



# Evaluation of National Citizen Service

Findings from the evaluations of the 2012 summer and autumn NCS programmes



**Authors:** NatCen Social Research, Office for Public Management and New Philanthropy Capital  
**Date:** July 2013

**At NatCen Social Research** we believe that social research has the power to make life better. By really understanding the complexity of people's lives and what they think about the issues that affect them, we give the public a powerful and influential role in shaping decisions and services that can make a difference to everyone. And as an independent, not for profit organisation we're able to put all our time and energy into delivering social research that works for society.

---

In partnership with



NatCen Social Research  
35 Northampton Square  
London EC1V 0AX  
T 020 7250 1866  
[www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk)

A Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England No.4392418.  
A Charity registered in England and Wales (1091768) and Scotland (SC038454)

Cover photo courtesy of Aleah Johnson – NCS Facebook photography competition

---

# Contents

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 What are the aims of NCS? .....	10
1.2 What does NCS involve? .....	10
<b>2 About the evaluation.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Aims and objectives.....	12
2.2 The programme logic model .....	12
2.3 Methodology .....	13
<b>3 Who are the NCS participants? .....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 How many young people took part? .....	19
3.2 What was the profile of participants? .....	19
3.3 Attitudes and behaviours.....	24
3.4 Who completed the programme? .....	25
<b>4 Summer NCS.....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1 What did young people think of the programme? .....	27
4.2 Attitudes to different phases of NCS.....	27
4.3 What was the impact of the programme on participants? .....	31
4.4 What was the value for money of the programme? .....	43
<b>5 Autumn NCS.....</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1 What did young people think of the programme? .....	49
5.2 How do outcomes in autumn compare to summer? .....	53
5.3 What is the cost effectiveness of the programme? .....	60
<b>6 Lessons for implementation and delivery.....</b>	<b>61</b>
6.1 Recruitment and Engagement.....	61
6.2 Achieving a social mix.....	63
6.3 Recruiting staff .....	65
6.4 Staffing the programme.....	66
6.5 Programme delivery.....	67

---

## Tables

Table 4.1	Measures of confidence.....	32
Table 4.2	Life skills.....	37
Table 4.3	Willingness to help out in the future .....	42
Table 4.5	Costs and benefits of NCS 2012.....	46
Table 5.1	Measure of confidence .....	55
Table 5.2	Measure of wellbeing .....	56
Table 5.3	Locus of control .....	56
Table 5.4	Measures of confidence.....	57
Table 5.5	Measures of anti-social behaviour .....	57
Table 5.6	Attitudes to mixing .....	58

## Figures

Figure 3.1	NCS participant profile - Gender .....	20
Figure 3.2	NCS participant profile - Age.....	21
Figure 3.3	NCS participant profile - Ethnicity.....	21
Figure 3.4	NCS participant profile - Religion .....	22
Figure 3.5	NCS participant profile - Disability .....	23
Figure 3.6	NCS participant profile - Free School Meals.....	23
Figure 4.1	Participants' favourite phase of NCS .....	28
Figure 4.2	Participants' least favourite phase of NCS .....	29
Figure 4.3	How participants felt NCS benefited them .....	30
Figure 4.4	How participants felt NCS benefited them .....	30
Figure 5.1	Mean scores of NCS phases.....	50
Figure 5.2	Participants favourite phase of NCS autumn .....	50
Figure 5.3	Participants' least favourite phase of NCS autumn.....	51
Figure 5.4	How young people felt they benefited from NCS (i).....	53
Figure 5.5	How young people felt they benefited from NCS (ii) .....	53



---

## The evaluation consortium

The evaluation consortium consisted of:

**NatCen Social Research**

Gareth Morrell, Liz Clery, Stephen Morris, Jerome Finnegan, Ashley Brown, Mehul Kotecha, Fay Sadro, Lucy Lee, Sarah Kunz and Kelsey Beninger.

**The Office for Public Management**

Ewan King, Linda Jackson, Lauren Roberts

**New Philanthropy Capital**

Tris Lumley, David Pritchard, Gavin Surgay

**Frontier Economics**

Matthew Bell

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to many people who have made this evaluation possible: colleagues in our own organisations and across government and most importantly NCS providers and participants.

The evaluation team would in particular like to thank Rebecca Wyton in the Office for Civil Society for commitment to the project and support and guidance with the report. We are also grateful to the policy team within Cabinet Office 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.

## Executive summary

Over 26,000 young people took part in NCS in 2012 – over three times as many as in 2011. Participants were largely representative of young people at that age. NCS participants held more pro-social attitudes at the outset of the programme, though less so than in 2011 suggesting providers have been more effective at recruiting young people who had not volunteered before.

**26,003** NCS participants in 2012



Summer 22,132



Autumn 3,871



The summer NCS programme appears to have increased its impact in relation to communication, teamwork and leadership and now has a positive impact on young people's willingness to help out in the local community – a positive finding in light of the scaling up of the programme

Participants in summer and autumn programmes were overwhelmingly positive about their experience, with almost all young people surveyed saying they would definitely recommend NCS to a friend.



Summer 88%

Autumn



86%



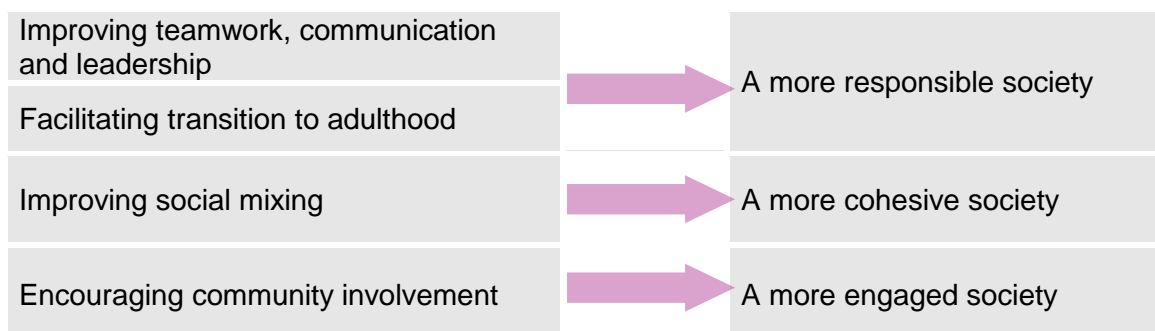
The evidence of this evaluation suggests that the autumn pilots produce a similar participant experience and is associated with broadly similar outcomes as the summer programme, suggesting that it is worth extending and refining following further evaluation in future years.



