture that emerges from the impact survey is that NCS had a range of impacts on two of the four outcomes and more limited impact in the other two. The impact survey identified:

- A range of statistically significant positive impacts of the programme in relation to communication, teamwork and leadership.
- A range of statistically significant positive impacts of the programme in relation to transition to adulthood
- A small number of statistically significant positive impacts in relation to social mixing, although the overall pattern of change in this area was mixed.
- A small number of statistically significant positive impacts in relation to community involvement although overall pattern of change in this area was mixed.

In addition to the independent impact of the programme, it is clear that NCS participants found NCS enjoyable and worthwhile (giving scores of 9 and 9.1 out of 10). 92% of participants said they would recommend NCS to other young people.

The next four sections provide more detail on the types of impact the programme had and what participants thought of the programme in relation to the four outcomes.

### Communication, teamwork and leadership

*What impact did the programme have?*

- The most significant impacts of NCS were on young people's teamwork, communication and leadership skills, with impacts being seen in all areas. The proportion of young people who felt confident being the leader of a team increased by 13 percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 47% to 63% compared with an increase from 50% to 53% among the control group).
- The proportion who felt confident in putting their ideas forward increased by seven percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (from 59% to 74%, compared with an increase from 60% to 69% among the control group) and increased by five percentage points more in relation to explaining their ideas clearly (from 58% to 73%, compared with an increase from 60% to 71% among the control group).

*What created the impact?*

Qualitative interviews suggest that two elements of the NCS programme were important in facilitating this change in participants. These related to working with others to achieve shared goals and youth involvement in the design, planning and delivery of the social

action project. The relative effectiveness of these factors was influenced by how well the NCS team was able to 'gel' and bond as a group.

*How did participants experience related aspects of the programme?*

Over 90% of participants agreed that NCS had made them proud of what they had achieved.

### **Transition to adulthood**

*What impact did the programme have?*

- Participants saw significantly greater improvements in several measures of self-reported wellbeing compared with the control group:
  - The proportion of young people reporting low levels of anxiety increased by nine percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 45% to 49% compared with a decrease from 56% to 51% among the control group).
  - The proportion reporting that they feel that things they do in life are worthwhile increased by five percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 65% to 79% compared with an increase from 64% to 73% among the control group).
  - The proportion reporting high levels of happiness increased by five percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 66% to 72% compared with an increase from 67% to 69% among the control group).
- Participants also saw a positive change in attitudes towards future study compared with the control group:
  - The proportion reporting that they are interested in doing more learning increased by three percentage points more among the NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 84% to 92% compared with an increase from 87% to 91% among the control group).
  - The proportion reporting that they plan to study for another qualification in a sixth form or college in the autumn of 2011 increased by six percentage points more among the NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 27% to 34% compared with an increase from 29% to 30% among the control group).
- Attitudes to anti-social behaviour (ASB) improved more among NCS participants than the comparison group. The proportion who recognised the statement "young people want to stay out of trouble" as being "just like me" increased by seven percentage points more among the NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 61% to 64% compared with a decrease from 69% to 65% among the control group).
- The survey did not identify any independent impact on levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction, assessment of life skills or longer term plans. On many of these measures, the period of the research represented a time of considerable change for the young people such that there were big changes in both the NCS and comparison group.

*What created the impact?*

Qualitative interviews identified that impacts on life skills were affected by the activities and structure of the residential phases and youth involvement in the programme. Young people's capacity to progress into education, employment or training in line with their aspirations was facilitated by gaining new skills, experiences and qualifications, being asked to demonstrate these skills to employers, and an expanding awareness of opportunities and social networks. Finally, the programme was felt to have reduced ASB though increasing awareness and understanding of the consequences this kind of behaviour.

Where impact was not identified, the qualitative interviews suggest that it may have been difficult for NCS to make a measurable impact in this area as young people felt they had these skills already or already had high self-esteem. Baseline scores for the NCS participants back this up.

*How did participants experience related aspects of the programme?*

- 95% of participants agreed that NCS had given them the chance to develop more skills for the future
- 85% of participants agreed that NCS had made them learn something new about themselves
- 85% of participants agreed that NCS had made them aware of more education or employment opportunities

### **Social mixing**

*What impact did the programme have?*

- Participants saw improvements in attitudes to mixing with people from different backgrounds compared to the control group:
  - The proportion saying they had no friends from a different religion decreased by four percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (decreasing from 20% to 17% compared with an increase from 21% to 22% among the control group).
  - The proportion saying all their friends were from different estates or parts of town increased by seven percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 13% to 15% compared with a decrease from 18% to 13% among the control group).
- The impact survey also identified a negative independent impact on whether people felt their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well – while the number of NCS participants agreeing that this was the case increased from 43% to 55%, the comparison sample increased by more (six percentage points)
- On the majority of measures included on the impact survey, participation in NCS was not associated at the aggregate level with significant change in attitudes to and experiences of social mixing compared to the comparison sample. This was measured in terms of attitudes to trust in the local area and mixing with people from different backgrounds
- The qualitative case studies identified that where this was an impact for individual participants, this was influenced by the degree to which young people met others from different backgrounds on the programme, with positive impacts being found when this did occur.

*What created the impact?*

The qualitative interviews identified two key barriers here that may explain why only limited impact was seen at an aggregate level. Firstly, the perceived lack of diversity within some NCS teams was said by young people to have been a barrier. A second explanation was that young people already had a relatively diverse social network thus reducing the relative effect of meeting others from different background. An explanation for the results relating to NCS's impact on attitudes to mixing in the local area could relate to some of the challenges NCS participants had in working with the local community.

*How did participants experience related aspects of the programme?*

- Over 90% of participants agreed that NCS had given them the chance to know people they wouldn't normally mix with
- 85% of participants agreed that NCS had made them feel more positive towards people from different backgrounds

## Encouraging community involvement

### *What impact did the programme have?*

- The survey identified a statistically significant impact of NCS in terms of the number of NCS participants who had recently helped out a neighbour. The proportion of young people who had done this increased by four percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (increasing from 31% to 40% compared with an increase from 31% to 36% among the control group).
- The data suggests that NCS participants who helped out were more generous with their time than the control group – with 19 per cent giving up more than seven hours per week over the summer, compared with 12 per cent of the control group.
- Participation in NCS was not associated with any other statistically significant independent impacts on encouraging community involvement, measured in terms of perceptions of being listened to, viewing it as everyone's responsibility to help out, and helping out themselves in practice.
- Despite this, qualitative interviews identified positive impacts in this area for individual young people, such as being aware of a broader range of ways to help out locally and a belief they are able to make a difference to their local area.

### *What created the impact?*

Where positive impact occurred this was attributed in the qualitative case studies to three related factors: social action projects with a local focal point; positive engagement in NCS from members of the community; and making an observable, tangible difference through the social action project. However, there were also barriers to impacts on community involvement, particularly where participants had negative experiences of their social action project or did not feel the project took place in a location that they considered local.

### *How did participants experience related aspects of the programme?*

Participants were asked about their future community involvement and 77% said that following NCS they were more likely to help out locally. Anecdotal data from NCS alumni teams suggests that this is happening and the extent to which this is the case will be measured in the second follow-up survey in summer 2012.

## Estimating value for money

NCS cost the government £14.2million to deliver. An additional £3million was raised by providers and in kind support. This means that the unit costs per commissioned place is calculated at £1,303 to the government and £1,553 in total.

Three types of social benefits resulting from the identified impacts of NCS can be estimated as up to £28 million:

- Over £600,000 in hours volunteered by participants during the programme
- More than £10million in increased earnings, including almost £3million in increased tax revenue, can be expected from increased confidence, improved leadership and communication.
- Up to an additional £17million increased earnings, including almost £5million in increased tax revenue from a greater take up in educational opportunities by NCS participants.

As the pilot programme costs nearly £14.2m to government, the societal benefits are between one and two times the cost, showing a net benefit to UK society. The lower end of this range reflects the uncertainty in the above estimates, as explained in the technical report. If, in future, the unit costs of the programme should fall to the cost to society per

commissioned place, but the benefits remain the same, the ratio of benefits to costs could be as high as three to one. Furthermore, the actual benefits may be greater than these estimates because:

- Unit costs used in these calculations were based on number completing the programme; those who dropped out may have benefitted in some way
- The value of additional benefits that are not easily given an economic value (increased well-being, benefits of volunteering, social mixing and reduced anti-social behaviour) are not included in these estimates.

## Learning for NCS in 2012

Interviews with staff and participants highlighted several key issues to focus on in order to ensure that successes from the first year pilots are continued and learning can be translated into greater and more cost effective impacts in 2012. These include:

### *Raising awareness*

- During the first year of delivery awareness of the programme was low; addressing this at a national level will be required to facilitate any expansion and help recruitment of participants through early engagement of schools and others that act as gatekeepers to young people
- Appetite for future participation appears to be high, with 68% of young people surveyed as part of the comparison sample reporting they would have liked the opportunity to participate in NCS. However, providers will need to improve strategies for converting young people expressing interest into participants that complete the programme.
- Furthermore, 92% of participants said they would recommend NCS to other young people, suggesting involving alumni in recruitment would be worth pursuing

### *Staffing the programme*

- Providers were concerned about the feasibility of increasing the number of NCS staff nationally by three times.
- Equally, staff were keen to be involved in 2012 assuming that delivery would become more effective and efficient and less strain would be placed upon them.
- Training was provided in three key areas, NCS orientation, working with young people and practical necessities, yet there were gaps identified in relation to guided reflection and working with more challenging young people.

### *Delivery of the programme*

- There was broad support amongst NCS staff and participants for the structure of the programme in relation to its incremental nature which encouraged young people to take a greater role in leading their teams and projects.
- Concerns over the structure related specifically to the timing and ordering of the residentials, the overall length of the programme and the suitability of phase 4 as a distinct phase.

### **Recommendations for the NCS Programme Team (Cabinet Office and Department for Education) and Providers**

- Work towards longer lead-in times to enable providers to improve staffing, planning and recruitment
- Consider improving the stability of providers' positions by awarding longer contracts
- Consider enabling greater flexibility in some aspects of the programme delivery, particularly in relation to the timing and ordering of residentials and the overall length of the programme
- Staffing models should aim to include clear roles and lines of responsibility, information sharing mechanisms, suitable staff numbers and consistency of approach in working with young people.
- Improve clarity of training and guidance about 'guided reflection' and its role in NCS
- Ensuring that the programme is coherently 'championed' at national and local level

These recommendations have been shared with the NCS Programme Team as findings have emerged throughout the evaluation. Where possible, these have been taken on board in terms of planning, design and implementation of NCS in 2012.

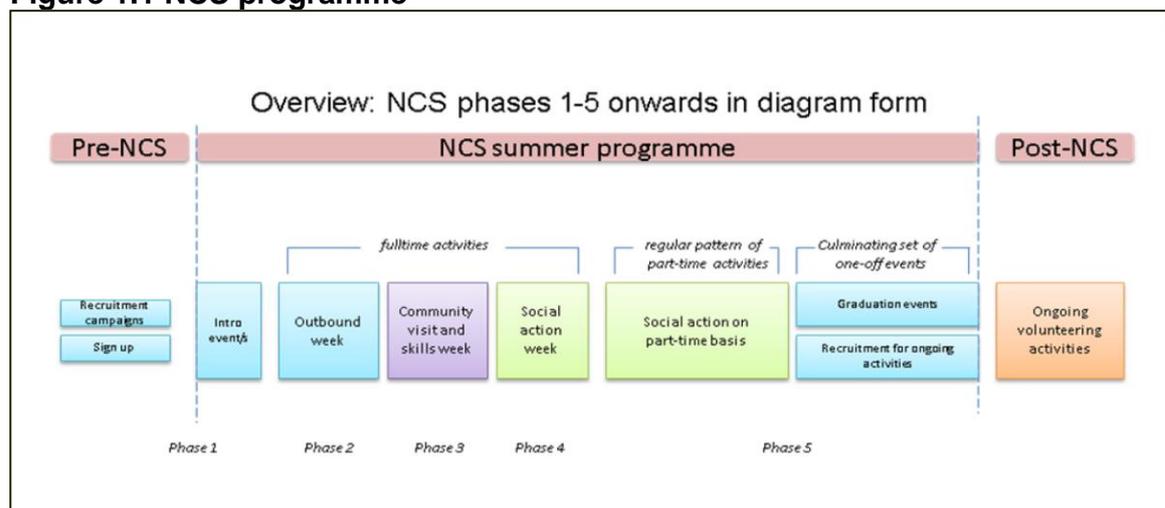
# 1 About NCS

National Citizen Service (NCS) is one of the Coalition Government's flagship initiatives for building a bigger, stronger society. The programme aims to be a rite of passage for all 16 year olds and help to promote a more cohesive, responsible and active society.

NCS is a programme for 16 year olds, involving both residential and at-home components and voluntary local social action schemes. In 2011 the programme was delivered by independent charities, social enterprises and businesses, all of whom had to compete through an open tendering process to run the programme. The 2011 pilot was open to all young people around the age of 16 (who would typically have just completed year 11 or equivalent), although extended up to the age of 25 for those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The programme follows five distinct phases of activities running for eight weeks during the summer months. The phases of NCS are depicted in figure 1.1 below:

**Figure 1.1 NCS programme**



## Phase 1: Introductory phase

During the introductory phase, expectations are set and relationships built between participants and staff.

## Phase 2: Full-time residential programme away from participants' local community, with a focus on teamwork and outdoor physical challenges (one week).

Phase 2 provides an opportunity for personal and social development through a series of physical challenges to push participants out of their comfort zones.

## Phase 3: Full-time residential programme based in participants' home community, with a focus on developing new skills and serving groups in the community (one week).

Phase 3 involves team members returning to their locality, but staying in a residential environment away from home. During this phase, teams use a shared passion, for example for music or art, to build on their teamwork and project management skills and develop an interest in community service. Throughout the week, the young people are

encouraged to think about how they come across as they deal with people of different ages in the community, and are helped to present themselves more effectively.

**Phase 4: Participants to design a social action project in consultation with the local community (one week).**

In this phase, young people design a social action project that will benefit the community. While they return home at night, they participate full time, with each day ending with a team discussion of what they have learnt, as in previous weeks, to reflect on their experiences and learning.

**Phase 5: Social action project and graduation.**

A period of 30 hours social action on a part-time basis, during which the teams deliver the project they designed in Phase 4. Participants during this phase also take part in a large celebration and graduation event for participants and their guests. It is anticipated that as a final challenge young people will play a full and active part in this celebration.

