



**KNOWING ME
KNOWING YOU**
creating a more welcoming society

National Policy Proposal:

**Adapting the National Citizen
Service**



Erasmus+

INTRODUCTION

The Knowing Me, Knowing You national-level policy proposal for improving social integration and making migrants more welcome is based on the National Citizen Service (NCS). The NCS was introduced in 2009 to improve social mobility in young people aged 15-17. Having recognised the success of the programme in giving young people of different backgrounds the opportunity to meet each other and engage in local and national social action together, we feel that further developing the NCS scheme to specifically address the barriers to integration will positively affect youth integration and will expand the scale of social mobility.

BACKGROUND

The National Citizen Service is a summer programme aimed at improving social cohesion, social mobility and social engagement. Its primary focus is on young people aged 15-17 with the programme being divided into three parts: adventure, discovery and social action. The core aims of the programme are in line with improving social integration in the UK and the scale of the impact that the NCS has had is one we wish to have with our integration policy. The National Citizen Service is open to all young people regardless of ability, income, ethnicity, faith or background. An independent evaluation of the impact of the National Citizen Service in tackling mobility, cohesion and engagement found that 7 in 10 NCS graduates are more confident leading and working in teams¹. One of the elements necessary for improving social integration that we have identified is improving an individual's confidence in their new country² and NCS has been noted to reduce anxiety and boost confidence in trying new things.

However, in the NCS report on life satisfaction two years on, it was found that the impact does not seem to endure beyond the year that the participants take part in NCS.³ Crucially, this does not mean that the programme has lost its value: 8 in 10 NCS participants keep in touch with people that they met through NCS⁴, and relationships are a fundamental aspect of social integration. Despite the two-years-on assessment, NCS still has positive implications on the participants and indicates that our proposal requires follow-up in the project in order for the 'friends for life' slogan to hold true for NCS participants. Ultimately, having this follow-up allows participants to have a continuous support system after the summer programme has ended and this will help to remedy the matter of lasting impact.

Cumulatively, NCS participants dedicate 7 million hours of social action each year during the programme.⁵ Social action is a core part of the NCS agenda and the impact of working in the community extends the legacy of the programme. Investing in helping the community empowers participants to feel like they can

¹ "About Us". 2018. National Citizen Service. <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/about-us>.

² British Academy for the humanities and social sciences. 2017. "If you could do one thing...": The integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers."

<https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/British%20Academy%20IYCDOT%20Case%20Studies.pdf>

³ National Citizen Service. 2015. "National Citizen Service 2015 Evaluation". London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ National Citizen Service. 2015. "National Citizen Service 2015 Evaluation". London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



have a positive impact on the world around them. Social engagement can also affect the integration process by making it a two-way process: Britons can see the active engagement of immigrants in their community, built on a vested interest to make it their home⁶.

NCS provides unique benefits for personal development: public speaking, a safe space to communicate things learnt about oneself and facing one's fear during the adventure and discovery week. For many participants, particularly in metropolitan cities in London, this is the first opportunity to visit the British countryside and to travel affordably across the country. Not only can this broaden their view of their new country, this can help migrants originally from rural areas create links between their home and host countries.

NCS facilitates independent living as young people live in halls of residence with a budget, teaching them responsibility and how to work and live as a team. Such an experience bonds people, providing the foundation for long-term friendships to be made. Establishing relational networks for people who may have few ties in Britain is a significant integrative impact of the NCS programme. The programme also puts teams together based on preferences for activities such as Drama or Music so that individuals can identify with their team on the account of shared interests, finding commonalities where there may otherwise be few.

The social action elements of the project that each young participant must undertake provide long term engagement with local communities, allowing the better integrated participants to be tied to their local communities, empowering them to seek support from community services that NCS partnerships may have exposed them to.

NCS is commended for bringing together individuals from very different backgrounds, leading to friendships formed outside of young people's schools and immediate local community. 95% of participants say that the programme gave them a chance to get to know people they wouldn't normally meet⁷, and 82% of participants finish the programme feeling more positive about people from different backgrounds⁸. This suggests that all participants are better socially integrated thanks to the programme.