The monetary benefits to society of the NCS summer 2012 programme are estimated to be up to 2.8 times the cost of delivering NCS in 2012. This represents an improvement of the cost-benefit ratio for the 2011 programme.

## 1. Background

National Citizen Service (NCS) is one of the Coalition Government's flagship initiatives for building a bigger, stronger society. The programme aims ultimately to be a rite of passage for all 16 and 17 year olds and help to promote a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society. NCS aims to improve outcomes in four areas to contribute to these wider goals:



NCS was first piloted in the summer of 2011, with approximately 8,500 participants. In 2012, NCS was delivered in the summer and, for the first time, in the autumn. This report presents findings from the evaluation of the summer and autumn programmes in 2012 and builds on the findings of the 2011 evaluation published in an [interim report](#) in May 2012.

## 2. Methods

As in 2011, the evaluation of 2012 aimed to assess the success of the programme in meeting the objectives outlined above. The evaluation comprised three core strands of work:

- **A process evaluation** aimed to assess the design and delivery of the programme through: in-depth qualitative case studies including interviews with staff, young people, parents and other stakeholders; collection of Monitoring Information data about NCS participants; and multi-level regression models to identify characteristics associated with improved or inferior outcomes. Each of these elements was carried out in both summer and autumn.
- **An impact study** aimed to assess the independent impacts of the NCS programme through a before and after survey with NCS participants in summer and autumn. Summer outcomes were compared to the 2011 comparison group to estimate independent programme-level impacts; autumn outcomes were compared to summer outcomes to estimate the relative effects of participation in the autumn programme compared to participation in the summer.
- **Economic analysis** aimed to assess the value for money of NCS by estimating a cost benefit ratio in summer, compared to the ratio for the summer 2011 NCS programme.

Further details of the methodology for each of the elements of the evaluation and some of the caveats around the findings are provided in Chapter 2 of this report and in the full Technical Report.



### 3. Who are the NCS participants?

**26,003** NCS participants in 2012



Summer

22,132\*



Autumn

3,871

*\*The summer total includes 626 participants from the Cadets' programme, who took part in a bespoke pilot of their own. Due to the different structure of the programme and the small sample size they are excluded from subsequent analysis.*

NCS largely met its brief in both summer and autumn in terms of recruiting a **socially mixed** cohort of participants. Socio-demographically, NCS participants appeared to be largely representative of the general population of that age group in relation to ethnicity, religion, disability and uptake of Free School Meals. NCS participants were more pro-social at the outset of the programme than the general population of that age group, being considerably more likely to take part in clubs and activities as well as help out locally, though this is less pronounced than in 2011, suggesting providers have improved recruitment in this respect.

Completion rates have improved in 2012. In summer, 84% of participants that started the main phases of NCS completed the entire programme, higher than 81% in summer 2011; this increased slightly to 85% for autumn participants. There were few significant differences in terms of the profile of young people who did not complete the programme.

### 4. NCS summer 2012

- In summer 2012 NCS appears to have increased its impact in relation to communication, teamwork and leadership and now has a positive impact on young people's willingness to help out in the local community.
- As in 2011, participants remain overwhelmingly positive about their experience of NCS, scoring the programme around 9 out of 10 for how enjoyable and worthwhile it was.
- Ninety-eight per cent of participants would definitely (88%) or might (10%) recommend the programme to others, a similar proportion to 2011.

#### What impacts did the programme have on young people?

Impacts of the summer 2012 programme were measured using before and after surveys with participants. The change in observed outcomes for participants between these two time points was then compared with data on change in outcomes for a matched sub-sample of young people from the 2011 control group.

This approach offered an opportunity to provide a good estimate of the impacts of the programme, but at a fraction of the cost of generating a new comparison sample. Despite some caveats associated with this approach (see Chapter 2 for further details), the types of young people participating in the summer 2012 programme are very similar to those who took part in 2011, suggesting that this

---

approach provides a meaningful and useful estimate of the impact of the programme in 2012.

Estimates of the impact of the 2012 NCS summer programme closely mirror impacts identified in 2011:

- Improved impacts were found in relation to all outcomes related to communication teamwork and leadership
- Impacts were also found in relation to transition to adulthood and willingness to help out in the local area
- While the programme did recruit participants from diverse backgrounds, no impacts were found at the programme level in relation to changes to attitudes to people from different backgrounds, however the qualitative data reveals a more nuanced picture, with impacts identified at the individual level.

Overall, summer NCS 2012 appears to have been at least as effective as 2011 – a positive finding in light of the fact that the programme tripled in size within this time. The next four sections provide more detail on the types of impact the summer programme had in relation to the four key 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 statistically significant impacts seen in all areas. The proportion of young people who felt confident being the leader of a team increased by 17 percentage points more among NCS participants than among the 2011 control group (NCS participants increasing from 46% to 64% over the course of the programme; the control group increasing from 50% to 51% over the same period of time in 2011).
- The proportion who felt confident putting their ideas forward increased by eight percentage points more among NCS participants than among the control group (NCS participants increasing 59% to 71%, the control group 57% to 62%) and by 17% percentage points more in relation to explaining their ideas clearly (NCS participants increasing 58% to 71%, the control group falling from 63% to 60%).

*What created the impact?*

Qualitative interviews suggest that the programme design and the progressive nature of the programme have a positive influence on impacts in this area. Firstly, the programme requires participants to test and develop their communication skills with other young people before doing so with adults they know and, finally, wider community stakeholders. Secondly, participants described how residential took them out of their comfort zone, requiring them to work with people they did not know but in an environment that they felt was supportive. Finally, participants were required to take on leadership roles and reflect on their own styles within the supportive framework of their NCS team.