The process of 'guided reflection' is an important part of supporting participants' personal and social development during NCS. Guided reflection aims to help participants to reflect on their decisions and their interactions with an aim of learning and improving.<sup>1</sup>

In 2011, the first year of the programme, NCS was provided by twelve organisations that made over 10,000 places available to 16 year olds in different locations across England. A total of twenty-nine organisations have been commissioned to provide up to 30,000 places in 2012, with the aim being to raise the number of places to up to 90,000 by 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> London Youth, Hunch: a vision for youth in post austerity Britain, 2001

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## 2 About the evaluation

### 2.1 Aims and objectives

The evaluation consortium was commissioned by the Office for Civil Society to evaluate the NCS pilots in 2011 and 2012 in order to:

- inform the future development of the NCS programme through assessment of the design and delivery of the pilot scheme;
- assess the impact of NCS on young people's attitudes and behaviours with regard to: social mixing; leadership; communication; community involvement and trust; confidence; and transition to adulthood;
- gather information on the views of parents' of young people and the wider general public as regards NCS;
- estimate the value for money of the NCS programme.

### 2.2 Design and methods

The evaluation had four core components designed to meet these aims: a process evaluation; an impact survey; economic analysis; and social media listening. At the outset of the evaluation, a scoping study was conducted to refine the design of these components, comprising a desk review, briefings with key strategic stakeholder in government, a review of management information systems and a workshop with strategic staff from each of the 12 providers. The resulting report was circulated internally for comment, and informed the design of each of the evaluation strands below.

Following this, the contribution of each strand of the research to the aims and objectives of the evaluations is as follows:

<b>Aim 1</b> Inform the future development of NCS	<b>Process evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 case studies conducted at the NCS team level, selected to ensure diversity in terms of location (rural/urban, density of NCS provision), charging arrangements and social mix</li><li>• Data collected via depth interviews with staff and volunteers, workshops and video diaries with young people and interviews with parents and community stakeholders</li><li>• Online focus groups were also conducted with delivery partners from larger providers</li><li>• Monitoring information data was also collected by providers and collated by the evaluation team</li></ul>
<b>Aim 2</b> Assess the impact of NCS on young people's attitudes and behaviours	<b>Impact survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Baseline and two follow-up surveys of NCS participants</li><li>• Baseline and two follow-up surveys of matched control group from the National Pupil Database</li><li>• Baseline surveys by paper questionnaire, follow-ups by web and telephone</li></ul>
<b>Aim 3</b> Gather view of parents and the	<b>Print and social media analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitoring and analysis of print and social media content referring to NCS</li></ul>

wider public on NCS <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored at key points: beginning of NCS projects and around NCS graduations.</li> </ul>
<b>Aim 4</b> Estimate the value for money of the programme	<b>Economic analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost-benefit analysis of impacts from the survey that can be robustly monetised</li> <li>• Cost-effectiveness analysis of other impacts</li> <li>• Benchmarking of NCS value for money against other programmes</li> </ul>

Measuring outcomes for young people in some of these areas such as social mixing and community involvement is inevitably challenging. These are not issues that young people may have thought about in any great depth and individuals could potentially have different views as to what is meant by the concepts of social mixing and community involvement. For these reasons, the measures included needed to be as general as possible, to be as relevant to the majority of young people. It may be that these measures are concealing more specific outcomes for certain young people.

Full details of the design, sampling and recruitment, data collection, and analysis of each of the research strands are provided in the technical report.

## 2.3 The programme logic model

As part of the scoping phase, the evaluation team developed a programme logic model that sets out how NCS should work and achieve its stated aims.<sup>3</sup> The logic model sets out how NCS is intended to work by identifying the inputs, activities, change mechanisms and outcomes of the programme and the relationships between the different elements of the programme. The programme logic model can be found in the technical report.

The programme logic model provided a frame of reference for measuring the success of the programme. Outcomes of the programme were expected to be in four key areas:

- social mixing,
- transition to adulthood,
- teamwork, communication and leadership skills and
- community involvement.

Data collection instruments for each component of the evaluation were designed to capture data on outcomes related to these four areas.

## 2.4 About this report

Data from different components of the evaluation are drawn upon throughout the report. The specific data sources used are summarised in the introduction to each chapter. We have used consistent terminology to refer to different components of the evaluation/ participant groups. These are explained below:

- NCS participants: young people taking part in NCS (they may be referred to as a whole group or in relation to those who took part in the survey or workshops)

<sup>2</sup> Data from this strand has been communicated to the Cabinet Office in a separate report and will be included in full in the final report in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> This is linked to a wider Theory of Change, see Chen, H.T. (1990) *Theory-Driven Evaluations*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.

- National Pupil Database (NPD) sample: young people who did not take part in NCS but took part in our baseline survey
- The control group: the sub-set of participants from the NPD sample that took part in the follow-up survey on the basis of a matching exercise to select a group that was most like NCS participants on key socio-demographic characteristics and pro-social attitudes and behaviours
- Impact survey: the set of questionnaires completed by the NCS participants or NPD control group
- Qualitative interviews/ workshops: the way in which data was collected from young people as part of the process evaluation

Where data are drawn from the qualitative components of the evaluation no numerical figures have been given as the data do not facilitate numerical analysis. However, this information provides in-depth insight into the range of experiences, views and recommendations. Verbatim quotations and case illustrations are used to illustrate findings and labelled to indicate participant type and provider type to preserve the anonymity of participants.

The next 5 chapters of the report explore the main objectives of the study. Chapter 3 sets out who the NCS providers were in 2011 and how they approached delivering the programme. Chapter 4 provides details from monitoring information data and the baseline survey on the NCS participants: how many took part and their socio-demographic profile. Chapter 5 describes the participants' experiences of NCS and its impact on young people, as measured by survey data and described by data from qualitative interviews. Chapter 6 outlines our estimates of the value for money of the programme based on the economic analysis. Finally, Chapter 7 identifies some of the key learning from the qualitative process evaluation on the delivery of NCS, which has been shared in discussions with the Cabinet Office, Department for Education and the 2011 and 2012 providers. The full findings from this will be included in the final report in 2013.

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## 3 The NCS providers

As described in Chapter 1, NCS is a scheme led and co-ordinated by central government but delivered by a range of organisations and consortia that were selected through a competitive process. The chapter introduces the 12 providers that were awarded grants to deliver the 2011 NCS pilots and outlines three typologies that are used to divide providers into sub-groups throughout the rest of the report.

### 3.1 Who were the 2011 NCS providers?

Twelve providers were selected through a competitive process to deliver the 2011 NCS pilots. The 2011 providers comprised a range of voluntary sector organisations, social enterprises and consortia of the two. A brief summary of the background of the twelve providers is provided in the technical report.

### 3.2 Delivery models

Providers varied by size and location in addition to other factors such as their delivery model, governance and charging and funding arrangements. This section aims to give an overview of the different structural approaches adopted by providers and illustrate key provider typologies that are used for sub-group analysis throughout the report.

#### 3.2.1 Size and location

The size of NCS providers, in terms how many places they were aiming to fill, varied considerably, ranging from 3,240 places by The Challenge Network, to 120 places by Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership. Size alone, however, is not the only helpful way to look at the differences between the providers. A second point of interest is the locations in which providers were delivering their programmes. This fell into three broad groups:

- *locally-focused* provision where providers worked intensively in one or more local areas;
- *regional* in which providers worked with partners across a county or adjacent counties; and
- *national* where providers were working across a whole range of regions.

#### 3.2.2 Structure and delivery

There were also key distinctions in the approach of providers in terms of organisational structure and how this determined their approach to delivery. For example:

- Providers acting as the lead and only organisation involved in the delivery. These providers existed at both ends of the size scale with Bolton Lads and Girls Club and The Challenge delivering the programme directly for example.
- A second approach was working as part of a regional consortium, such as Safe in Tees Valley and The Young Devon and South West Consortium.
- Finally, there are a third group of providers who are the lead organisation but contracted out some or all of the delivery of the programme – this was the approach taken by The Princes Trust and Connexions Cumbria for example.

There was also diversity in the delivery of specific aspects of the programme. Notably this related to the nature of the residential. Providers with a background in a particular sector offered more themed NCS programmes, such the Football League Trust and the Field Studies Council. Other providers who were contracting out delivery expected there to be local variation based on the delivery partner’s expertise.

A final element of delivery that differed amongst providers was timing. One approach was for providers to have a single start date for all of their NCS teams. This approach was more apparent amongst smaller providers. Larger providers offered a range of start dates in some cases in two or three waves.

### 3.2.3 Charging mechanisms

Providers were able to implement various models of charging for participation in NCS, on the proviso that this included mechanisms to ensure no one was excluded from taking part due to inability to pay. There were two main approaches to charging for NCS places:

- The first approach taken by providers was not to charge any participants. Half of the providers adopted this approach.
- The remaining providers implemented a range of charging options, including:
  - charging participants a £50 deposit that was refundable following completion of their social action project.
  - charging participants between £20 and £95 but including variation in their costs either by a discount or a bursary for those less able to pay.

In some cases providers also split the costs, charging young people a small application fee and then a further fee for taking part.

## 3.3 Provider typologies

On the basis of some of these key distinctions between the approaches of providers, this section sets out three typologies of providers to enable us to understand what works for different delivery models and the impact of different approaches.

Table 3.1 Provider typologies

Typology	Type	Prince's Trust	Catch-22	The Challenge	V	Football League Trust	Young Devon	Connexions Cumbria	Safe in Tees Valley	Norfolk Consortium	Bolton Lads & Girls	LEBP	Field Studies Council
Size, coverage and structure	Large national	◆	◆	◆	◆								
	Regional consortia					◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			
	Small local										◆	◆	◆
Delivery approach	Direct			◆		◆					◆	◆	
	Contract out		◆		◆								

	Mixed	◆					◆	◆	◆	◆			◆
Charging arrangement	No charge	◆			◆		◆	◆	◆			◆	
	Charge		◆	◆		◆				◆	◆		◆

The implications of these different approaches in terms of retention (Chapter 4), impact (Chapter 5) and delivery (Chapter 7) are discussed in subsequent chapters.

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## 4 The NCS participants

Over 10,000 places on NCS programmes were offered to 16 year olds across England in 2011, with a particular emphasis on recruiting a socially mixed group of participants. NCS providers recorded the participation of 8,434 participants.

This chapter identifies the number and type of young people recruited to NCS and considers whether the programme achieved its aims in terms of the profile of young people recruited. It explores not only the young people's demographic characteristics but their attitudes, behaviour and aspirations at the start of the programme. It then considers the extent to which NCS retained participants throughout the duration of the programme and whether particular types of participant were less likely to complete the programme.

The analysis of participant characteristics at the start of the programme is based on data collected in the baseline survey of the impact study. As described in chapter 2, the impact study selected a control group from the National Pupil Database (NPD), against which to compare and measure change in the attitudes and experiences of NCS participants. Here we use the information collected from NPD sample prior to the selection of a matched control group, weighted so that it represents the population of young people as a whole, to provide a comparison to the general population.

The analysis of numbers completing the programme is based on monitoring information supplied by NCS providers. Survey data is not used here given the likely lower propensity of those who drop out of a programme to respond to a survey about it.

### 4.1 Demographics of NCS participants

#### 4.1.1 Age

The vast majority of NCS participants, almost nine in ten, were aged 16 as was the programme's original intention. However, a small number of participants were under 16 (6 per cent) or 17 years and over (7 per cent), which may reflect guidelines for including other age groups based on learning difficulties or that providers accepted participants aged 15 or 17 rather than see a place go to waste, with the agreement of the Cabinet Office. This picture is reflected in the monitoring information collected from providers (full figures available in the Technical Report).

#### 4.1.2 Social Mix

One of the primary aims of NCS was to achieve a social mix of participants, an important element of which was the engagement of 'harder to reach' groups. The following sections demonstrate that the programme was successful in recruiting a cohort more diverse than the general population in terms of ethnicity and religion, disability and socio-economic background.

## Ethnicity & Religion

With regards to ethnicity, NCS was successful in its aim, recruiting proportionately more young people from minority ethnic groups, compared with the general population of young people. Seventy per cent of NCS participants were white, compared to 82 per cent of the NPD sample. Linked to this, it is unsurprising to find that NCS participants contained slightly fewer Christians than the general population and slightly more non-Christians and people of no religion (as those in minority ethnic groups are known to be less likely to be Christian).

It should be noted that providers necessarily recruited participants to NCS from the local areas in which they operated. The ethnic diversity of local areas differs considerably – and it may be the higher proportion of non-white participants in NCS is broadly in line with the overall composition of the local populations from which they were drawn.

## Disability

Sixteen per cent of NCS participants had a disability or health problem expected to last for more than a year, compared with 12 per cent of the general population of young people. Of these participants, 43 per cent said their illness or disability limited their daily activities, the same proportion as in the general population.

There were relatively more carers among NCS participants than in the population as a whole. Fifteen per cent of NCS participants said they lived with someone who they looked after or gave special help to because they were elderly or had a longstanding illness or disability before the start of the programme, compared with 10 per cent of the general population. It may be that those with particular demographic characteristics are more likely to be providing care for others.

## Socio-economic background

For young people, socio-economic background can be measured in a number of ways. Here, we consider whether young people were receiving Free School Meals (FSM), determined by their family income, and the education and employment status of their parents.

Those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds were over-represented in NCS, with 23 per cent of participants being in receipt of Free School Meals, compared with 14 per cent of the general population. This pattern is endorsed by data on parents' education and employment.

The same was not true of educational background however, where similar proportions of both groups reported their parents had stayed on at school or college. However, NCS participants were considerably less likely to know this information than the NPD sample – meaning these differences should be interpreted with caution.

## 4.2 Attitudes, behaviour and aspirations

This section considers whether NCS participants had different attitudes, experiences and aspirations at the start of the programme compared to the population from which they were drawn. The main differences identified are in relation to pro-social behaviour, with the NCS participants being more 'pro-social' than the general population, and attitudes towards people from different backgrounds.

### 4.2.1 Views on social mixing

At the start of the programme, NCS participants were more likely to state they “enjoyed being with people with different backgrounds” than the general population of young people (76 per cent compared to 67 per cent). It is possible this attitude attracted them to a programme such as NCS. There was, however, no difference between the two groups in the extent to which they viewed their area as one where people from different backgrounds got on well.

The baseline survey also asked questions to gauge the social diversity of friendship groups. NCS participants were similar to the NPD sample in the mix of perceived income backgrounds of their friends but were more likely to have friends from a different race or ethnicity to themselves, and of a different religion. This may be because, given a larger proportion were drawn from minority ethnic groups, the chances to make friends from different ethnic groups were somewhat greater. In contrast, NCS participants were less likely to have friends from a different part of the area in which they lived. On balance, it is not possible to conclude, therefore, that NCS recruits were from substantially more or less diverse social groups than those who did not take part in NCS.