The size of NCS - with over 300,000 young people now having taken part⁹ - suggests that this can be a powerful tool for integration at the national level. 90% of participants say they would recommend the programme to others and view the experience as worthwhile. This popularity suggests that such a programme could be adapted effectively to engage more young people, and that more youth would want to take part if they were given the opportunity to do so.

IMPLEMENTATION

⁶ Bell, Richard & Plumb, Nick. 2017. "Integration not Demonisation: The final report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's inquiry into the integration of immigrants." http://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/themes/570513f1b504f500db000001/attachments/original/1504379228/TC0016_AAPG_Integration_not_Demonisation_Report.pdf?1504379228

⁷ Lynas, Michael. 2018. "The Little Book Of NCS". National Citizen Service.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "About Us". 2018. National Citizen Service. <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/about-us>.



National Level Policy Idea – Widening the NCS to reach an older cohort

The policy objective is to implement a national policy programme which enhances social integration between the following groups: the British white majority, ethnic minorities and migrant groups. It aims to implement the current NCS programme as a social integrative initiative for 16 – 29 year olds. Currently, it operates as a national-level policy programme for 16 - 17 year olds.

To widen the age cohort of the programmes participants, **we propose that we can change the operational structure of the programme in terms of the four phases of the programme, the recruitment strategies for participants and the courses offered.** We have also identified the risks of this policy proposal and how such risks can be minimised, as well as feasibility and applicability considerations.

OPERATIONAL CHANGES

We propose that the structure of the NCS programme should be changed to accommodate the needs of older groups who are likely to have obligations preventing them from participating in the programme as it currently stands.

We propose that phase 1 should continue as a 4 nights/5 day residential adventure where participants focus on outdoor team-building activities. However, phase 2 (discovery skills development and community explorations) should take place on weekends or set weekday evenings for a duration of 4 months. This flexibility will ensure that those groups already in work, or those who have other family obligations, can still attend the sessions. This will prevent the programme from simply attracting NEET groups and younger cohorts, which could potentially stigmatise the programme. There should be an emphasis on promoting skills (vocational and soft) which our target groups may require to fully socially integrate into British society. This element of the programme could involve a buddy system which entails social and employment mentoring. Further, to appeal to older participants specifically, this element should stress the opportunity to learn vocational and entrepreneurial skills (e.g. encouraging participants to volunteer with local charities), similarly to the present SCOUTS programme.

We aim to ensure that migrants are well supported throughout this phase, and that their agency, contributions, and long-term needs are met. One of our proposals is a buddy system between fluent English speakers and those with lower English proficiency. In order to ensure that this does not lead to a power imbalance, the person with lower English proficiency will be encouraged to teach their buddy a skill or language so that it is a two-way transaction and the value of each other's knowledge thanks to different life experiences is appreciated. The hope is that this will lead to a bond being formed between the buddies and that this relationship will be kept up outside of the programme. This should greatly improve integration as communication between migrants and others becomes easier through their command of the English language – hopefully it will give the buddies the chance to create a lasting friendship. Furthermore, if we have a workshop teaching about migration/integration and solidarity, such as the Wonder Foundation, “A Migrant Like Me” workshop, this should directly improve social integration as greater understanding and awareness is built around migration.



Phase 3 (action designing and delivering social action projects) should be 2 months in duration and again, require a certain amount of hours for completion either on the weekend or during weekday evenings. We propose that this part of the programme include specific social integration workshops where participants are able to discuss issues in a safe space. Participants can be encouraged to speak candidly on the issue and initiate practical solutions. This will be a good way to find out the views of certain vulnerable groups such as migrants whose voices are often negated in policy discourse surrounding social integration.

Young people taking on social action projects should be encouraged to consider how their ideas facilitate encounters between people from different communities, and the value of learning from each other as equals. In choosing their social action projects, young people will be encouraged to consider the communities of those in their groups and see whether it is possible for them to work together to build cross-community solidarity through their project. This will raise consciousness of all participants to migrant integration. Successful projects should raise awareness, bring people together and encourage integration.

A focus on engaging with migrant communities led by a young member of that community can help the young migrant/minority community member to reflect upon their own sense of belonging. To see others expressing interest in your community and culture can decrease feelings of alienation and allow under-represented voices to be heard. Additionally, encountering a community through a member of that community can break barriers to engagement, fostering solidarity.