*How did participants rate these aspects of the programme??*

- Over 90% of participants agreed that NCS had made them proud of what they had achieved
- Over 80% of participants felt that they were capable of more than they thought after taking part in NCS

---

## Transition to adulthood

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

- In relation to life skills, NCS 2012 was found to have a significant impact on the proportion reporting that they are 'good at having a go at things that are new to me', which increased by eight percentage points more among the NCS participants than among the control group (NCS participants increasing 76% to 85%; the control group 75% to 76%). This impact was not seen in 2011.
- In 2012, unlike in 2011, impacts were not detected in relation to measures of self-reported well-being – however, increases in happiness for NCS participants were seen and the fact that no statistically significant impact was detected in this area may be due to the small sample size of the control group.
- In relation to measures designed to assess how in control of their life young people feel they are, one impact out of two found in 2011 is sustained in 2012. The proportion of participants disagreeing with the statement 'how you get on in life is mostly down to luck' increased by 10% more for participants than the control group (NCS participants decreasing slightly from 43% to 42%; the control group decreasing from 48% to 38%)
- Data were collected on two measures related to attitudes to education: participants were asked whether they thought education is worthwhile and whether they are interested in doing any more learning. In 2012, NCS had an impact on the former attitude but not the latter; in 2011 the reverse was true. The proportion reporting that education is worthwhile in 2012 increased by three percentage points more among the NCS participants than among the control group (NCS participants increasing 96% to 97%; the control group falling from 98% to 95%)
- Attitudes to anti-social behaviour (ASB) improved more among NCS participants than the control group. The proportion who recognised the statement "young people want to stay out of trouble" as being "just like me" increased four percentage points more among the NCS participants than the control group (NCS participants increasing 87% to 91%; the control group stable at 93%).

### *What created the impact?*

Qualitative interviews suggest that specific activities that took place as part of NCS encouraged the development of life skills and helped young people become aware of more opportunities for the future. In particular, engaging in these activities in a supportive environment was seen to give young people more confidence in trying new things. NCS was also felt to provide something useful to add to young people's CV and open up opportunities to do more volunteering or work experience that could lead to paid work in the future. Providers and parents described how this gave young people a greater sense of direction and maturity, reflected in more positive views towards education and the ability for people to control their own lives and stay out of trouble.

### *How did young people experience related elements of the programme?*

- Over 90% of participants reported developing new skills as a result of NCS and more than 80% felt they had learnt something new
- Eighty per cent of participants felt more aware of educational and employment opportunities available to them and over 70% felt more confident about getting a job as a result of NCS

## Social mixing

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

No statistically significant positive impacts were found on the measures relating to changing attitudes towards people from different backgrounds. This is slightly different to the summer 2011 programme where both positive and negative impacts were detected. However, the programme did recruit participants from diverse backgrounds and evidence from the qualitative interviews and satisfaction ratings suggests a more nuanced picture. There is some evidence of positive impacts on attitudes at the individual level and of social mixing leading to impact on other areas (e.g. communication and teamwork) rather than being an impact in itself.

### *What created the impact?*

Providers and young people described how the programme puts participants in contact with people they would not normally mix with, yet this does not necessarily translate into a change in attitudes for all. However, while this was not picked up at the programme level, qualitative evidence suggests that NCS did impact some individuals' views to social mixing. Having to mix with others was also felt to have had a positive effect on teamwork and communication, if not directly on views of people from different backgrounds. Providers and young people also described some barriers to impact in this area. Firstly, in some local areas it was more challenging for providers to put together mixed teams; in other areas, participants' friendship groups were already very mixed prior to NCS. Secondly, some of the measures here lie outside the control of NCS providers and are likely to be influenced by the nature of young people's engagement with their local community and the actions of local community stakeholders.

### *How did young people experience related aspects of the programme?*

- Ninety-five per cent of young people said that during NCS they met people they would not normally mix with (the highest agreement to any of the feedback statements)
- Over 80% said they felt more positive towards people from different backgrounds following NCS

## Community involvement

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

The 2012 summer programme was associated with two impacts in this area, reversing the trend of some negative impacts in 2011:

- There was a positive impact in relation to appetite for helping out in the future. The proportion of NCS participants saying they would like to spend more time helping out declined by six percentage points less than the control group (NCS participants falling 74% to 67%; the control group falling 75% to 62%). This is also a positive finding in light of the fact that NCS participants had just completed over 30 hours of social action.
- There was also a positive impact in relation to local influence: The proportion of NCS participants agreeing that 'when local people campaign together they can solve problems' stayed relatively stable, compared to a fall in the control group (NCS participants decreasing slightly from 55% to 54%; the control group decreasing from 56% to 47%).

### *What created the impact?*

Qualitative interviews suggest that providers learned lessons from experiences in 2011 to improve the design, planning and conduct of the social action project. Three key points were identified. Firstly, providers planned for the project much earlier, taking more time to identify suitable community partners. Secondly, providers felt more adept at achieving the right balance between a youth-led project and offering an appropriate level of support. Finally, providers described the importance of ensuring that projects chosen were achievable and culminated in a tangible outcome for young people. These three elements appear to be crucial to the social action project achieving the impacts that it is designed to.

*How did young people experience related aspects of the programme?*

- Over 70% of participants felt they were more likely to help out in the local community because of NCS
- Over 60% of participants reported feeling more responsibility to the local community following NCS

#### **Was the summer 2012 programme value for money?**

In summer, the programme cost £36.8 million to deliver. The total estimated benefits are up to £101.9 million. Therefore societal benefits of the NCS summer 2012 programme are estimated to be between 1.5 and 2.8 times the cost of delivering summer NCS in 2012. This is an increase on the summer 2011 programme where the societal benefits were initially estimated to be between 1 and 2 times the cost of delivering NCS.

### **5. Autumn NCS 2012**

- **Autumn NCS was piloted for the first time 2012 and the programme appears to be associated with similar outcomes to the summer programme on the majority of measures**
- **As in summer, participants were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of NCS, scoring the programme around 9 out of 10 for how enjoyable and worthwhile it was.**
- **Ninety-eight per cent of participants would definitely (86%) or maybe (12%) recommend the programme to others, a similar proportion to summer.**

#### **How did outcomes in autumn compare to summer?**

Without a suitable control group we were unable to measure the independent impact of the autumn NCS programme within the scope of this evaluation. Instead we aimed to assess how the outcomes for autumn participants (that is the difference in responses given on key measures at the end of the NCS programme) differed to estimates of their outcomes had they taken part in the summer programme.

To account for potential differences between summer and autumn participants at the baseline we matched the autumn participants to a sample of summer participants on a range of characteristics and outcomes (to get a like-for-like comparison). We then looked at the mean differences between outcomes for both groups at the end of the programme. In effect we are examining whether autumn participants would have fared better or worse in the summer programme.

We ran this comparison on 41 outcomes. We found that on the vast majority (34), participation in the autumn programme compared to the summer programme was

associated with similar outcomes. For a minority of outcomes (six) autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes; and on one outcome autumn participation was associated with improved outcomes. For the four types of outcome, we found that:

- For the majority of measures related to **communication, teamwork and leadership**, participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on two outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes. These were confidence in meeting new people and explaining my ideas clearly.
- For the majority of measures related to **transition to adulthood** participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on four outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes. These related to life satisfaction, feeling in control of my life, time management and anti-social behaviour.
- For the majority of measures related to **social mixing** participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on one outcome, views on whether people in the local area get on well together, autumn participation was associated with improved outcomes.
- For all measures related to **community involvement** autumn participation was associated with similar outcomes to summer participation.