### 4.2.2 Previous experience of volunteering

NCS participants and the NPD sample were asked about their interests outside of school and to choose from a list which activities they had undertaken in their free time in the past 12 months. NCS participants were much more likely to have taken part in some form of pro-social activity in the 12 months prior to taking part in the programme than the NPD sample, with 80 per cent having done at least one of the activities, compared with 67 per cent of NPD sample. The most popular activities reported by NCS participants were taking part in a sports club or team (42 per cent), partaking in an art, drama or music club (24 per cent), or some other youth group or community centre (24 per cent).

NCS participants were also much more likely to say they would like to spend more time taking part in these activities: 79 per cent stated this, compared with 47 per cent of the NPD sample. Clearly, NCS attracted young people who were more pro-socially minded than their peers, perhaps not surprising as it is arguable that such a programme would be potentially more attractive to this group and would meet the aspiration for young people to engage more in organised social activities.

Given this pro-social outlook of the majority of NCS participants and their involvement in organised social activities, it is not surprising that NCS participants were also more likely to have helped out in the past 12 months outside of school hours than the NPD sample. Sixty-nine per cent of NCS participants had helped out in at least one of a range of ways listed in the questionnaire, compared with 56 per cent of the NPD sample. The most popular ways of helping out were raising money for charity, helping a neighbour or someone else local, and helping a local group, organisation or place of worship.

Additional information was collected from NCS participants about how much they were helping out, to create a picture of their activities prior to joining NCS. A third (36 per cent) who had helped out in the past 12 months had done this at least once a week. A quarter (24 per cent) had helped out less often, but at least once a month, and four in ten (40 per cent) helped out less often still, but at least once in the past 12 months. So, over two thirds (69 per cent) of NCS participants had helped out in the past 12 months prior to starting the programme and, of these, 58 per cent had done so relatively frequently (once a month or more). This confirms that, for the majority, participation in NCS did not precipitate involvement in volunteering and helping out; for many, these activities were already regularly engaged in.

Finally, respondents were asked at the start of the programme if they would like to spend more time helping out in the ways considered above. Three quarters (75 per cent) of NCS participants said they would, compared to just over half (52 per cent) of the NPD sample. Of the NCS participants who said they would like to spend more time helping, one in three (35 per cent) were already helping out at least once a week, and three in five (58 per cent) were already helping out at least once a month. So, even though they were already helping out more than the NPD sample, there was a greater aspiration among NCS participants to undertake further activities in this area. Clearly, the aspiration to help out more is likely to have played a significant part in attracting recruits to NCS.

### 4.2.3 Confidence

The survey asked how confident young people were about a range of activities. NCS participants were more confident about staying away from home and ‘having a go at things that are new to me’, though their levels of confidence on other matters were similar to the NPD sample. Confidence about staying away from home and trying new things and both key elements of NCS and likely to have been factors attracting recruits to the programme – or it could be that those who were unconfident about these areas were put off the programme as a result.

### 4.2.4 Plans for the future

The survey also asked about aspirations for the future. They were slightly less likely than the NPD sample to say they would be studying for A/S or A-levels in autumn 2011, and slightly more likely to mention undertaking an apprenticeship. Notably, NCS participants were also more likely to mention voluntary or community work as part of the plans for the coming autumn.

Respondents were also asked what they expected to be doing in the autumn of 2013. The responses of NCS participants were broadly similar to the NPD sample, though slightly fewer said they would be studying full time for a degree or higher education qualification. This may reflect the greater proportion of individuals from poorer socio-economic backgrounds among NCS participants – who are known to be less likely to attend higher education.

Clearly then, the attitudes, aspirations and experiences of NCS participants were somewhat different from the population of young people from which they were drawn. Most notably, they were more pro-social in outlook, had more experience of and aspiration to engage in helping out and were more confident about the activities which NCS entails. In other words, it seems the focus and structure of NCS had a significant role in attracting participants with relevant experiences and interests. For this reason, pro-social behaviour was one of the criteria upon which the control group was matched to NCS participants for the impact survey.

## 4.3 Retention

Retaining young people for the duration of NCS, from initial expressions of interest through sign up and throughout each phase of the programme, is critical to its success. However the programme is designed to challenge young people, and as such it can be expected that not all will go on to complete the programme. The levels of attrition from the programme varied by individual provider and type of provider and occurred at different stages and for different reasons. Here, we examine the success of NCS in

retaining participants, whether particular groups had a greater propensity to drop out and whether any types of provider were more successful in retaining young people.

### 4.3.1 Retention rates

Analysis of the monitoring data supplied by providers shows 8,434 young people started Phase 1 of NCS, with 81 per cent (6,809 of participants) completing the programme in full.

It should be noted that some providers only formally recruited participants at the end of Phase 1 (meaning they could only drop out after Phase 2 or later). Consequently, it is helpful to consider the retention rates pre and post Phase 2. Of the 1,622 participants not completing the programme, a total of 530 (33 per cent) failed to continue to Phase 2 of the programme, with the remaining 1,092 (66 per cent) starting Phase 2, but failing to complete the entire programme.

### 4.3.2 Characteristics of those not completing NCS

This section considers the characteristics of those who failed to complete NCS and whether any groups had a particular propensity to do so. Males were significantly more likely to drop out than were females, with a drop out rate of 21 per cent compared to 17 per cent. While the data suggest younger age groups were more likely to drop out, it is difficult to interpret these results with any certainty, due to the small numbers of participants in each age group other than those aged 16 years. The group at whom the programme was aimed – those aged 16 – were less likely to drop out (17 per cent) than other age groups.

In terms of ethnicity, the results suggest those who are White were more likely to drop out than all other groups (21 per cent drop out) and that Black/African/Caribbean/Black British were the least likely to do so (10 per cent). Given minority ethnic groups were over-represented in the programme initially, this data suggests, by the end of the programme, this over-representation would have been even more pronounced. This might be because providers delivering NCS in areas where there are more ethnic minorities might have had better overall retention rates.

Data on religion suggests drop out rates were lower among those reporting any religion and higher among those reporting no religion. This correlates with the data regarding ethnicity, given that those who are White (who were shown to be more likely to drop out) are also known to be the most likely group not to belong to a religion.

Drop out rates for young people without a disability and disabled young people were not significantly different.

There was a difference in drop out rates according to whether the young person paid a fee to take part in NCS or not. The results suggest those who paid no fee were considerably more likely to drop out. Logically, a fee paid to participate in NCS could represent an investment for the young person, meaning they would be more likely to see the programme through to the end. It could also be that the existence of a fee ensured that those young people who signed up to a programme were particularly committed, and thus least likely to drop out. It should be noted, however, that those who had been awarded a bursary would not have paid a fee – and that this group (due to their selection for a bursary) might have other characteristics making them more likely to complete the programme. For instance, the fact that they had been selected for a bursary might reflect their levels of enthusiasm, aptitude or commitment.

In terms of previous volunteering experience, the results suggest those who had volunteered before were more likely to complete the programme. The qualitative data on why young people took part in the programme suggest that those with more experience of pro-social behaviour were more enthusiastic and aware of the goals of the programme, meaning it would be more likely to fulfil their expectations. See Chapter 5 for more detail on motivations for taking part.

### **4.3.3 Retention rates according to provider**

As seen above, retention rates varied for different demographic groups. The next section examines whether this was the case for different NCS providers or types of provider.

For individual providers, there was substantial variation in provider success in retaining recruits to NCS, with drop-out rates ranging from 0 per cent to 37 per cent. In terms of the provider typologies outlined in Chapter 3, results show that large national providers and small locally focused providers were more successful than regional consortia in retaining recruits, and that those using a direct delivery approach were much more successful at retention than those who used a contracted-out or mixed approach. Those using a direct delivery approach experienced less than half the number of drop outs of those using a mixed approach and less than a third of the number of drop outs of those for whom NCS was contracted out.

These findings can be used to inform the future design of models for delivering NCS, recruitment practice and the focus of retention strategies.

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## 5 Experiences and impacts of the programme

This chapter describes participants' experiences of NCS and the impact of participation in relation to the key outcomes that the programme is aiming to achieve.

### 5.1 Experience of participants

This section uses data from the impact survey and the qualitative interviews to illustrate participants' views of NCS in terms of why they took part and the programme activities.

#### 5.1.1 Why young people took part

As part of the impact survey and in the qualitative interviews, NCS participants were asked about what motivated them to take part. Analysis of the qualitative data identified three sets of reasons for getting involved. Firstly, young people were motivated by the **individual benefits** that they anticipated arising from involvement in the programme. Secondly, young people became involved for more **socially-minded or community reasons**, for example the opportunity to volunteer or improve the local community. A final set of reasons were more **circumstantial** – because they had nothing else to do or because their friends were doing it.

In the impact survey, NCS participant could give as many reasons for getting involved in NCS as were applicable from a set list. Grouping these responses in the same way as identified above, the most commonly cited related to perceived benefits to the individual. The majority (70 per cent) of participants wanted to take part to meet new people and two thirds (65 per cent) of participants wanted to do something different or to try something new. Wanting to have fun (63 per cent) and wanting to learn new skills (63 per cent) were also frequently cited reasons for taking part in NCS. The young people were more likely to personally choose to take part in NCS rather than as a result of encouragement from their parents or teachers or because their friends, brothers or sisters were taking part (around a quarter of participants mentioned these as reasons for taking part).

As noted in the previous chapter, overall NCS attracted young people who were more pro-social than young people in general. As the programme scales up in future years, it will need to recruit more young people that are not engaged in volunteering or helping out. Consequently, the data above was also broken down by whether the respondent was 'pro-social' at the outset of the programme.<sup>4</sup> However, the only noticeable differences were that pro-social participants were more likely to enrol on NCS because they wanted to learn new skills (66 per cent compared with 58 per cent of non-pro-social participants) and, as you would expect, because they wanted to help out in the local area (44 per cent compared with 37 per cent of non-pro-social participants). This may suggest that for the less pro-social young people, greater effort needs to be made to articulate the personal development impacts of NCS; given their limited involvement in this kind of programme, they may be less aware of these potential benefits.

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<sup>4</sup> Pro-social was defined by the answers given to the question on helping out at the baseline study i.e. if a participant said that they helped out in some way then they were defined as pro-social.

As part of the impact survey, the NPD sample was asked why they had not taken part in NCS. By far the most commonly cited reason was a lack of awareness of NCS, with 80 per cent saying they had not heard of the programme and 26 per cent saying they did not know what it involved. Other reasons, such as being on holiday or wanting to do other things with their time were mentioned by smaller numbers of young people, 16 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. These reflect the recruitment challenges that were reported by providers (see Chapter 7 for further detail).

### 5.1.2 Overall views of NCS

Data on participants' views of NCS were collected as part of the impact survey and qualitative interviews. Although the five phase structure was seen to be demanding for both staff and young people, NCS was seen as a positive experience by young people. In the survey, participants were asked to rate how much they enjoyed NCS and how worthwhile they felt it had been. The results were overwhelmingly positive: participants gave an average rating of 9 out of 10 for how much they enjoyed NCS and an average rating of 9.1 out of 10 for how worthwhile their involvement had been.

The survey also asked participants whether they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements related to NCS. Again, the results were positive with the large majorities agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had met people they wouldn't normally mix with (96 per cent), felt more positive about people from different backgrounds (89 per cent), gained skills (94 per cent) and increased their awareness of opportunities available to them (85 per cent). A majority of participants (77 per cent) also agreed that overall, they would be more likely to help out in their local area following their involvement in NCS. However, of all the statements, participants found this the most difficult answer (16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed) and fewer respondents strongly agreed to this statement (21 per cent) than all the other statements.

These are encouraging findings for the programme; section 5.2 provides more robust data on whether this positive feeling about the programme translated into identifiable impacts over and above those seen in a matched control group on the key outcomes the programme is aiming to achieve.

### 5.1.3 Experiences of different phases of the programme

The impact survey asked participants about their preferred phase of NCS. The data shows that phase 2 was participants' favourite, with phase 4 the least favourite. These two phases were also considered the most and least worthwhile respectively

A majority of participants (71 per cent) selected phase 2 (the residential away from home) as their favourite part of NCS, with over half of these citing 'liking the activities' as their main reason for this. This phase also received the highest score out of 10 (8.8) for how worthwhile it was. In the qualitative interviews, participants described challenging activities as a reason for liking phase 2:

*Participant 1: I was going to say the first week was more like they're trying to challenge you.*

*Participant 2: With all the activities you wouldn't normally do.*

*Participant 1: ...out for your comfort zone kind of...which was really good'  
(Young people, Regional consortia)*

Participants also reported that suitable venues and activities and the behaviour of staff were also key elements for making phase 2 a success.

The impact survey indicated that similar proportions of young people thought that phase 3 was their most favourite (20 per cent) and least favourite (17 per cent) phase of the NCS. It received a lower, but still very positive score in terms of how worthwhile the phase was (8.2 out of 10). In the qualitative interviews, participants reported that a similar set of factors affected the success of phase 3 as phase 2. However, it appears that the activities in phase 3 were less popular as they were considered boring and less challenging in comparison. Where the activities were considered a success, this related to them being youth-led and having an observable impact on young people's personal development.

Phase 4 was felt to be the least popular part of the programme with over half (57 per cent) of participants felt that planning their social action project was their least favourite phase. It also received the lowest score in terms of how worthwhile the phase was (7.6). Reasons for this were diverse, with 16 per cent feeling that the week was disorganised and 15 per cent not liking the activities. A tenth (11 per cent) of participants felt that they did not learn anything new and a further 11 per cent feeling they did not make a difference to the local area. In the qualitative interviews participants expressed the view that much of what was taught in Phase 4 they had already learnt at school – the classroom-based nature of some activities was off-putting. It was also felt that this phase was too long. Similarly with phase 3, however, more favourable views appeared to be based on how youth-led the activities and planning was.

The final phase of the programme, completing the social action project was the favourite or least favourite part of the programme for the fewest participants (7 per cent and 16 per cent respectively). It was given a score of 8.1 out of 10 for how worthwhile participants felt it was. In the qualitative interviews, young people identified two key factors that made this phase enjoyable and worthwhile: it was important for young people that the project itself achieved tangible benefits for the community; and good working relationships with community stakeholders were also important.