To ensure that the gains and community ties made by participants over the course of the intensive programme are maintained, we propose that follow-up meetings, reunions, and a continuation of the buddy system be implemented. This will ensure that participants that took part in NCS will see a long-lasting impact to their participation, and that their senses of solidarity and community are not lost after the programme ends.

ALLEVIATING RISK

There is currently widespread concern over the low participation in NCS and the programme's high expenditure, suggesting that the scheme lacks value for money. An NAO report on the NCS in January 2017 found that value for money depended on successful expansion to a larger number of people and demonstrated long-term benefits to participation. Indeed, the required growth rate to reach the target participation for the programme of 360,000 is 40% year on year so it is crucial that the programme appeals to a larger cohort.

Arguably, worries over the programme's sustainability may not necessarily be of great concern. The NHS trust operated a net surplus for the year 2016/17 due to an increase in self-generated income. Whilst in 2015/16, income and expenditure were both £156.4 million; in 2016/17 the programme's expenditure was £183.6 million whilst the income was noticeably higher at £187.7 million.¹⁰

¹⁰ "About Us". 2018. National Citizen Service. <http://www.ncsy.es.co.uk/about-us>.



In order to appeal to an expanded and more diverse audience, recruitment strategies must be widened. At present, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport oversees the programme and advertises it nationally and locally, e.g. through TV and social media. The Department should allocate their funds to local authorities who can expand advertisements to job centres, colleges, places of worship and community centres. Advertising funds could also be spent on university career and volunteer centres to attract older participants.

Another potential problem of the programme is the issue of finding the right staff to mentor young people on the scheme.¹¹ Current mentors tend to be teachers and teaching assistants. However, this issue could be alleviated if vacancies for this post were also advertised at universities for teacher trainees or opened up to graduates of the scheme, as happened with the International Citizen Service.

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

The programme should be easily implemented seeing as the social benefits are already widely reported and accepted by stakeholders. This indicates the projected reliability of this policy proposal. For instance, the NCS is widely accepted to help one's employability which is a key element of social integration – 47% of NCS participants from areas of the country with the lowest university participation rates were almost 50% more likely to go onto further education than their non-NCS counterparts.¹² Further, after the programme, 80% of NCS graduates were reported to feel more positive about people from different backgrounds.¹³

The NAO's value for money report concluded that the NCS had shown initial success in reaching young people and achieving positive impact with 93,000 participants in 2016, 32% of whom were from BAME backgrounds.¹⁴ Political acceptability is certainly a given seeing as the NCS bill went through the House of Lords and House of Commons with cross party support. The NCS Act aims to make NCS permanent and establishes the NCS Trust as a Royal Charter Body that is independent of government and accountable to parliament. Demonstrating that our proposed expansion would only increase the benefits of the project to those most in need of such support could lead to the inclusion of this proposal in the Act.

Finally, participants of the NCS tend to more frequently come from low income and minority ethnic backgrounds than the UK population in general, which shows that it facilitates social mixing. Implementing the proposed changes to appeal to older groups and migrants would provide even greater benefits. Whilst it would increase the expense, it should be viewed as an investment leading to future savings, as the NCS programme has proved to be already.

¹¹ Staufenberg, Jess. 2017. "National Citizen Service faces staffing challenge as programme for schools grows." *Schools Week*. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-forced-to-promote-national-citizen-service-worried-about-staffing/>

¹² "About Us". 2018. National Citizen Service. <http://www.ncsyas.co.uk/about-us>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ National Audit Office. 2017. "A Short Guide to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport." <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Short-Guide-to-the-Department-for-Digital-Culture-Media-and-Sport.pdf>

CONCLUSION

The National Citizen Service facilitates social mobility, social engagement, and social integration. It helps young people find their independence, develop hard and soft skills, and establish ties to their community and to other youth. We propose an expansion of the NCS to reach those from 16 – 29 years old and to adapt the programme so to make it accessible to a wider group of young people. We aim to enhance the programme by amending the configuration for this part of the programme, creating a mentoring system that facilitates the involvement of those with poorer English language skills and solidarity workshops in order to encourage consciousness of social integration of both host communities, minorities and migrant groups. Doing so will remove barriers to integration and allow a greater number of youth to take advantage of the significant social and personal benefits of the NCS.

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The Knowing Me, Knowing You project was funded by the European Commission through Erasmus +