This evidence suggests that in the majority of areas, therefore, the experience of an autumn participant is similar to a summer participant and from the evidence we have in this evaluation, the autumn variation of NCS appears to be worth extending and refining through further evaluation in subsequent years.

Qualitative interviews suggest that participants continued to benefit from the general structure of the programme and specific activities such as the residential and exposure to a range of different people on NCS and within the community. Interviews with staff and young people also indicate reasons related to the structure and format of the autumn programme that may dilute the impacts on young people in some of these areas. In particular, staff and NCS summer graduates identified colder weather restricting the type of activities, the timing of the programme meant that young people could only work on their social action project in evening and weekends, and a shortened Phase 3 meant young people were less prepared for their social action project. Furthermore, it was felt that some participants were more mature and already developing some of these skills and qualities in their day to day activities (education or training) which would not have been the case in summer.

However, other providers and young people felt that this actually helped embed some of the outcomes being improved by NCS, with skills learned on NCS utilised in further education and vice versa.

### **What did young people think of the programme?**

Similarly to the summer programme, participants in autumn NCS were overwhelmingly positive about the programme:

- Participant rated NCS 9 out of 10 for how enjoyable and worthwhile their experience had been.
- 86% of participants would definitely recommend NCS to a friend, 12% might recommend it.
- 9 in 10 participants felt they met people they would not normally mix with, developed useful skills and were proud of what they achieved.



- 8 out of 10 were more aware of opportunities open to them, learned something new and felt they were capable of more than they thought.
- As in summer, 7 in 10 said they were more likely to help out in the local area, and more likely to get a job; 6 in 10 said they felt more responsibility to their local community.

## 6. Lessons for programme delivery

Interviews for the process evaluation yielded a significant amount of learning for the programme which has been shared with the Cabinet Office and NCS providers as it has become available. A full description of these findings and recommendations can be found in Chapter 6, in particular relating to:

- Improving planning and sharing of good practice around **recruiting and engaging** young people
- The provision of clearer guidance and development of appropriate expectations around **social mix**
- Exploring links with schools and the possibility of accreditation to aid the **recruitment of NCS staff**
- The importance of a coherent and responsive **staffing structure**
- A whole range of recommendations for **delivering the programme**, particularly in relation to planning early, formalising the substantive nature of Phase 1, sharing provider views on articulating the value of Phase 3, engaging early with community stakeholders and the development of clear criteria for successful social actions projects

# 1 Introduction

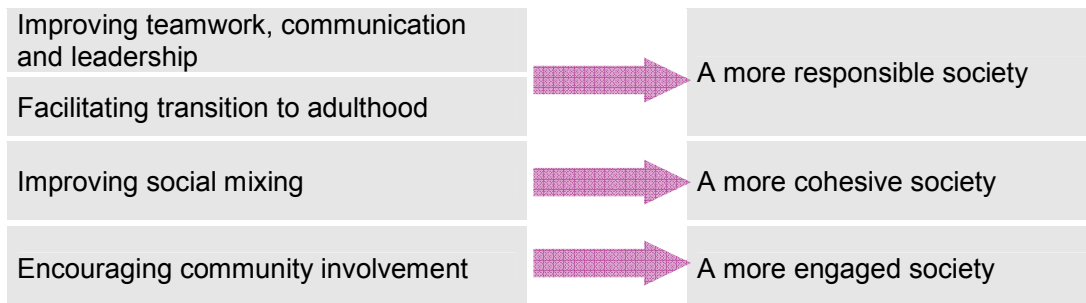
National Citizen Service (NCS) is one of the Coalition Government's flagship initiatives for building a bigger, stronger society. The programme aims ultimately to be a rite of passage for all 16 and 17 year olds and help to promote a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society.

NCS was piloted for two years in 2011 and 2012 to inform wider roll-out from 2013. In 2011, the first year of the programme, NCS was provided by twelve organisations that made 10,000 places available to 16 year olds in different locations across England. In 2012, up to 27,000 places were commissioned in summer and around 5,000 places in autumn. The aim is to provide NCS for up to 90,000 young people in 2014.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the summer and autumn 2012 NCS programmes, and follows on from the [interim report](#) published in May 2012 that contained findings from the evaluation of the 2011 NCS pilots.

## 1.1 What are the aims of NCS?

NCS has three broad aims: to make society more cohesive, more responsible and more engaged. The programme intends to improve outcomes in four areas to contribute to these wider aims:



## 1.2 What does NCS involve?

NCS involves both residential and at-home components culminating in a social action project carried out by young people in their local area. In 2012, the programme was delivered by twenty-nine independent charities, social enterprises and businesses, local councils and sixth form colleges, all of which had to compete to run the programme through an open tendering process. The pilots in 2011 and 2012 were open to all young people around the age of 16 and 17 (who would typically have just completed year 11 or equivalent), although this extended up to the age of 25, on a case-by-case basis, for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. In 2012 the summer and autumn programmes followed five phases but were implemented slightly differently, as illustrated below:



Phase	Summer	Autumn
<b>Phase 1: Introductory phase</b>	Recruitment of young people and warm-up events	As summer
<b>Phase 2: Away residential</b>	One week residential phase, held at least one hour's travel away from the participants' home community (5 consecutive days and 4 nights)	As summer, but 3 nights (for example, Saturday afternoon to Tuesday morning) taking place in half-term
<b>Phase 3: Learning about the home community</b>	One week residential phase based within one hour's travel of the participants' places of residence (5 consecutive days and 4 nights)	As summer but three full days, non-residential, immediately following Phase 2 (for example, Wednesday morning to Friday evening)
<b>Phase 4: Design of a social action project</b>	30 hours of activity, designing a Social Action Project (five 6-hour days)	As summer but 30 hours of provider supported Social Action Project planning <i>and</i> delivery (to take place within 35 days of the final night of Phase 3)
<b>Phase 5: Social action project and graduation</b>	30 hours delivering the Social Action Project (on a part-time basis)	

The autumn programme also included a pilot in Northern Ireland and a post-graduation event. NCS participants had the opportunity to take part in a Team Test or Mission Day:

- The Team Test weekend (2 days) and mission day (one day) were held in the middle of December at the end of the autumn pilots – intended to be the culmination of the NCS experience for autumn participants. Both events comprised a series of physical, mental and social challenges with the following objectives:
  - To allow participants to demonstrate and strengthen the skills and lessons learnt through the personal and social development of their main NCS programme; and
  - To improve retention over the course of the programme.
- The team test was run centrally by Ministry of Defence and one external provider, whereas the mission day was provider led, bringing their specific NCS cohort back together. The team test also had the added objective of furthering social mixing as it brought large numbers of teams from different providers together, including Cadets and Northern Irish participants.