#### **5.1.4 Views on staff**

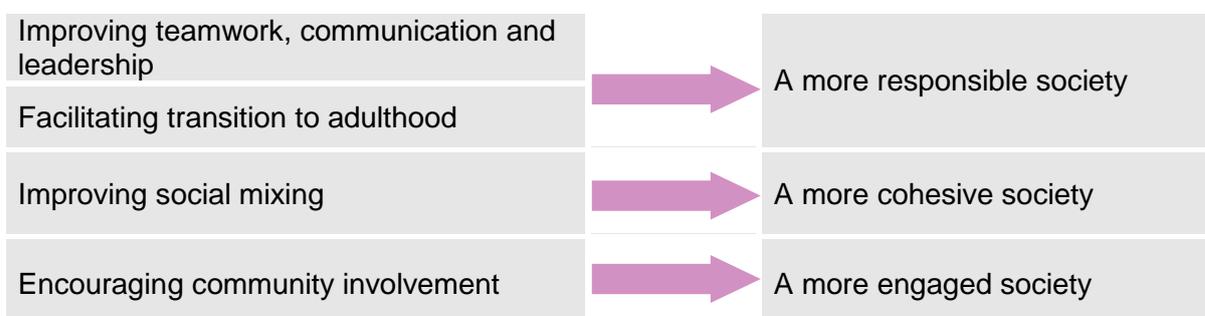
There was widespread agreement that NCS staff performed extremely well under immense pressure and that outside factors were largely responsible for under-performance. Over 90 per cent of NCS participants thought that the staff they spent most of their time with and the help received to plan and run their social action project was good or very good. These figures were slightly higher for participants from providers that had contracted out the delivery of NCS. In the qualitative interviews, where staff were considered to be less effective this was described as lacking focus on the outcomes for young people, with staff too focused on their own work. In models that did not contract out delivery, staff acknowledged that it was possible that they would have other work to contend with in addition to their role on NCS.

## **5.2 Impact on participants**

As described in Chapter 2, the evaluation was carried out using the framework of a logic model outlining the key inputs, activities, change mechanisms and outcomes of the programme. This chapter describes the interim impacts of NCS and the mechanisms and barriers which facilitated or inhibited them, as compared to a matched control group of young people not taking part in NCS. A second follow-up survey in summer 2012 will measure longer-term impacts.

## 5.2.1 Measuring impact

The findings in section 5.1 illustrate that participants really enjoyed and valued their experience of NCS, and reported positive benefits. In addition to this self-reported assessment, the evaluation also aimed to identify the independent impact of NCS. The programme had three broad aims at the outset: to make society more cohesive, more responsible and more engaged. The evaluation has identified impacts on young people in relation to four outcomes that contribute to these three core aims.



In order to measure this robustly, NCS participants were compared to a sub-sample of the NPD control group in relation to a series of tested measures. The comparison sample is matched as closely as possible to NCS participants in terms of key socio-demographic characteristics and on their attitudes towards pro-social behaviour. This approach asks questions about the proposed outcomes of the programme without reference to NCS enabling the same questions to be asked of a separate sample of 16 year olds, the comparison sample, selected to match the NCS participants as closely as possible. This provides a more robust measure of the actual impact of the programme than asking participants what they thought of the programme because in comparing results to the control group the independent impact of the programme can be isolated.

In the sections below, we present two types of data on impact:

- Data from before and after surveys of NCS participants and a matched comparison sample of 16 year olds from maintained schools to measure the independent impact of the programme.
- Data on impacts collected through qualitative interviews with NCS staff and young people. Where measurable impact has been found, this provides an understanding of the mechanisms within the NCS programme that led to these impacts. Where measurable impacts were not identified at an aggregate level by the survey data, the qualitative data maps the range of impacts observed by staff and young people at an individuals level and provides an understanding of the aspects of the programme that meant that these were not more widespread.

## 5.2.2 Summary of impacts

The overall picture that emerges from the impact survey is that NCS has extensive impact on two of the four outcomes and more limited impact in the other two. The impact survey identified:

- A range of statistically significant positive impacts of the programme in relation to communication, teamwork and leadership.
- A range of statistically significant positive impacts of the programme in relation to transition to adulthood
- A small number of statistically significant positive impacts in relation to social mixing, although the overall pattern of change in this area was mixed.

- A small number of significant positive impacts in relation to community involvement although overall pattern of change in this area was mixed.

It should be noted that the outcomes of social mixing and community involvement represent the more experimental elements of the programme. Unlike many of the measures related to the other two outcomes, attitudes to social mixing is an area that does not have a long history of impact measurement, while outcomes related to community involvement are often difficult to measure and detect. Some of the measures used in our impact survey were, therefore, also experimental and will be improved for future follow-up surveys. For this reason, and because some of these impacts may manifest themselves more over the long-term, it is possible, though not certain, that the second follow-up survey taking place in summer 2012 will identify further impacts in these areas.

More information on the methodology for measuring impact is contained within the technical report.

### 5.2.3 Communication, teamwork and leadership

**NCS was associated with large improvements in communication, teamwork and leadership. A range of independent impacts of the programme were identified in relation to these outcome measures.**

The impact survey aimed to measure the independent impact of NCS on young people's teamwork, communication and leadership skills. Table 5.1 illustrates that, on each of five aspects for which confidence was measured, participation in NCS had a significant positive impact.

Table 5.1 Measures of confidence							
Base: All							NCS
	Results				Impact		
	Baseline		Follow-up		Change over time		Difference in difference
	NCS	Control	NCS	Control	NCS	Control	
% confident about...							
Meeting new people	67	67	82	78	14	10	<b>3.83</b>
Working with other people in a team	78	77	89	84	10	7	<b>3.35</b>
Putting forward my ideas	59	60	74	69	15	8	<b>6.57</b>
Being the leader of a team	47	50	63	53	16	3	<b>13.32</b>
Explaining my ideas clearly	58	60	73	71	15	11	<b>4.50</b>
Bases	1613	1569	1579	1527			

The impacts in the table are considered in turn below, alongside the findings from the qualitative interviews that help to explain what underpins these impacts.

#### Teamwork

Before NCS, over three-quarters of participants and the control group were confident about working with other people in a team. While this proportion increased for both

groups, the increase was greater for NCS participants, suggesting NCS improved young people's confidence in working with other people. Examples of three specific team working skills were identified by young people taking part in the qualitative case studies.

- **Learning to work with others**, particularly from different backgrounds: The programme required co-operation between young people who would not usually meet, with young people from different neighbourhoods working together on a social action project. At the start of the programme they were said by staff to have been reluctant to spend any time together. This changed as the young people became familiar with one another through informal social activities and later through teamwork.
- NCS had taken them out of their comfort zone and be **required to build trust, reliance and support** amongst the team: young people's mental and physical resolve had been tested by the challenging activities in phase 2, where they bonded with team mates and came to trust and rely on others. Reciprocity that developed between young people helped them overcome subsequent challenges on NCS.
- Finally, young people identified the importance of **having to compromise** and becoming aware that it was not always possible to please everyone.

#### Case illustration – teamwork and compromise

The importance of having to compromise was discussed by an NCS team who had fund raised for a local charity during Phases 3 and 4. Throughout the week of Phase 3 the young people visited local organisations to find out about the work they carried out before choosing one organisation to fundraise for. The young people said they found it challenging to select a charity because members of the team were passionate about different causes. To overcome this difficulty the young people decided to put the decision to vote and accepted the majority outcome. The team then worked together to plan and carry out a number of fundraising events.

## Communication skills

NCS participants in the impact survey were no more likely to say they were confident about meeting new people than were the control group at the baseline. However, by the follow-up stage four in five participants (82 per cent) said they were confident in doing this – representing a greater increase than for the control group. The impact survey also suggests a positive impact on confidence in interacting with others. Around three in five young people taking part in the impact survey said they were confident in explaining their ideas clearly at the baseline and, while this increased in both groups, it did so more among NCS participants. It is likely that confidence increased in both groups as, since leaving school, they may have had more opportunities to meet new people, through jobs or other summer activities.

The importance of meeting and working with new people to developing communication skills is supported by the qualitative case studies. Young people said they became better at interacting with their peer group by working in NCS teams with new people. Confidence in communicating with adults was also improved through meeting staff, delivery partners and members of the community. In particular participants saw value in meeting adult members of the community from phase 3 onwards in helping to improve their verbal communication skills. Active listening skills were also thought by staff to have improved through these types of activities. In general, improved communication skills helped young people to feel more confident about meeting new people and new situations such as job interviews.

### Case illustration – communicating ideas

A NCS team carried out a consultation with members of the local community to help inform the direction of their social action project. The young people gathered the views of the local community through a questionnaire. NCS staff observed a positive difference to young peoples' communication skills through their involvement in the consultation activity. Members of the NCS team also perceived the programme had a positive impact on their communication skills which made them feel more confident about interacting with adults in the future. (Regional consortia)

## Leadership

The largest impact found by the survey was seen in attitudes to being a leader of a team. Around half of all respondents at the baseline were confident in this role; this rose by 16 percentage points for NCS participants, compared with three percentage points for the control group.

The qualitative interviews enrich our understanding of how young people describe this and what mechanisms facilitated these impacts. The impacts were described in relation to awareness of the importance of leadership and motivational approaches.

- A greater awareness of the importance of leadership to the success of activities: Young people observed staff and peers successfully utilising different approaches to leadership.
- Ability to motivate others and keep them engaged in the task at hand: Different approaches to motivation were thought by young people to have worked more or less successfully for different members of the team. For one young person this had ranged from words of encouragement to more coercive measures:

*'Just talking to people and actually realising that not everyone is the same, not everyone comes from the same background and you need to like handle different people differently, like you can't like, say you shout at one person to get them working whereas like talking to them and saying what you need to do probably works better...'*  
(Case 4, Young people)

Leadership skills were developed in three key ways. Firstly, taught sessions on leadership delivered by staff. Secondly, young people also had opportunities to take a lead on activities throughout the programme and put this into practice. For example, young people were given responsibility for discrete elements of the planning and delivery of the social action project. Finally, young people also benefited from working in teams with people with a range of personalities and approaches to team working. This meant that more reticent young people benefited from working alongside 'natural' leaders and 'natural' leaders learned to step back to allow others to lead the team.

### 5.2.4 Transition to adulthood

**NCS was associated with large impacts on participants' transition to adulthood. A range of independent impacts of the programme were identified in relation to these outcome measures.**

Impacts on transition to adulthood are grouped into five categories: personal qualities, life skills, progression into education, employment and training and reduction in challenging and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The impacts in these areas are displayed in subsequent sections alongside findings from the qualitative case studies that help to explain the distribution of these impacts.

## Impacts on personal qualities

The impact survey asked respondents about three types of personal qualities: self-esteem, well-being and feelings of personal efficacy. In summary, while NCS did not appear to have a particular impact on levels of self-esteem, participation in the programme was associated with an increase in happiness and self-worth and reduction in anxiety. In addition, participation in NCS gave respondents a greater sense of control over certain aspects of their lives. Three key mechanisms were identified in the qualitative case studies: having new experiences and overcoming challenges; a sense of achievement from completing tasks; and successes celebrated by providers and others.

The impact survey used the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale** - a series of 10 questions, answered on a four point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Scores range from 0-30, with scores between 15 and 25 being within normal range; scores of less than 15 suggest low self-esteem. Findings illustrates that there was little change between the baseline and follow-up for either group: NCS did not exert a significant impact in this area.

The reason for lack of impact is likely to be that the vast majority of NCS participants felt within a normal range for self-esteem at the beginning of the programme when the baseline questionnaire was issued. This explanation is supported by the qualitative case studies which found a general barrier to impacts on transition to adulthood was that young people said they already had many of these skills or qualities at the outset of the programme.

Sense of **personal wellbeing** was measured using an 11 point scale (0-10) where 10 represents being completely satisfied with your life nowadays, feeling completely happy yesterday and feeling the things you do in life are completely worthwhile.

Positive feelings of wellbeing increased for both groups, especially for life satisfaction. Changes for the NCS group were significantly different for levels of happiness and feeling things you do are worthwhile, with NCS participants’ measures more likely to have improved than the control group (a difference of five percentage points for each outcome). The qualitative case studies suggest that young people gained a sense of pride and achievement from taking part in NCS, through overcoming personal fears (e.g. heights, speaking to new people, working in groups) and through making a difference to others through the social action project. Furthermore, participants in the impact survey were also asked how anxious they felt yesterday; while slightly more NCS participants said they were not anxious at the follow-up (increasing from 45 per cent to 49 per cent), the opposite was true for the control group (decreasing from 56 per cent to 51 per cent), suggesting a positive difference made by NCS at an important transitional stage of young peoples’ lives.

Young people were asked a series of questions in the impact survey to glean how **in control of their lives they felt**. Two positive impacts of NCS were identified. The proportion agreeing that ‘if someone is not a success in life it’s their own fault’ – in other words, recognising that the individual has some control over the extent to which their life is a success - increased over the summer from 33 to 37 per cent. Participants were significantly less likely than the control group to say this at the baseline, so this is an encouraging increase. Correspondingly, the proportion of participants disagreeing that ‘how well you get on in this world is mostly luck’ increased substantially more than for the control group. The responses to these questions would appear to indicate that NCS has had a positive impact on how in control of their lives young people felt. However, when answers to these questions were combined into a composite measure, the proportion of NCS participants who expressed a positive view on at least four of the measures was not

significantly different from that for the control group (though this had increased substantially for both during the period of the programme).

Participants in qualitative case studies identified two ways in which NCS had a positive impact on young people's self awareness and feelings of personal efficacy. Firstly, the programme was identified as helping young people to have a greater awareness of their own capabilities. The activities in phase 2 helped young people to become aware of their physical capabilities; other elements of the programme made young people become aware of their resilience.

#### Case illustration – improving resilience

A young person experienced bereavement shortly before the beginning of the programme. Staff thought that the young person's experiences on NCS had helped them to come to terms with their loss and had demonstrated to them their resilience in coping with challenging situations.

Secondly, there is also evidence that greater self-awareness could have a positive effect on young peoples' life aspirations. Young people described a shift in attitude towards being more open to trying new and challenging experiences. This included discovering new interests or becoming aware of new opportunities to explore existing interests.

#### Case illustrations – new experiences

A young person discovered they enjoyed rock climbing during Phase 2 of the programme. This was a new experience for the young person and something they planned to continue as a hobby beyond NCS. But equally, they felt that they would use this experience when dealing with other new situations which they might be scared of: 'it was like a lesson that you've still got a few weeks ahead of you, a huge event, so if something comes up don't worry about it 'cause you managed to climb a whole mountain with aching feet. So, I think you can do anything else.'