Central to all phases of NCS is the process of 'guided reflection' which supports participants' personal and social development during NCS. Guided reflection encourages and supports participants to reflect on their decisions and their interactions with the aim of learning and improving their skills, talents and self-awareness. Guided reflection aims to underpin the communication, teamwork and leadership abilities developed through NCS and to facilitate long-lasting personal resilience which will help participants prosper during and after NCS.

## 2 About the evaluation

### 2.1 Aims and objectives

The evaluation consortium was commissioned by the Office for Civil Society in the Cabinet Office to evaluate the NCS pilots in 2011 and 2012. The evaluation had three core aims:

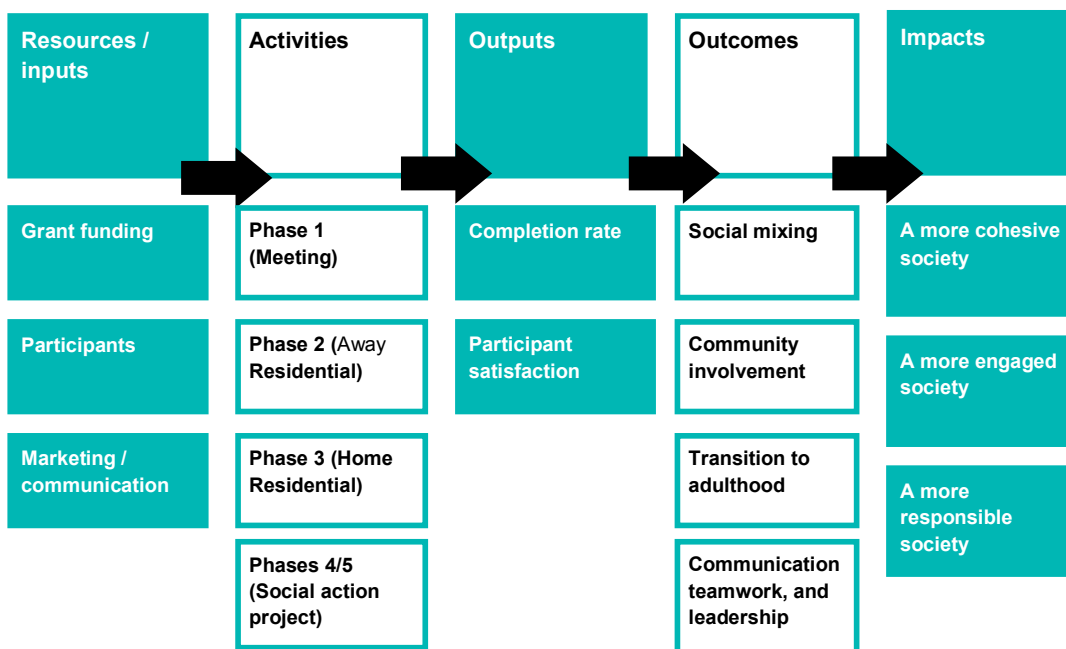
- inform the future development of the NCS programme through assessment of the design and delivery of the pilot scheme
- assess the impact of NCS on young people's attitudes and behaviours with regard to: social mixing; leadership; communication; community involvement and trust; confidence; and transition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

Since the 2011 evaluation, the consortium has also been commissioned to extend the impact evaluation to cover the summer 2012 programme and conduct a separate evaluation of the autumn programme in 2012.

### 2.2 The programme logic model

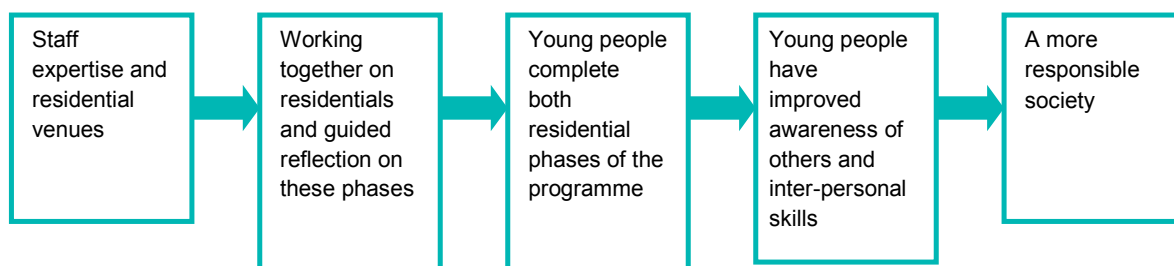
As part of the scoping phase of the 2011 evaluation the consortium developed a 'programme logic model'. A logic model is a tool developed as part of many evaluations of social programmes and aims to set out how NCS should operate and how it will achieve its stated aims.<sup>1</sup>

#### NCS Programme Logic Model – summary



<sup>1</sup> Chen, H.T. (1990) *Theory-Driven Evaluations*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.

The logic model illustrated above, helps develop a theory of change for the programme by setting out how the planned activities of the programme will lead to improved outcomes for young people and have wider social impacts. The process of developing the model tends to work backwards, identifying the high-level outcomes a programme is aiming to influence and then working out what needs to happen to achieve this aim and how the programme can contribute. The model is then built from a series of causal pathways identified through this process; the flow chart below illustrates one of these causal pathways.



The full version of the logic model (which can be found in the Technical Report) comprises a whole series of these connections between NCS activities and outcomes for participants and society more widely. A summary of the logic model is illustrated above. The logic model provided a frame of reference for measuring the success of the programme within this evaluation by explicating the outcomes that required measurement as well as guiding selection of the types of measures and indicators required. Data collection instruments for each component of the evaluation were designed to capture whether activities had been carried out as intended, as well as identifying change in relevant outcome measures.

## 2.3 Methodology

### 2.3.1 Evaluation design in 2012

The overall design for both the summer and autumn evaluations comprised the same three strands as the evaluation of 2011: a process evaluation, an impact study and economic analysis. The specific elements of each of these strands differed in summer and autumn due to the nature of the programmes and available resources. The table below provides a summary of the design and identifies the objectives that each strand aimed to meet.

Strand	Summer	Autumn
<b>Process evaluation:</b> Assessing the operation of the programme	<p>In-depth case studies with six NCS providers comprising two waves of qualitative data collection with staff, young people, parents and other local stakeholders.</p> <p>Case studies were selected to reflect the diversity of providers' location, charging arrangements and delivery experience.</p> <p>Collection of monitoring</p>	<p>In-depth case studies with five NCS providers comprising two waves of qualitative data collection with staff, young people, parents and other local stakeholders.</p> <p>Case studies were selected to reflect the diversity of providers' location, delivery model and NCS delivery experience.</p> <p>Collection of monitoring</p>

	<p>information data from all providers to establish the profile and completion rates of NCS participants</p> <p>Multi-level models to identify specific characteristics of participants or providers associated with particular outcomes</p>	<p>information data from all providers to establish the profile and completion rates of NCS participants</p> <p>Multi-level models to identify specific characteristics of participants or providers associated with particular outcomes</p>
<p><b>Impact survey:</b> Assessing outcomes and impacts of the programme</p>	<p>A before and after survey of NCS participants:</p> <p>The baseline paper questionnaire achieved a sample of 12,540 reflecting a 58% response rate.</p> <p>The follow-up web survey achieved a sample of 2,831, reflecting a 35% response rate of eligible cases from the baseline.</p> <p>Changes in outcome measures for participants were compared to the comparison sample surveyed in 2011.</p>	<p>A before and after survey of NCS participants.</p> <p>The baseline paper questionnaire achieved a sample of 2,875 reflecting a 75% response rate.</p> <p>The follow-up web survey achieved a sample of 886 reflecting a 54% response rate from eligible cases from the baseline.</p> <p>Changes in outcomes for autumn participants were compared to changes in summer 2012 to estimate whether there was any improvement or worsening of outcomes among autumn participants relative to outcomes that would have pertained had they participated in the summer.</p>
<p><b>Economic analysis:</b> Estimating cost effectiveness and value for money</p>	<p>A value for money analysis of the programme, comparing costs to benefits.</p> <p>Benefits included in the calculation are statistically significant impacts identified by the impact survey for which accurate estimates of monetary value can be made.</p>	<p>A cost-effectiveness analysis calculating the cost to the Cabinet Office on achieving percentage increases in outcomes.</p> <p>Outcomes used are those consistently apparent across 2011 and 2012.</p> <p>This analysis is also applied to 2011 and summer 2012 and a comparison made.</p>

Full details on the methodology are contained in the Technical Report. The next section discusses some of the challenges faced as part of this evaluation in relation to estimating the impact of the programme.

## 2.3.2 Estimating impact

Evaluators face a range of challenges when designing research to evaluate social programmes. The extent to which these challenges can be overcome depends primarily on programme design and resources. Often, the most difficult challenge is estimating the independent impact of a programme.

In the 2011 NCS evaluation, we estimated the impact of the programme by collecting data from NCS participants and from a contemporaneous matched comparison sample of 16 year-olds who did not take part in the programme. The same questions measuring key outcomes identified in the logic model were asked of both samples. Outcomes before and after the programme for the NCS participants were then compared to those of the comparison sample. The outcomes of the comparison sample represent our best estimate of the outcomes for the NCS participants had they not taken part in NCS – that is, their counterfactual outcomes. Comparing participants' outcomes with the counterfactual provides estimates of the independent impact of participation in NCS.

In 2012, the Cabinet Office considered what would provide the most cost-effective evaluation of the programme. In light of the fact that a full impact evaluation had been carried out in 2011 the decision was taken not to collect data from a contemporaneous comparison sample in 2012. The key challenge for the 2012 evaluation was therefore how to estimate the impact of the summer and autumn NCS programmes through obtaining the best possible estimate of counterfactual outcomes within the scope of the available budget. This section outlines our approach to estimating impacts for each programme and lists important caveats to ensure that the findings are interpreted accurately.

### Estimating impact for the summer programme

Our approach to estimating impact for the summer programme was to use the 2011 comparison sample to estimate a counterfactual for the NCS participants in summer 2012. This means comparing the outcomes for the NCS participants with the outcomes observed for the 2011 comparison sample. This represented the best available method for providing a reliable estimate of impact within the constraints of the evaluation for the following reasons:

- This approach provides an opportunity to generate an estimate of the impacts of the programme but at a fraction of the cost of generating a new comparison sample.
- We know from observing the 2011 comparison group that outcomes can change within the year but there is no obvious reason why outcomes should not be reasonably stable when measured at the same point in the year for successive age cohorts.
- The 2011 comparison sample was selected to be a good match for 2011 participants so it is important for it to also be a good match for the 2012 participants. The NCS participants in summer 2012 were very similar to the 2011 participants in terms of key measures on the baseline survey. Where there are differences, the magnitude of these differences is small and we have corrected for them statistically in our analysis. As a result, the 2011 comparison group, based on what we can observe about them at baseline, appears to be a reasonably good match for the 2012 summer participants. In practice, we conducted a re-matching exercise in 2012 selecting only those from this group who were a good match for participants from 2012.

- Mode effects could have been a concern here – that is, the way the surveys were carried out. In 2011 the follow-up survey was conducted by telephone and online; in 2012 resource constraints dictated that all the data was collected online. There is evidence to suggest that the survey mode may have affected responses. However, to counterbalance this, we have only included cases in our comparison sample from 2011 that completed the follow-up survey online.

As described in Chapter 4, the general pattern of outcomes for the summer 2012 programme is very similar to 2011, suggesting that this approach provides a useful and meaningful estimate of the impact of the programme in 2012. However, there are a few factors to bear in mind when interpreting these findings:

- We can only identify how good a match the 2011 comparison sample is on the basis of measures we observe at the 2011 and 2012 baselines, such as demographics and answers to key baseline questions. There may be unobserved differences between the two groups due to 'history effects' (events that have taken place between the collection of the 2011 and 2012 data). Other selection processes which we do not observe may also be more of a concern where non-contemporaneous comparison samples are used.
- There are small, but not significant, differences in the content of the 2012 questionnaire, which was also conducted slightly later than in 2011. Consequently, we cannot rule out that this has influenced observed differences in outcomes.

As a result of these issues, we are more cautious about the estimates we make of the impact of NCS in summer 2012. However, as alluded to above, the fact that we find a similar pattern in the 2012 findings means that we are confident that these findings provide a meaningful and useful assessment of the programme and the most robust findings possible within the constraints of the project.