## Impacts on life skills

The impact survey asked young people how confident they felt about life skills such as managing their money and time management. There was less impact attributable to NCS here than in other areas. While there were increases in levels of confidence in trying new things, managing money, staying away from home, and getting things done on time, this change was also reflected in the control group, so cannot be attributed to participation in NCS.

The qualitative case studies provide further insight into why these impacts were more limited. Three reasons can be identified:

- Young people who said they had already developed skills important for the transition to adulthood at school or through involvement in other youth programmes.
- Staff noted that some young people would not yet recognise progress they might have made in this area, particularly not in self-reported measures like the questions reported above.
- The approach of staff could either enable or inhibit impacts on life skills. It was important to young people that they were treated as 'adults' by staff, with associated values such as respect and independence. Despite overall positive views of the staff, young people were not always thought to have been treated in this way by staff which could reduce impacts on life skills:

*'...from talking to [young people], they just want the freedom to be treated like that. To be treated like they're good people, and not like school kids. And I think it's important for whoever is recruited to, to recognise that and not treat them like kids. I think that's a huge, I mean, that's the feedback they were saying. They couldn't, they couldn't even go down the shop on their own, you know, and, and they want to be treated like adults. They want that respect.'* (Staff, Large national provider)

The qualitative interviews do identify positive impacts in these areas for some young people. In particular, this was in relation to young people's skills for independent living and working and capacity to exercise responsibility and take ownership of activities.

These impacts were prompted by two components of the programme:

- Living away from friends and family during the residential phases helped young people become more independent. The home residential in particular was important for impacts on life skills because it enabled young people to enjoy independent living within the familiar environment of their local community.
- During the residential and social action phases young people were also encouraged to take a lead on activities, a new experience for a group of young people who said that they were used to things being done for them or being told what to do at school or home.

### **Case illustration – taking responsibility**

A team of young people that carried out a social action project aimed at improving a community garden said they valued having freedom to deliver to their own project. The young people said this helped them feel more 'grown up', improved their capacity to exercise responsibility, and gave them a sense of pride and achievement. The importance of young peoples' contribution to the community was validated by friends and family recognising their achievements.

## **Progression into employment, education or training**

Participants in the impact survey were asked about their attitudes to education and their plans for the future. In summary, NCS had a positive impact on interest in learning, and a corresponding increase in the proportion planning to study for another qualification. These impacts are described below.

Firstly, participants were asked about their attitudes to education. There was little change in attitudes towards the statement 'education is worthwhile' among either group: the majority agreed with the statement. There was, however, a slight change in the proportion in each group disagreeing that 'I'm not interested in doing any more learning'. This increased interest was especially marked for NCS participants (from 84 per cent to 92 per cent compared to 87 to 91 per cent for the control group) suggesting an independent impact of the programme of three percentage points.

Participants were also asked about their plans for the coming autumn and could choose as many categories from a list as they wished. The majority were planning to study AS/A-levels in a sixth form or college. This option was particularly popular in the control group, perhaps because NCS was more attractive to those less likely to continue academic study (with vocational interests or from more deprived backgrounds). Seemingly, the strongest impact of NCS was on people deciding to study for another qualification in a sixth form or college – this rose from 27 per cent to 34 per cent between our two surveys – a seven percentage point increase, compared with a rise of one percentage point in the control group (29 per cent to 30 per cent). Both groups saw a doubling of the proportion expecting to undertake voluntary or community work, or expecting to look after the home or family.

Finally, participants were asked to choose from a list of activities they expected to be doing in Autumn 2013. Over half said they would be studying full-time for a degree or higher education qualification; the second most popular answer – working full time – was given by around one in six. There were no differences in change over time between NCS participants and the control group.

Young people taking part in the qualitative case studies also discussed impacts on progression to employment, education or training. Two types of impact were identified. Firstly, young people who were less certain about their aspirations benefited from the opportunity to consider their next steps and could be inspired to pursue new opportunities.

### Case Illustrations – progression to employment or education

A young person was said by staff to have been considering going to college as a result of their experiences on the programme. The young person, who had been excluded from mainstream school, was said to have found it initially challenging to work in a large group. However, staff thought the young person was better prepared for a college environment following their experiences of working in a team on NCS. Another young person who had begun the programme without a clear career direction had told their parent they now had a greater awareness of their interests. Having a clearer sense of the future was thought to have encouraged the young person to become more focused on securing the grades required to pursue their interests.

A second type of impact was improving young peoples' capacity to progress into employment, education or training in line with their aspirations, with three mechanisms identified.

- Gaining transferable or directly relevant skills, qualifications and experiences was thought to improve young people's chances of securing an employment, training or education opportunity. This was particularly valued by young people who felt they lacked qualifications and experiences required to pursue their aspirations.
- Expanding their social networks was also thought to improve opportunities for education and training. Examples of this included a young person that secured a work experience placement with a community organisation and a young person who was supported with their application for the uniformed services by a commanding officer involved in NCS.
- Young people also expected the programme would help them to secure education, training or employment opportunities by enabling them to demonstrate their skills and experiences to employers, training providers and universities.

### Case Illustrations – skills for the workplace

One way a group of young people working with a provider documented their time on NCS was through capturing video footage. This footage was then edited by the young people to show-case their journey on the programme, and shared with friends, family and the local community. A young person who had been involved in capturing video data thought their experiences on the programme had given them a good grounding for a career in media. Another NCS team thought their construction related social action project had helped them develop transferable skills. Initially, the young people were said to have been over-excited, but over time they were observed by staff and community stakeholders to have modified their behaviour and respected the importance of complying with workplace regulations. The young people themselves reported having a better understanding of what is required of them in the workplace and saw this as a valuable experience for the future.

Three factors were thought to reduce impacts on progression to education, employment or training:

- Young people did not always see the skills they had gained as directly relevant or transferable for some specific aspirations, e.g. a career in the uniformed services.
- The value of the skills and experiences gained on NCS were thought to be diminished by lack of awareness of the programme amongst employers.
- The increasingly competitive labour market was also discussed by young people planning to enter work that Autumn:

*'...even if you have A stars across the board, you still have no chance of getting a job.'* (Young Person, Regional consortia)

It will be important for the 2012 providers to ensure that activities aiming to develop skills are as directly relevant to young people's needs and aspirations as possible.

### Reduction in challenging and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

Asking young people about their likely engagement or intention to engage in anti-social behaviour in a quantitative survey is inherently problematic. Not only is there an issue of social desirability (with people wanting to present themselves in a positive light), but it is difficult for young people to predict the circumstances in which they might be encouraged to engage in anti-social behaviour and how they might react. For these reasons, we asked two questions to tap into young people's general attitudes to avoiding trouble and to resolving problems in their life – phrasing these in terms of young people in general ("some young people") to discourage the view that one particular response was desirable.

There was a slight increase in the proportion of NCS participants in the impact survey who said they 'had no problems' in their lives. While the control group remained stable though were not statistically significant differences. NCS appeared to have a positive impact on wanting to stay out of trouble: the proportion of NCS participants describing the statement 'some young people want to stay out of trouble' as 'just like me' increased (61 per cent to 64 per cent), whereas it declined in the control group (69 per cent to 65 per cent), giving an impact of seven percentage points.

That NCS could contribute to a reduction in challenging or ASB amongst young people is supported by the qualitative case studies, which identified to enabling factors.

- Staff and community stakeholders expected that a group of young people would have engaged in challenging or ASB over the summer had they not taken part in

the programme. This view appears to be supported by the young people themselves who alluded to previous involvement in challenging or ASB.

- Taking part in NCS was also thought to have improved the behaviour of this group of young people whilst on the programme and was also expected to protect against future involvement in ASB. These changes were attributed by staff to young people having a greater awareness of the consequences of ASB on the community.

### Case Illustrations – progression to employment or education

This type of impact is illustrated by a NCS team who visited a local organisation during Phase 3 of NCS to observe the affects of ASB on a local park and to understand the financial cost involved in repairing the damage. Within the group there were young people that said that the experience would make them think twice about getting involved in ASB in the future.

## 5.2.5 Social mixing

**NCS was associated with independent impact on a small number of outcomes relating to participants’ attitudes to social mixing. On the whole the impact in this area was variable.**

On the whole, the impact of NCS on social mixing was more variable. The impact survey found that NCS had an independent impact on fewer of the related outcomes than for other areas. The qualitative interviews highlight two main reasons for this:

- Impacts on social mixing were thought to be influenced by the degree to which young people meet others from different backgrounds on the programme. While NCS achieved good social mixing overall, there was a feeling amongst providers that social mixing at the team level was less pronounced. For example, where young people worked in a team with people from diverse backgrounds this could help improve understanding of diversity, encourage the development of attitudes and values for social mixing and expand social networks.
- There was also a sense that some young people already had a relatively diverse social network thus reducing the impact of meeting others from different backgrounds on the programme. The impact survey found that the vast majority of young people in the NCS and control groups said at the baseline that they had friends from different estates/parts of the village or town, race or ethnicity and religion, which supports this explanation. As the programme expands, it will have to attract greater numbers young people who have less diverse social networks which may increase the capacity for impact in this area.

While fewer impacts on social mixing were identified at the aggregate level, this does not mean that there was no impact on attitudes towards social mixing for a given NCS participant. Despite the barriers that appear to have prevented this being the dominant experience, the qualitative interviews identified that where there was impact, it occurred in three areas: knowledge and understanding of diversity, attitudes and values for social mixing and expansion of social networks. These impacts are discussed below.

### Knowledge and understanding of diversity

Young people expressed differing views on the extent to which NCS had increased their awareness and understanding of diversity. Where NCS was thought to have had an impact this was on awareness and understanding of dimensions of differences such as religion, disability and ethnicity. Young people also said their awareness and

understanding of other dimensions of difference including socio-economic, geography and education had also increased. The prevalence of this type of impact is not known as it was not covered in the impact survey.

### Case illustration – awareness and understanding of difference

A group of young people increased their awareness of cultural/ religious practices through meeting a staff member from a different faith background. The young people enjoyed having the opportunity to learn about Halal meat, and contrasted the value of meeting people from different backgrounds compared to learning about difference through textbooks in school. (Large national provider)

## Attitudes and values for social mixing

The impact survey asked young people about attitudes and values pertaining to social mixing. The proportion of NCS participants who agreed their **local area** is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together increased by 12 percentage points following their participation in the programme, compared with an increase of 18 per cent for the control group in the same period. Taking part in NCS is therefore associated with a negative impact of six percentage points. An explanation for this from the qualitative case studies is that young people could have experienced challenges working with the local community during the social action phases or that as part of the residential they had been taken to areas where other communities had better relations.

The impact survey also identified no significant impact of participation in NCS on **trust in people in the local area**. This increased similarly for participants and the control group. It is possible that both groups spent more time with people in their local area over the summer than they would do during term-time, contributing to a heightened level of trust. There was an overall increase in both groups in those agreeing that they enjoy being with people from different backgrounds; as the level of the increase was similar, this cannot be attributed to taking part in NCS.

Nevertheless, the qualitative case studies help illuminate the ways in which the programme may have supported positive impacts on some young peoples' attitudes to mixing with people from different backgrounds.

Firstly, NCS was thought by young people to have positively impacted on their attitude and confidence towards meeting people from different backgrounds and feeling that diversity was enriching. For a group of young people NCS was also thought to have affected their willingness to meet people from different backgrounds in the future. A Muslim girl was said by staff to have been thinking about choosing a college with a greater diversity of students than originally planned as a consequence of successfully meeting people from different backgrounds on the programme.

Secondly, young people also discussed positive impacts on values important to social mixing, such as judging people they did not know. Examples were given of young people deciding that others were not their 'sort' of person before having the opportunity to get to know them. These initial judgements were influenced by characteristics based on the way another young person dressed or the school they attended. Similar feelings were articulated by another group of young people:

*'Yeah, when we first met the people [other NCS team] we immediately thought these are not the type of people we would hang out with or talk to. As soon as we got to know them after the Army we were like oh my God they're just like us [laughter] and*

*it was like, it was like, wow we stereotyped them pretty bad.’ (Young people, locally-focused provider)*

These views changed as young people from different backgrounds were brought together and given an opportunity to get to know one another in a safe environment. In the longer term young people thought that their experiences on NCS would encourage them to treat others as individuals and not to label them.

*‘...at first I thought oh I might not get along with these people because we’re not the same but like as the week went on I just found out that, you know, it’s really easy and they’re very nice people and you’ve just gotta go for it and talk to them and stuff and stop judging them.’ (Young People, Regional consortia)*

Alternatively, however, meeting people from different backgrounds could validate as well as challenge perceptions of others. For example, a parent said that their child had mixed experiences of working with other young people from a different school. It was however, thought to be important that young people got to know others before making a judgement about them.

Finally, other values important for social mixing discussed by young people were respect, tolerance, and openness to difference. This type of impact is illustrated by an NCS team that visited an organisation supporting adults with physical disabilities during phase 3 of the programme. Within the team there were young people who said that they would show greater respect to people with disabilities in the future because of their experiences at the community organisation. Other young people said they became more tolerant and had developed strategies which helped them to live and work with others whose approach and outlook on life were different from their own.

*F1: It was good like practice for college life 'cause you're not going to be with your friends always so, it was really good like mixing in with other people and to experience how it's going to be in college when you don't know others so.*

*F2: So, you get, you, you learn more about people's cultures and like how people are, different and have different lifestyles (Young people, locally-focused provider)*

This type of impact was a young person previously involved in altercations arising from difference of opinion who was said by a staff member to have been more willing to listen to differences in viewpoints. These values were thought by young people to be valuable for the future.

### **Case Illustration – befriending people they would not otherwise have met**

Young people working together in a NCS team said it was unlikely they would have become friends in day-to-day life as they belonged to different ‘cliques’ or came from different areas. It was therefore surprising for the young people to discover shared interests and form new friendships with team mates. An additional impact of the friendships formed on NCS was that young people said they had an increased awareness and respect for differences in personality.

## **Expansion of social networks**

As part of the impact survey, respondents were asked to think of all of their friends, both in and out of school, and indicate what proportion were from different backgrounds to their own. Slightly more than half of the respondents in each group stated at the baseline that most or all of their friends were from a different part of their area; the control group saw a decline in this proportion (from 18 per cent to 13 per cent), which remained stable

for NCS participants (rising slightly from 13 to 15 per cent), suggesting participation in NCS had the impact of stalling this decline of seven percentage points. This is perhaps because the programme provided more opportunities to make new friends with those outside the local area, shifting the balance of friendship groups overall.

There was a significant decline of four percentage points associated with participation in NCS in the number of participants who said that none of their friends were from a different religion to them (20 per cent to 17 per cent) compared to the control group (increasing from 20 per cent to 21 per cent), suggesting the social mixing element of NCS had an impact here.