## Assessing outcomes for the autumn programme

Without an available comparison sample for the autumn programme we were not able to estimate the independent impact of the autumn programme on participants. Instead we adopted a different approach to assessing outcomes by estimating the relative effect of taking part in NCS in autumn compared to summer for autumn participants. In other words, we wanted to estimate whether participants in autumn NCS would have experienced better or worse outcomes had they participated in the summer programme. This approach addresses a key question for policy: whether there is evidence to suggest that outcomes are significantly different for participants taking part in the autumn and summer programmes.

To make this assessment we first needed to match summer and autumn participants, in order to ensure a 'like for like' comparison. We therefore combined the summer and autumn 2012 participant samples and subsequently matched autumn participants to the summer participant samples on a range of socio-demographic characteristics and baseline scores using a statistical matching technique called propensity score matching. This process is explained in the technical report, but the aim is to obtain a comparison sample that is as close as possible to the autumn participant sample on a range of key measures.

Such a comparison between autumn and summer outcomes is not a straightforward one. There are a number of differences between the summer and autumn programme other than the time of year they take place. For example,

there are differences in the programme length and structure, and the areas in which it was delivered are not exactly the same as summer. As such we aimed to control for as many of the differences as possible – for instance - restricting matching to participants who took part with providers operating both in summer and autumn and in the same areas of the country.

Once summer and autumn participants were matched on this basis, the outcomes of the summer participants represent a useful estimate of the outcomes for the autumn participants had they participated in the summer programme instead. Comparing the relative outcomes at follow-up from the two cohorts then enables us to estimate the relative effects on autumn participants of participating in the autumn programme as opposed to the summer programme.

However it is important to note that this approach estimates *relative outcomes* (i.e. the scores on a range of measures at the end of the programme), rather than independent impact (how these changes compared to changes in an equivalent control group). We are not able to discuss impact for autumn because we do not have a control group for this period and therefore we do not have an estimate of outcomes for autumn NCS participants had they not participated in the programme. We cannot presume that outcomes seen for the summer control group would be equivalent in autumn, therefore it is not possible to utilise this group in this analysis.

## Describing impacts in this report

Given that impacts and outcomes are being estimated in different ways within this evaluation, it is important to provide clarity on how they will be described.

For the evaluation of the summer NCS programme we are estimating the independent impact of the programme. This is expressed as a single figure for each of the outcomes measured and represents the improvements on a given measure *that we can attribute to NCS*. This figure is calculated by subtracting the change over time in the 2011 comparison sample from the change over time for the 2012 participants. For example, looking at the outcome where the survey asked whether young people feel confident working with others in a team, the programme impact is estimated as seven percentage points, as follows:

Change in NCS participants	-	Change in comparison	=	7% independent
6%		group -1%		impact of the
(80% baseline, 86% follow-up)		(80% baseline, 79% follow-up)		programme

For the autumn programme we report the simple mean differences between the average outcomes at the end of the programme for the autumn participant sample and the average outcomes in a matched summer participant sample, to estimate the relative programme impact. This matching accounts for differences at the baseline. Therefore calculating the relative effect of the autumn programme is a simple calculation of the difference between mean outcomes at the end of the programme.

For example, we have estimated that participation in autumn NCS compared to summer would have led to outcomes 5 percentage points lower in relation to 'confidence explaining my ideas clearly'. In other words, those who participated in the autumn programme had an average score on this outcome 5 percentage points lower than our estimate of how they would have fared on average if they had participated in the summer programme.

---

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} \text{Mean score at end of} & & & & \\ \text{programme for autumn} & - & \text{Mean score at end of} & = & \text{-5\% relative} \\ \text{participants 66\%} & & \text{programme for autumn} & & \text{effect of the} \\ & & \text{participants 71\%} & & \text{autumn} \\ & & & & \text{programme} \end{array}$$



### 3 Who are the NCS participants?



#### Summary

- Over 26,000 young people took part in NCS in 2012
- 22,132 participated in the summer programme and a further 3,871 in autumn
- 84% of participants completed the summer programme and 85% completed the autumn programme
- NCS 2012 appeared socio-demographically representative of young people in this age group
- A higher proportion of NCS participants appeared to hold more positive attitudes towards volunteering and their local community in 2012 than the general population for this age group, however this proportion was lower than in 2011

Over summer 2012 27,000 places were offered by 29 NCS providers across England while in the autumn programme 23 of these providers offered a further 5,000 places across England and Northern Ireland. A particular emphasis was placed on recruiting participants with a diverse range of characteristics (a social mix), and the expansion to Northern Ireland in the autumn programme was the first time the programme was delivered outside of England.

This chapter draws on two sources of data to describe the number and type of young people who took part in NCS and those who did not complete the programme.

- Monitoring information data from NCS providers tells us the number of young people who took part in NCS and how many completed the programme.
- Participant characteristics and attitudes at the start of the programme were collected in a baseline survey as part of the impact study.

#### 3.1 How many young people took part?



*\*The summer total includes 626 participants from the Cadets' programme, who took part in a bespoke pilot of their own. Due to the different structure of the programme and the small sample size they are excluded from subsequent analysis.*

#### 3.2 What was the profile of participants?

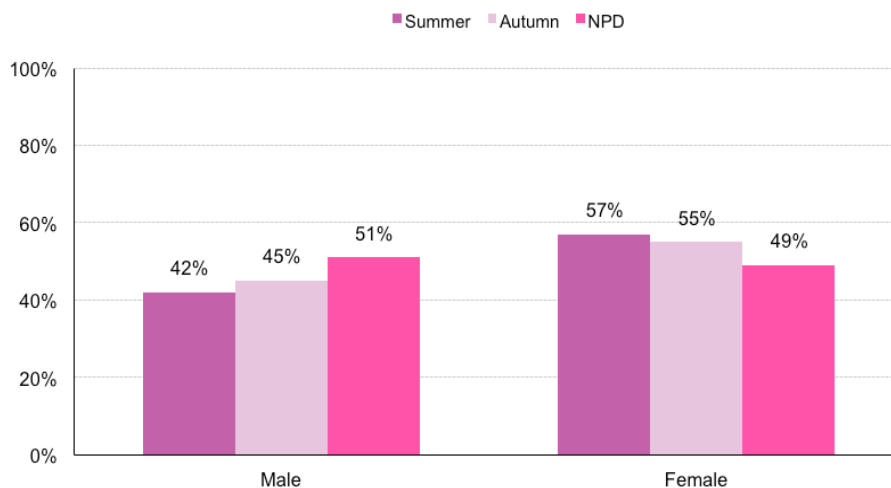
**NCS was successful in meeting its brief to attract and recruit participants that were broadly representative of the general population at this age.**

To establish how successful NCS has been in attracting a representative cohort of participants in 2012, we compared the participant data with data from the 2011 survey of participants from the National Pupil Database (NPD). These data were collected during the 2011 NCS evaluation, and have been weighted to provide an accurate and representative estimate of the general population of young people at that age.