In the qualitative interviews young people said they had made new friends on NCS, including friendships with others from different backgrounds. This impact was surprising for young people who initially did not expect to get on with others because they were different to them. 'Unlikely' pairings were said by staff to include young people from different socio-economic groups, cultural backgrounds or personalities. A shared NCS experience had been important to fostering friendships between young people from different backgrounds by providing them with a common reference point. Another mechanism was the activities in phase 2 as these acted as a 'leveller' and encouraged close cooperation between young people. These relationships continued to be strengthened throughout the community residential and social action phases of the programme as young people worked together as a team, supporting views on the value of the incremental nature of the programme outlined in Chapter 7.

In addition to gaining new friends, young people said NCS had helped them to recognise the value of friendships and the role they can play in helping young people feel connected to the wider community. Amongst the friendships made on NCS there were relationships which were expected to continue beyond NCS. A barrier to this happening however, was geographical distance between young people. This was viewed by other young people as less problematic due to social networking sites.

#### Case illustrations – finding common ground

Two young people who perceived they were from different backgrounds discovered they had a shared interest in horse riding, and formed a friendship. This friendship was said to have been an unexpected benefit of their involvement in the programme.

## 5.2.6 Community involvement

**NCS made only limited impact in the area of community involvement, with attitudes largely unaffected but some change in behaviours. A small number of statistically significant positive impacts were identified, although the overall picture was otherwise mixed.**

As set out in the logic model, NCS aimed to impact four areas relating to community involvement: connection to the local community; ability to make a difference; rights and responsibilities and impacts on pro-social behaviour. The impact survey found only limited independent impact of NCS on these outcomes for participants at an aggregate level. As with social mixing, the qualitative interviews can shed some light on the barriers to impact in these areas; they can also identify impacts that were described by individual participants or by staff.

Types of impacts on community involvement and the mechanisms that either facilitated or inhibited impacts are described below.

## Connection to the local community

There were young people in the qualitative case studies that said they had greater awareness of the positive work carried out within their communities through involvement in NCS. This was highlighted to one NCS team when they visited a local organisation providing a befriending service to members of the community:

*On the Friday when we went to the church and at the back of the church there was that small centre where like middle aged people could come and just talk, just acquaint themselves with other people their age and just have someone to talk to. And I was completely unfamiliar that [city] did things like that and things like that existed because I think sometimes like loneliness is so consuming and it was so nice to see just people just getting together. (Young people, Locally focused provider)*

Young people's feelings and connection to their local community were improved by having a greater awareness of the positive work carried out by local residents and organisations:

*'It's made me appreciate my community a lot more... 'cause there's actually so many things out there that nobody knows about.'* (Young People, Large national provider)

This connection was also fostered through involvement in social action within the local community. However, where young people did not consider their local community to have been the locus of the social action project this reduced impacts in this area:

*I: DO YOU THINK IT'S MADE ANY DIFFERENCE TO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?*

*F: No*

*M: 'Cause I don't live, none, none of us really...*

*F...No, what I mean, none of us live in this area...it's not ours [the local community] (Young People, Large national provider)*

Where this had been the case the NCS team was made up of young people from across a number of communities. This was particularly an issue in disparate, rural areas where it was challenging to recruit a sufficient number of young people from one area. In this circumstance a solution discussed by staff was to carry out a number of smaller social action projects in each of the areas the young people lived in.

## Ability to make a difference

Participants in the impact survey were asked whether they felt listened to and how able they felt to make a difference to their local area. On the whole both NCS participants and the control group felt listened to by their families but were less likely to feel their views are taken seriously by local people. The control group improved more than NCS participants on these two measures, indicating a negative, though not statistically significant difference in these areas. An increase was also seen in both groups in the proportion agreeing that when local people campaign together they can solve problems, and the proportion agreeing that government listens to people like me doubled, but still remained low. However, these changes were broadly comparable for participants and the control group. While the proportion who felt they cannot change the way things are

done locally declined in the control group, NCS appeared to have a positive, though not significant, impact in this area.

The qualitative case studies suggest that young people who had successfully helped out in the community prior to NCS saw social action as an effective way to bring about change. Where other young people were less positive this was because they were not confident that members of the local community or government would take them seriously or invest the resources required to bring about change. Two views emerged after the social action phases. On the one hand young people said they felt empowered to make a difference in their local community in the future. This was attributed by young people to working successfully with the local community to make a positive difference through the social action project. Contrastingly, other young people described a sense of disempowerment, indicating their views had not been taken seriously by members of the community:

*'...We can't do anything because the whole point of it is for us to do something and for us to give back to the community, but it's like the community won't let us because they don't trust us.'* (Young People, Locally focused provider)

Negative perceptions of young people amongst some members of the community were seen to contribute to this as it was felt they were less likely to respect or trust young people. This was thought to have been compounded by lack of awareness of NCS among some members of the community which was thought to have reduced their buy-in to the programme. It is important for 2012 providers to bear this in mind: team leaders should consider carefully the community partners they work with. Equally, this is a further reason to improve the national level marketing of the programme.

## Rights and responsibilities

Participants in the impact survey were asked whether they agreed with the statement that '.....it's everyone's responsibility to help out in these ways'. There was an increase in both groups in the proportion agreeing, though this was more strongly seen in the control group. It might be surprising how relatively low these numbers are, with less than two in three agreeing with this statement at the follow-up stage.

## Impacts on pro-social behaviour

Despite not having a discernable impact on attitudes to helping out, NCS was identified with some positive impacts on actual levels of helping out. Participants in the impact survey were asked whether they had given time to help out outside of school hours. At the baseline they were asked to think about the last 12 months; at the follow up stage they were asked about July and August 2011. NCS participants were asked to think of ways they had helped out *excluding* anything they had done as part of NCS. Assuming this did not result in any double-counting, it would seem participation in NCS had an impact of four percentage points on the likelihood of helping out a neighbour, with the increase in the proportion helping a neighbour or someone local increasing from 31 percent to 40 per cent compared to 31 per cent to 36 per cent in the control group. What might be surprising about this, and potentially masking other possible future increases, is that this was in addition NCS activities and NCS participants will have had little free time while undertaking the programme. We might expect to see a further increase at the second follow-up survey to be completed in June 2012. Slight declines in many of the activities might also be expected given that a number of the examples of helping out are

facilitated through school groups young people partake in during term-time that are less likely to happen during summer holidays.<sup>5</sup>

Participants in the impact survey were also asked about time spent helping out in July and August 2011. NCS participants were asked to count only help they had given *outside* of the NCS programme. We can see that NCS participants were more likely to have spent some time helping out, but we must not rule out the possibility that they counted something they did as part of NCS mistakenly here. The data suggests that NCS participants who helped out were more generous with their time than the control group – with 19 per cent giving up more than seven hours per week over the summer, compared with 12 per cent of the control group. However, for time given overall there are few differences between the two groups, though NCS participants were significantly more likely than those in the control group to have given less than five hours overall. This suggests the NCS group were particularly active during a shorter time period, and that perhaps some respondents included NCS-related helping; or that involvement in NCS was seen as sufficient ‘helping out’ at that time.

Finally, the impact survey asked whether participants would like to spend more time helping in a range of different ways. This can be interpreted as a measure of their willingness to help within their communities. Taking part in NCS did not appear to increase young people’s desire to help more in their community at an aggregate level. However, NCS participants were more likely originally to say that they wanted to spend more time helping out than were the control group (by 17 percentage points), a gap that narrowed by the follow-up stage, with 10 percentage points separating the two groups. This suggests NCS attracted socially-minded young people – who perhaps did not have any further capacity to extend their commitment to helping out. Anecdotal data from NCS alumni teams suggests that this is happening and the extent to which this is the case will be measured in the second follow-up survey in summer 2012.

Young people in the qualitative case studies also discussed their willingness to help out in the future. Where NCS was thought to have had a positive impact on young people’s willingness to help out this was attributed to involvement in meaningful social action. This was characterised by successfully working with the community to bring about tangible, positive change. Positive experiences of social action helped young people to realise the value of contributing small amounts of time and energy and the difference this can make to communities.

### Case Illustration – making a tangible difference in the community

A team of young people carried out a social action project designed to recognise the positive contribution of residents to the local community. The community was invited to nominate individuals who volunteer their time, and the young people also nominated members of the community who were known to them to have made a valuable contribution. Each person nominated was presented with a plant by the young people. The reaction this evoked was unexpected, but edifying for the young people, and demonstrated to the young people the value of on-going involvement in their community.

Young people acknowledged, however, that whether or not this was translated into pro-social behaviour would be influenced by two factors:

- *Awareness of opportunities:* Whether or not young people knew where to access information about volunteering opportunities was thought to affect engagement in

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<sup>5</sup> There is broader evidence from the Citizenship Survey to suggest that pro-social activity drops off after people leave school, Lee et al (2011)

volunteering beyond NCS. One way in which young people had become aware of new opportunities was through local workers and community organisations. An example of this was a young people who had been invited by a community organisation to become a volunteer mentor for young people with learning disabilities

- *Availability of suitable opportunities:* Even where young people are aware of opportunities, they may not be appropriate. Young people living in dispersed rural communities thought that the number of volunteering opportunities within their local area would be limited. In this case, the young people had travelled to another geographical area to carry out their social action project.

### 5.3 Impacts for different groups of young people

It was envisaged that NCS could potentially have varied impacts for different groups of young people because of the considerable differences that existed in their experiences, attitudes and aspirations **before** taking part in the programme, as detailed in Chapter 4. For example, it is clear to see how, theoretically, NCS might have a bigger impact on an individual with no previous experience of helping out outside of school - for example by raising money for a charity, organising a petition, or helping a neighbour. It was also envisaged that NCS could have the potential to have a greater impact on those who, from a socio-economic perspective, were more deprived and who may have had fewer such opportunities to take part in the activities involved in NCS and acquire the associated skills.

To test these theories, we repeated the analysis reported previously for two sub-groups: the 'non pro-social', those who had not helped out in any way outside of school; and those from lower socio-economic groups, defined in terms of being in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM).

Few impacts on 'non pro-social' young people were identified, that had not been found for the group of NCS participants as a whole. One area where there was a significant impact on only the 'non-pro-social' group was in reported levels of confidence surrounding working with other people as part of a team. Here the increase in confidence reported by 'non-pro-social' NCS participants of 16 percentage points was twice that for 'non-pro-social' people in the control group (a difference in difference of 7.8 percentage points). Other differences between the programme impact experienced by the pro-social and the non pro-social were variably positive and negative and appeared to follow no clear pattern. Similarly, no trends were identified in relation to those who received FSM in terms of experiencing a different impact from NCS than did their less economically disadvantaged counterparts.

### 5.4 Impacts across different provider types

As detailed in Chapter 3, NCS providers were categorised in three ways to examine what factors relating to their characteristics and delivery approach might have been associated with particular programme outcomes. For example, Chapter 4 demonstrates how those providers who did not contract out elements of the delivery and who operated at a national level were the most successful in retaining participants. To identify any variability in impact among the different types of providers, we analysed the different impacts reported in this chapter by the three provider typologies. Although different types of provider in some cases had significantly better or worse impacts than others on individual measures, no clear pattern emerged within or across the four types of outcome; the general trend seemed to be for different types of providers to do better in

some areas and worse in others than alternative types of provider, with there being no clear pattern or theoretical explanation for any of these differences. Therefore it can be concluded that the impacts of NCS were not highly differentiated across the population of NCS participants – either by the characteristics of the participants or those of the providers themselves.

## 5.5 Sustainability of impacts on young people

A key part of NCS is to generate impacts for young people that are sustainable. The qualitative case studies identified three sets of factors that were thought to either increase or erode the sustainability of impacts on young people. Firstly, environmental factors such as a young person's peer group or home life could have the potential to erode or bolster positive impacts on young people. In addition to this, two factors related to NCS were instrumental to the sustainability of impacts: progression into education, employment or training; and on-going contact and support.

- *Progression into suitable education, employment or training* was thought to increase the sustainability of impacts on young people by enabling them to consolidate the skills gained on NCS. Providers helped young people to progress into positive opportunities such as referring them to other youth programmes.
- *On-going contact and support* was thought to increase the sustainability of impacts on young people. Types of support discussed by staff included: practical and emotional support, NCS alumni events and on-going contact with NCS peers. A level of support was felt to be beneficial for all young people graduating from NCS, but particularly so for young people for whom impacts were thought to be fragile. This included young people who were not engaged in positive activities following NCS. The risk of not providing support to these groups of young people in particular was that the skills and learning gained on NCS would be lost, thus reducing the value of the programme. There was concern that on-going contact and support for young people had not been sufficiently planned or resourced. For example, there was felt to be value in having continuity of support for young people, but this would not be possible where staff had been employed on a temporary basis.

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## 6 Value for money

This Chapter assesses the value for money of NCS based on:

- the costs of the service, in total and per participant;
- the projected economic benefits compared to these costs; and
- a comparison of the costs and the benefits with those of similar programmes and/or programmes aiming to achieve similar outcomes to NCS.

The calculations and assumptions that lie behind these findings are set out in the technical report. It should also be noted that this is an interim assessment of the value for money of the programme and will be updated to reflect the findings of longer-term impact later in 2012.

### 6.1 Unit cost

The 2011 NCS pilots cost the government £14.2 million to deliver. An additional £3 million was raised by providers, including both additional funding and in kind support. This means that unit cost per commissioned place was £1,303 to government and £1,553 in total.

For the present economic valuations, however, we use the cost per participants that completed the programme (n= 6,809). As discussed in the next chapter, some providers were unsuccessful in recruiting their target number of participants for the programme. This is to a large extent responsible for the difference between the cost per commissioned place and the costs per recruited place. While this cost is higher than the cost per commissioned place for this year, contract arrangements will work differently in subsequent years. In future, funding will be much more closely related to the number of young people who take part. Consequently, the cost per participant completing the programme should get closer to the cost per commissioned place, meaning a more favourable ratio of costs to benefits.

Figure 6.1 Breakdown of costs to providers

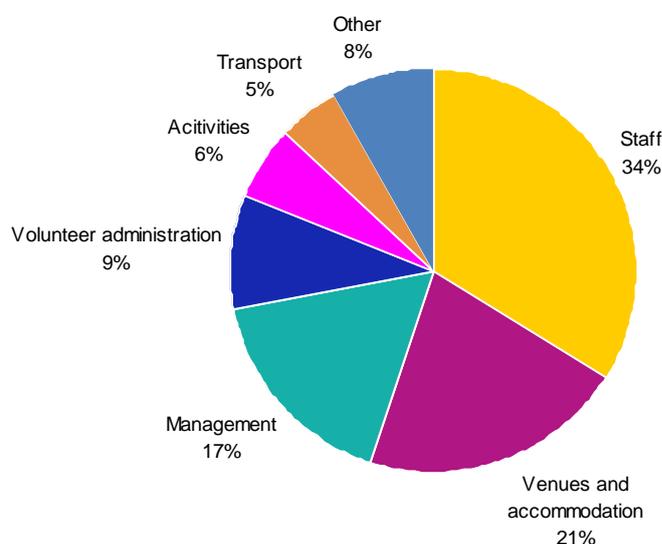


Figure 6.1 indicates the breakdown of costs incurred by providers. Staff and management costs make up half of the programme's costs. Remaining costs include venue and volunteers costs, albeit with considerable variation across individual providers. The distribution of costs highlights that a great majority of costs are incurred up front regardless of how many participants complete the programme. This demonstrates the importance of providers meeting recruitment targets in determining the unit cost of the programme.

## 6.2 Benefits of the programme

### 6.2.1 Economic impacts of the programme

The analysis of the economic benefits of NCS below is based on a bespoke approach that reflects the nature of the programme and its outcomes. As a combined volunteering and personal development programme the clearest economic benefits of NCS come from two main sources: (1) the value of the volunteering provided and (2) the development of non-cognitive skills and changes in pro-social attitudes. Specific economic benefits can be estimated based on three distinct impacts of NCS:

1. Benefits resulting from the time spent volunteering by the participants as part of their programme;
2. Future benefits resulting from increased teamwork, communication, and leadership; and
3. Future benefits resulting from greater take up of economic opportunities.

The net present value of the benefits to society as a whole are estimated to be up to £28 million, which is made up of:

- the equivalent of £618,000 in time donated by volunteers over the course of the programme;

- £10.2 million in increased earnings for NCS participants because of increased confidence in teamwork, communication, and leadership; and
- Up to an additional £17.1 million increase in earnings for NCS participants because of greater take up of education opportunities.

A portion of these benefits of £28 million to society accrue to government in the form of tax revenue. Specifically the present value of the benefits to government are estimated to be up to £7.6 million, which is made up of:

- £2.8 million from the increased earnings for NCS participants because of increased confidence in teamwork, communication, and leadership; and
- Up to an additional £4.8 million from the increase in earnings for NCS participants because of greater take up of education opportunities.

As the pilot programme costs the government nearly £14.2m, the **societal benefits are between one and two times the cost** of the programme. The lower end of this range reflects the uncertainty in the above estimates, as explained in the technical report. If, in future, the unit costs of the programme should fall to the cost per commissioned place but the benefits remain the same, the ratio of benefits to costs could be as high as three to one.

The actual benefits may be greater than these estimates for two main reasons:

- Unit costs were calculated using the proportion of participants that completed the whole programme, so those who dropped out may still have benefitted in some way.
- The value of additional benefits that are not easily given an economic value (increased well-being, benefits of volunteering, social mixing and reduced anti-social behaviour) are not included in these estimates.

## 6.2.2 Non-monetised benefits

### Factors associated with anti-social behaviour

The impact study identified change in the pro-social attitudes among NCS participants. This is shown by the slight increase in the proportion of NCS participants in the impact survey who said they 'had no problems' in their lives and a slight increase in the proportion of participants who aligned themselves with the statement 'some young people want to stay out of trouble' as 'just like me.'

The level of anti-social behaviour and crime in an area is known to have negative economic impacts. However, we do not propose to value these impacts for two reasons:

1. The survey shows only slight improvements in pro-social attitudes.
2. A range of other exogenous factors will influence the level of anti-social behaviour and crime; any estimate will be subject to uncertainty and challenge.

### Subjective Well-Being

Approaches to put an economic value to life satisfaction are discussed in the recently published supplement to HM Treasury's Green Book (Fujiwara & Campbell 2011, *Valuation Techniques for Social Cost-Benefit Analysis*). Annex B of the supplement tabulates the main methodological studies that place monetary value for a range of non-market goods. However, the authors do not include any study that has monetized subjective well-being in a robust manner. Similarly, Dolan and White (2007, *How Can Measures of Subjective Well-Being Be Used to Inform Public Policy? Perspectives on*

*Psychological Science* 2: 71) argue that current methodological limitations in measurement make the economic calculation of the benefits of subjective well-being still problematic. Because of these caveats, the present economic analysis does not include a value of subjective well-being.

### 6.2.3 Caveats of economic analysis

The monetary benefits are based on the best estimate available from the evaluation impact and secondary literature. Still, they need to be treated with caution due to the following caveats:

- There is a risk of double-counting benefits. However, our analysis indicates that such overlap is low. Approximately 11% of participants who benefit from increased leadership skills have also had an improved attitude towards education and more pro-social attitudes.
- Estimating the economic benefits relies on predicting future behaviour and attitudes based on results drawn from academic research that studied cohorts in different education systems and labour markets over many years. The next follow up survey of NCS participants will look at changes in behaviour and attitudes over a longer period of time, but not over the whole working life of the participants. In addition to validity issues, the research literature itself is not always consistent about the magnitude of these economic benefits.
- The most relevant academic studies are based on impacts that do not perfectly match the specific impacts of NCS as identified through the survey findings.
- As shown in Chapter 5, some impacts of NCS are not consistent and strong enough to make firm estimates of what future economic benefits might be. In particular, there was not a statistically significant impact on some of the possible outcomes (e.g., on the self-esteem of participants) that are known to have economic benefits.
- Any positive impacts may be offset in part by any negative impacts. As shown in Chapter 5, NCS appears to have a negative effect on some outcomes, such as enjoying being with people from different backgrounds.
- The benefits are typically expected to be realised over several years.

## 6.3 Costs and benefits compared to similar programmes

To understand how NCS compared to other programmes in terms of value for money this section compares its costs and benefits to those of similar volunteering and social action programmes and programmes that achieve similar outcomes using different methods. However, it is not possible to make clear direct comparisons because of differences in the structure of the different programmes.

The unit costs of NCS are similar to the costs of similar residential programmes undertaken in the United States. But the costs of the latter are not directly comparable to the costs of NCS because we do not have the raw cost data for the U.S. programmes. Likewise, the outcomes of NCS on young people are similar to those identified in similar programmes. Despite this, it is not sensible to compare the cost-benefit ratios of NCS against the ratios of other programmes. Variations in terms of programme structure, components, delivery as well as different evaluation methodologies and measurement of outcomes make such comparisons meaningless. This section does not provide exact like-for-like comparisons but does identify how NCS fares against similar types of programmes.

### 6.3.1 Comparison of costs

The differences in costs are in large part influenced by whether programmes include a residential element. In this light, NCS costs appear indeed to be in line with other large scale programmes, as shown in the table below. Simple volunteer programmes (such as Teen Outreach and Millennium Volunteers) have typically much lower costs as these involve mostly administration rather than personal development. However, note that the non-residential AmeriCorps programme has higher costs than NCS because of the tuition stipends given to participants. If, in future, the unit costs of NCS should fall to the cost per commissioned place then the cost of NCS would be lower than the cost of these comparison programmes.

Programme	Duration	Est. cost per week (35 hours)
NCS	7.5 weeks (incl. residential)	£331
AmeriCorps	900 - 1700 hrs (non-residential)	£375 - £410
Nat'l Guard Youth Challenge	20 weeks residential	£446
Teen Outreach	45 hours	£250 - £350

### 6.3.2 Comparison of benefits

As described in Chapter 5, NCS found a whole range of benefits to young people in relation to a number of key outcomes. The evaluation found benefits similar to those found in some of the comparator programmes, with some exceptions. Evaluations can only find benefits they are looking for, so direct comparisons are difficult to make. The youth programmes that we looked at considered three kinds of benefits (personal, educational and community-based).

Programme	Personal			Education			Community		
	Leadership	confidence	life satisfaction	Enrolment	grades	employment	Volunteering	social mixing	crime rates
<b>Evaluations with control group</b>									
NCS	✓	✓					✓	✓	
AmeriCorps						✓	✓		
National Guard	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Teen Outreach				✓					
AimHigher					✓				
SCEP				✓					
Quantum					✓		✓		
<b>Evaluations without control group</b>									
Project Scotland	✓								
V-Inspired	✓						✓	✓	
Youth in Action	✓	✓						✓	
Millennium		✓					✓		
Outward Bound		✓	✓						
YouthBuild									✓

Programme	Personal		Education		Community		
JobStart				✓			✓

Regarding personal benefits, similar to the findings of NCS, leadership skills were found to improve in several other programmes (Project Scotland, V-Inspired, Youth in Action and National Guard). The latter programme was evaluated using a rigorous treatment/control design. Similarly to NCS, the evaluation of other programs (Youth in Action, Millennium, Outward Bound) found impacts on self-confidence. Effects on life satisfaction / resilience were shown in National Guard and Outward Bound but not in NCS. Participants in NCS did experience benefits in several measures of well-being, though not directly in the measure of life satisfaction.

The effect of NCS and similar programmes on educational outcomes and attitudes towards education are mixed. Several similar programmes emphasized the measurement of educational outcomes (measured either by the likelihood to enrol in training and higher education, course grades, attitudes towards education and the chances of securing employment in adulthood). But the results vary considerably across programs, with improvements in course grades and enrolment in further education courses figures being the most consistent in evaluations using robust control-group designs. This is similar to the NCS programme which appears to have generated among some participants a more positive attitude toward higher education. However, generally, participants' attitudes towards education were rarely measured, and when they were, no strong effects could be found (AimHigher).

Finally, community benefits reported by other programmes include the value of volunteering, social mixing and reduction of crime and delinquency. Half of the comparator programmes stress the benefits of the volunteering service both to the community and to the participants who gain valuable skills. Social mixing was reported in two other programmes (V-Inspired and Millennium Volunteers). Three evaluations showed significant impacts in crime reduction, notably at National Guard, which uses a control-group design. By contrast, NCS participants did not appear to benefit greatly from social mixing, though, as explained above, this may have been in part because the participants reported having relatively diverse networks when they started the programme.

### 6.3.3 Summary information on comparable programmes

Similarly to NCS, a number of programs (*National Guard, Project Scotland, V-Inspired, Outward Bound, Youth in Action*) have found increases in participants' social skills (team working, leadership e.g.) and self-confidence.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, many comparative programs had an emphasis on educational outcomes measured either by the likelihood to enrol in training and higher education, course grades or decrease in the likelihood of unemployment. Tangible benefits in educational achievements were found for participants of the *National Guard, Teen Outreach, AimHigher, Millennium Volunteers, JobStart, Quantum and Youth Build* programmes. However, the two programme evaluations that tested attitudes towards education (AimHigher and JobStart) found no significant impact. The other focus of most programs was *crime outcomes*. *National Guard, JobStart* and *YouthBuild* were shown to have a positive impact in reducing delinquency.

<sup>6</sup> Note, however, that the programmes claiming these results were evaluated without a treatment/control group design.

The tables in the technical appendix present information on comparable programmes used in the analysis above. The tables are divided to show:

- Volunteer programmes that were evaluated with control groups. We have given more weight to these evaluations than to the evaluations of other programmes.
- Volunteer programmes that were evaluated without control groups.
- Education / personal development programmes.

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## 7 Learning for NCS in 2012

This chapter presents some of the key messages to come out of the process evaluation of the 2011 pilots. The learning from these findings has been shared with 2012 providers to ensure that the findings from this evaluation feed directly into improvements in implementation and delivery of NCS. Where possible, the recommendations made below have been reflected in changes to the design and guidance for 2012 providers. The full findings from the process evaluation of 2011 and 2012 will be included in the final report due for publication in 2013. The next three sections identify the key recommendations for delivery identified by the process evaluation, with the final section identifying key challenges for up-scaling the programme.

### 7.1 Branding and recruitment

A key element of the role of the provider was to engage and recruit a sufficient and diverse group of young people. The findings of the process evaluation highlight some significant challenges faced by providers and identify important lessons for future delivery.

#### 7.1.1 Approaches to branding and recruitment

- There was a range of views on the effectiveness and suitability of the branding, yet broad agreement that it only had a limited impact on recruitment
- NCS branding was not felt to articulate what NCS is about and how it could benefit participants; there was some concern that the name and imagery of the Union Flag colours could be misleading and off-putting to some potential participants
- Where providers used their own branding in place of or in addition to NCS branding, participants were less likely to be aware that the programme they were on was NCS
- Providers used multiple approaches to attract different types of participants, though direct, face to face methods of recruitment were considered as more effective
- This is reflected in how young people found out about NCS, with participants significantly more likely to have found out about the programme through school or a youth worker; non-participants were more likely to have heard of NCS through a leaflet or media advert

Recommendation	Whose role
A centralised, national level strategy for marketing and communications to improve awareness of NCS	NCS Programme Team
Review of branding of NCS to appeal to widest possible cohort of young people	NCS Programme Team and providers
Ensure sufficient budget for face to face recruitment.	NCS Programme Team and providers

### 7.1.2 Recruitment challenges

- Lead-in time was not felt to be long enough to establish a local presence for the programme and engage with those working with young people.
- Engaging schools was not always easy (particularly independent schools), partly as a result of feeling they were ‘going in cold’, but also in relation to finding the right person in a school with whom to work.
- Youth clubs and other youth services were difficult to engage.
- Providers also noted that they were facing competition from other demands on young people’s time: competing with exam commitments during recruitment and competing with other summer schemes and summer jobs during delivery.
- Providers responded to challenges by being more flexible and responsive in their recruitment approach (more hands-on and proactive as time wore on) and in their selection criteria, for example widening the age range to avoid seeing a place go to waste.

Recommendation	Whose role
Consider longer lead-in time for planning recruitment strategies and developing relationships	NCS Programme Team
Start recruitment as early as possible, though retain resources for maintaining contact up to start of NCS	Providers
While general advertising is important, ensure budget for face to face contact is sufficient	Providers
When involving schools aim to identify an ‘NCS champion’ amongst school staff to assist with recruitment	Providers
Consider involving NCS alumni in recruitment, particularly as a tool to demonstrate potential benefits of NCS	Providers

### 7.1.3 Barriers to achieving a social mix

- In addition to the general recruitment challenges noted above, providers faced specific difficulties in achieving a socially mixed composition within NCS teams
- Not all providers worked with a diverse group of young people prior to NCS and it took time to forge new links, although relationships developed during the 2011 pilots can be utilised more easily in future years
- Providers also noted that some specific social groups had other commitments: for example more deprived young people may have to work or less deprived young people may be away on other programmes organised by their school.
- There were also elements of the programme design that were potentially not inclusive: the activities on residential not always being appropriate for disabled young people; residential per se not being deemed appropriate for young people lacking confidence or those with caring responsibilities.

Recommendation	Whose role
Develop clearer guidance on how to interpret social mix locally	NCS Programme Team
Involve partners with specialist knowledge and track-record of	

working with hard to reach groups	Providers
Consider a more flexible programme design to ensure all young people can take part	NCS Programme Team and providers
Retain or expand bursaries/discounts for more deprived young people	NCS Programme Team and providers
Consider the appropriate social mix to ensure that this is not to the detriment of the NCS project team	Providers

## 7.2 Set-up and staffing

The effective use of human and financial resources can have a significant bearing on the experience of NCS participants. The evaluation has identified what worked in relation to raising additional funding, recruiting and organising staff and volunteers and ensuring they are fully equipped with the training and support required to deliver the programme.

### 7.2.1 Raising additional funding

- Providers adopted three approaches to supplement government funds for delivering the programme: direct fundraising; accessing in-kind support and internalising costs
- Direct fundraising and accessing in-kind support were facilitated by the existing links of providers and allowing potential sponsors to interact and engage with participants
- Internalising costs was more of a last resort and was less available to providers not delivering directly or with less experience of this kind of programme.

Recommendation	Whose role
Aim to involve NCS participants from past or present in fundraising activities to enable engagement of potential sponsors with the aims of NCS	Providers
Utilise existing, trusted relationships where possible to save time 'selling' NCS and the provider	Providers

### 7.2.2 Recruiting staff

- Selection criteria for staff fell under three headings: professional qualifications and experience; personal qualities; understanding of the role and of NCS.
- All providers noted the importance of professional experience, yet not all required specific qualifications and felt personal qualities were more important; another view was that qualifications were required but that they should not be enough on their own.
- Approaches to recruiting staff varied along a continuum of closed to open recruitment – the combination of approaches was determined by the availability of providers' own resources and their organisational policies.
- Four barriers to recruiting staff were identified: the temporary but intensive nature of the role; a lack of lead-in time; the nature of local labour markets; and the break down of providers' relationships with partners from whom they hoped to second or recruit staff.

Recommendation	Whose role
Consider longer lead-in times: recruit as early as possible	NCS Programme Team and providers
Consider offering NCS throughout the year to make positions more attractive and allow providers to retain learning	NCS Programme Team
Adopt multi-stranded recruitment strategy to spread risk	Providers
Seconding staff or recruiting internally should be considered as a way to mitigate the effect on recruitment of the short-term nature of the role	Providers

### 7.2.3 Staffing structure

- Staff were employed at three levels: strategic; intermediate or cross-cutting; and direct delivery staff. Among smaller and/or direct delivery providers, structures were flatter and did not always include separate intermediary staff (strategic staff played these roles).
- Despite the difference in staffing models, providers typically felt that on residentials, a ratio of 1:3 to 1:5 adults (staff and volunteers) to participants was required.
- However, there was concerns that this was not always achieved because: the number of volunteers was not sufficient, putting extra pressure on team leaders and providers were unable to retain staff across the entire programme
- This led to problems bringing in new staff halfway through or insufficient staff numbers at pinch points in the programme (e.g. the transition between the two residentials)
- Volunteers were also employed and key to the programme, particularly mitigating the effects of staff shortages at key points in the programme.
- Providers identified two key factors outside the control of staff that affected their ability to do their job: excessive workloads, particularly around the residentials; gaps in training or experience, notably in relation to working with challenging young people

Recommendation	Whose role
Staff to young people ratio should not fall below 1:5	Providers
Providers should be aware of the possibility of teams fracturing and cliques forming, where teams are larger than 12	Providers
Staffing models should aim to include: clear lines of responsibility for decision-making; enabling sharing of information; maintaining good working relationships	Providers and NCS Programme Team
Front-line delivery should aim to include: suitable ratio of staff to participants; clearly defined team roles; consistency amongst staff in dealing with young people.	Providers
Volunteer roles should be as flexible as possible while matching volunteer skills with tasks	Providers

Volunteers should be recruited from the local community where possible

Providers

## 7.2.4 Training and support

- Training was provided in three areas: NCS orientation, working with young people and practical necessities including safeguarding; and delivered either through face to face (in some cases residential) settings or e-learning
- Gaps in training were identified at a strategic and delivery level in relation to guided reflection; delivery staff identified gaps in relation to managing residential and working with challenging young people in some cases.
- Where training worked well it was felt to be relevant, was provided in a manner that wasn't rushed and gave an opportunity for practical learning.
- Top-down support from the Cabinet Office was largely appreciated by providers, though there were some concerns with formal, contractual nature of the relationship
- This translated into less flexibility and more bureaucracy than providers are used to; assessment and reporting requirements were also seen as excessive.
- Providers also had concerns about the lack of facilitation of peer-to-peer support to share practice across providers.
- Top-down support within providers was valued, though not always sufficient due to commitments of strategic staff or a lack of links between providers and delivery partners.

Recommendation	Whose role
Training should be fully factored into staff inductions to avoid rushed courses	Providers
Bringing staff together with young people in 'real life' situations should be central to training	Providers
Clearer training on what guided reflection means in practice and practical skills for residential	NCS Programme Team and providers
At strategic and delivery level provide platforms for peer-to-peer support	NCS Programme Team and providers

## 7.3 Delivery

Providers were required to deliver the programme in accordance with the delivery model devised by the Cabinet Office. Within this model there is some flexibility to allow for different approaches at each stage. The evaluation identified views on the suitability of the overall model as well as what worked at each stage of the programme from qualitative interviews with NCS staff and volunteers and workshops with NCS participants.

### 7.3.1 The overall programme structure

- Young people had positive views on the overall programme structure: NCS participants gave a score 9.1 out of 10 for how worthwhile their experience was and 9 out of 10 for how much they enjoyed it
- According to these scores, phase 2 was the most popular and phase 4 the least popular of the phases of the programme
- There was also broad support amongst NCS staff for the programme structure in relation to its incremental nature and slow build-up, which encouraged young people to increasingly take a greater lead in driving their team and projects.
- Concerns over the structure related to the timing and ordering of the residentials, the overall length of the programme and suitability of phase 4 as a discrete phase.

Recommendation	Whose role
Consider flexibility in the length of the programme as shorter versions may make it more accessible	NCS Programme Team
Consider the delivery of the programme at different points throughout the year to make it more accessible	NCS Programme Team
Consider changing the order or structure of the residentials to reduce the burden on staff and intensity for young people	NCS Programme Team
Consider reviewing the need for all five phases.	NCS Programme Team

### 7.3.2 Key issues in relation to the delivery of phase 1

- Phase 1 events that encouraged young people to take part and reassure parents about the residential relied on professional, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff
- Where recruitment was a challenge, staff found it difficult to afford phase 1 events the required attention to always achieve this
- Pitching meetings and activities at the right level was important, striking a balance between informative (share key information about the programme) and engaging (maintain the interest of young people)
- Flexible timings were valued by participants, as were the inclusion of meals.

Recommendation	Whose role
Ensure phase 1 maintains engagement of participants but also allows anticipation of behavioural issues or specific needs of participants before residentials	Providers
Ensure good attendance and knowledgeable, enthusiastic staff for events to work	Providers
Flexible timings, meals and carousel approaches are recommending for maximising attendance	Providers

### 7.3.3 Factors affecting successful delivery of phase 2 and phase 3

- Suitability of the phase 2 venue in relation to the activities possible, the menu and the sleeping arrangements
- Effectiveness of adventure challenge staff: whether they worked with young people in a manner consistent with the approach of the provider
- The pacing and structure of the residential required a balance of organised activities and free time to enable young people to get to know each other informally.
- The behaviour of young people and the preparedness and expertise of staff to deal with behavioural issues
- The effectiveness of staff to support young people and maintain their interest is affected by fatigue, staff attitudes and staff experience
- Opportunities to work with other NCS teams were important in sharing experiences and making young people aware of the broader scale of NCS
- Phase 3 was less popular amongst young people than phase 2; staff suggested that the purpose of phase 3 was less clear and difficult to articulate and that it lasted too long on the back of the first residential

Recommendation	Whose role
Ensure venues are secure but also have a novelty value that makes the experience something different	Providers
Rebalance the nature of the activities in residentials so that phase 3 is not considered less exciting than other elements of the programme.	NCS Programme Team and providers

### 7.3.4 Factors affecting delivery of phases 4 and 5

- Phase 4 was less structured than the previous phases, so it was challenging to manage this transition to a more youth-led approach. More young people felt this phase was disorganised and didn't teach them anything compared to other phases.
- Planning for phase 5 as early as possible enabled young people to take ownership of the project and establish links with community partners; in some cases phase 4 was subsumed into previous phases and eased the transition from the residential phases.
- The extent to which these phases were youth-led also affected the experience of participants, with staff noting the importance of balancing young people taking the lead but also being able to call on structured support when required.
- Social action projects retained the interest of young people where:
  - a wide range of community members were involved
  - skills that young people had developed during the programme were utilised
  - tangible, observable benefits were achieved
- The experience of working with community stakeholders could make or break the experience for young people: supportive, engaged stakeholders improved confidence of working with others and feelings of being able to influence local events; disengaged, unsupportive stakeholders had the opposite effect.
- Identifying suitable and effective community stakeholders was facilitated by existing links and early planning.

Recommendation	Whose role
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Begin project planning as early as possible to enable time for choices to be youth-led	NCS Programme Team and providers
Careful selection of community partners to ensure they remain supportive, engaged and add value	Providers
Ensure projects aims achievable and impacts tangible	Providers

### 7.3.5 Retention

- Reasons for young people not completing the full programme can be categorised as voluntary (due to young people’s attitudes towards the programme) or involuntary (due to external circumstances)
- Prior to phase two, involuntary reasons included falling ill, finding employment or moving away from the local area; voluntary reasons were described as young people deciding they wanted to have break following exams and not go straight into the programme or that phase 1 had not kept their interest.
- Beyond phase two involuntary reasons for not completing the programme were as above but also included being sent home for disciplinary reasons; voluntary reasons included homesickness, not feeling part of the team, or not being motivated to do the social action project.

Recommendation	Whose role
<u>Phase 1 to Phase 2</u>	
Regular on-going contact between a young person first showing interest and then turning up for phase 2.	Providers
Consider over-recruitment strategies for phase 2	Providers
<u>Phase 2 onwards</u>	
Better use of guided reflection to increase awareness of progress during the programme	NCS Programme Team and providers
Completing phase 5 on a full time basis to avoid conflicting with other commitments	NCS Programme Team and providers
Effective staff intervention aided by better advance information about young people’s specific needs	Providers
Design behavioural contracts to set expectations about young people’s behaviour	Providers
Encourage peer-to-peer support amongst young people	Providers

## 7.4 Up-scaling the programme

The government has commissioned 30,000 NCS places to be delivered in 2012. Staff and young people were keen to be involved in or recommend NCS in 2012. The increase in scale does, however, create additional challenges in delivering the programme. In order to ensure that successes from the first year pilots are continued and learning can

be translated into greater and more cost effective impacts in 2012, staff identified two key issues relating to up-scaling: recruiting enough young people and staffing the programme.

#### *Raising awareness and recruiting participants*

- To meet higher recruitment targets in 2012 and beyond providers will need to make significant improvement in terms of the ratio for converting young people for expressing interest into participants
- Awareness of NCS nationally will also need to improve to facilitate this expansion
- However, 68% of young people surveyed as part of the comparison sample said they would have liked the opportunity to participate in NCS
- Furthermore, 92% of participants said they would recommend NCS to other young people, suggesting involving alumni in recruitment would be worth pursuing

#### *Staffing the programme*

- Providers were concerned about the feasibility of increasing the number of NCS staff nationally by three times and the impact this might have on other youth services
- There were also concerns over the availability of physical resources such as venues and minibuses

#### **Recommendations for the Cabinet Office**

- Consider longer lead in times to improve NCS planning and recruitment
- Aim to improve the stability of providers' positions by awarding longer contracts
- Consider allowing greater flexibility in some aspects of the programme delivery
- Aim to ensure the programme is coherently 'championed' at national and local level.

## **7.4.1 Revisions to the programme in 2012**

The NCS Programme Team, and providers, have drawn on the lessons from the 2011 pilot in both the design and implementation of the 2012 pilots, and in the development of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for 2013, 2014 and 2015. Below is a summary of how the Programme Team has responded to the recommendations in this evaluation. Where actions taken respond to recommendations across the themes, they have been referred to under the heading where they are most relevant.

#### *Branding and recruitment*

The NCS Programme Team has developed a national branding and marketing strategy making extensive use of social media, and utilising celebrities who have a strong appeal to the target cohort of Young People. Providers have been supported in planning and implementing their recruitment efforts by longer lead times for delivery in Summer 2012 (initial grants were made in September/ October 2011) and support and training from a central team, including seminars, workshops and hands-on, tailored advice. Achieving a social mix is a key objective of the programme and to that end the Programme Team has made a number of links with national charities representing particular groups, for instance the National Deaf Association, as well as funding bursaries for disadvantaged Young People who would not otherwise be able to take part. Social mix has also been tracked as part of the Programme's Management Information to ensure that teams represent the diversity of the communities the Young People come from.

#### *Set up and staffing*

The NCS Programme Team has supported the sharing of best practice and lessons learned between providers in the 2012 pilots through central guidance and follow-up

support on how to implement full elements of the Programme. Particular emphasis has been given to explaining how personal development and guided reflection can be achieved through the programme. Interactive workshops and "train the trainer" events have been run with providers free of charge to facilitate peer to peer learning, and the integration of these concepts in programme delivery.

#### *Delivery*

In 2012 the Programme Team are running smaller scale pilot programmes during the Autumn in addition to Summer pilots. The Autumn pilots will enable the Programme Team to test the impact on accessibility of running the programme at different times of year, and with different timescales and structures.

The Programme Team has provided guidance and support for providers to enhance the quality of young peoples' experience in the 2012 pilots. The Programme Team has made strategic links between providers and national charities and businesses in order to enhance phase 3, as well as providing guidance on how to transition from more directed, to a more youth-led approach through the phases.

#### *Up-scaling the programme*

The Invitation to Tender (ITT) for contracts in 2013, 2014 and 2015 is being launched in the same week as the evaluation report. The longer duration of these contracts will give providers a longer lead time for planning their activities and give greater financial stability.

The 2012 process evaluation will continue to identify what has worked well in delivering NCS, paying particular attention to revisions in the design and recruitment. Findings from this evaluation will be available in 2013.