### 3.2.1 Gender

NCS was slightly more likely to attract female participants than males in both summer and autumn. The proportion of females taking part in NCS in summer and autumn was also slightly larger than the proportion of females in the general population.

**Figure 3.1 NCS participant profile - Gender<sup>2</sup>**

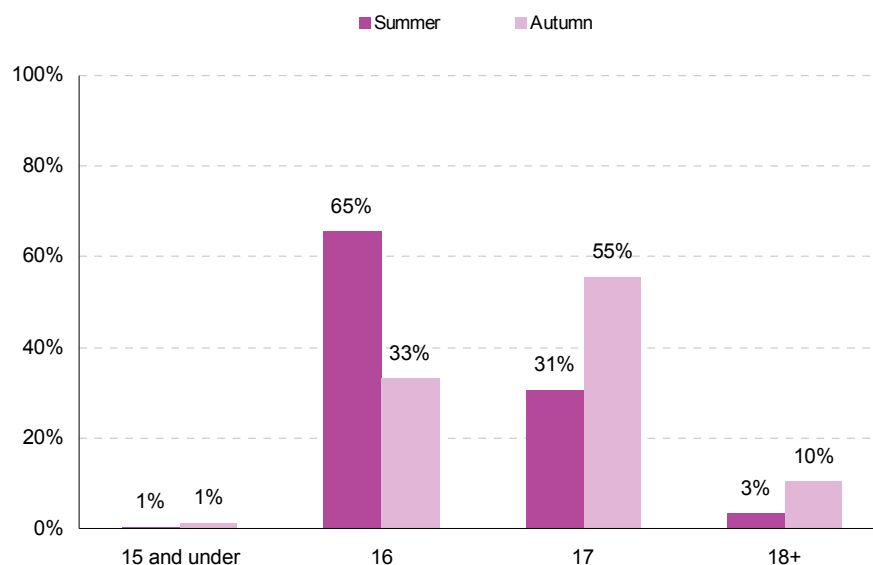


### 3.2.2 Age

Data from the surveys shows that the majority of participants in both summer and autumn were aged between 16 and 17. As reflects their different target age groups, a higher proportion of 16 year olds took part in the summer programme (65.4%) while a higher proportion of participants in the autumn programme were aged 17 (55.4%).

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in this and subsequent graphs are rounded to the nearest percentage, so may not sum to 100.

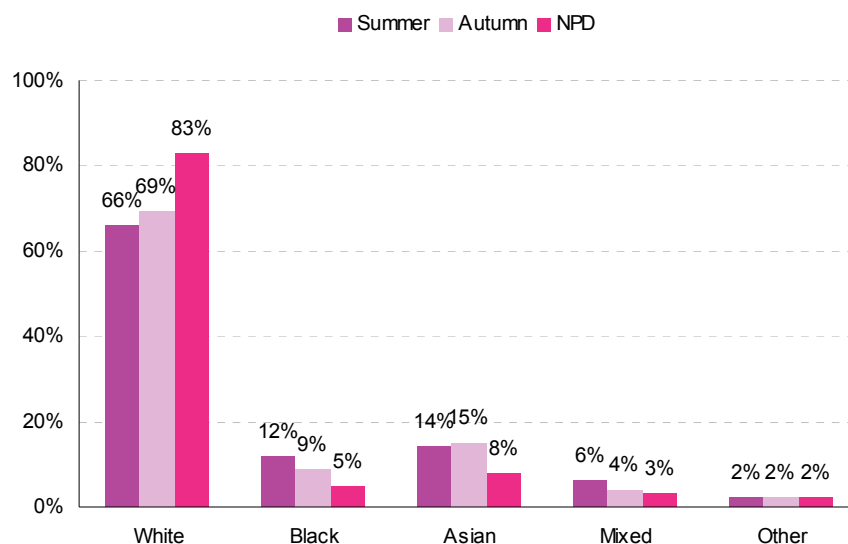
**Figure 3.2 NCS participant profile - Age**



### 3.2.3 Ethnicity

Compared to the NPD sample, NCS had a higher proportion of participants from minority ethnic groups. There were no significant differences amongst participants between the summer and autumn programmes by ethnicity.

**Figure 3.3 NCS participant profile - Ethnicity**

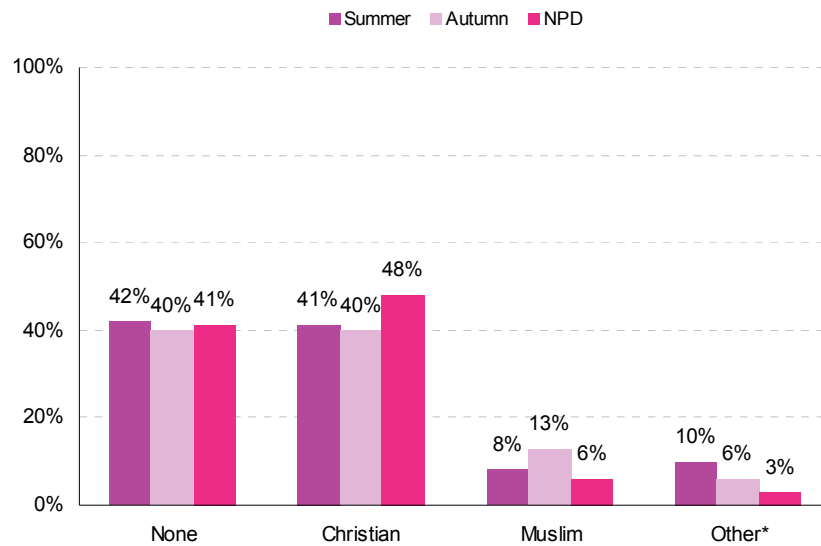


### 3.2.4 Religion

There were slightly fewer Christians in NCS than in the NPD sample, but higher representation amongst Hindu and Muslim young people. The proportions of young people identifying with a particular religion were broadly the same across

the summer and autumn programmes except those who identified themselves as Muslim, who were more likely to be involved in the autumn programme (13%) than in summer (8%).

**Figure 3.4<sup>3</sup> NCS participant profile - Religion**

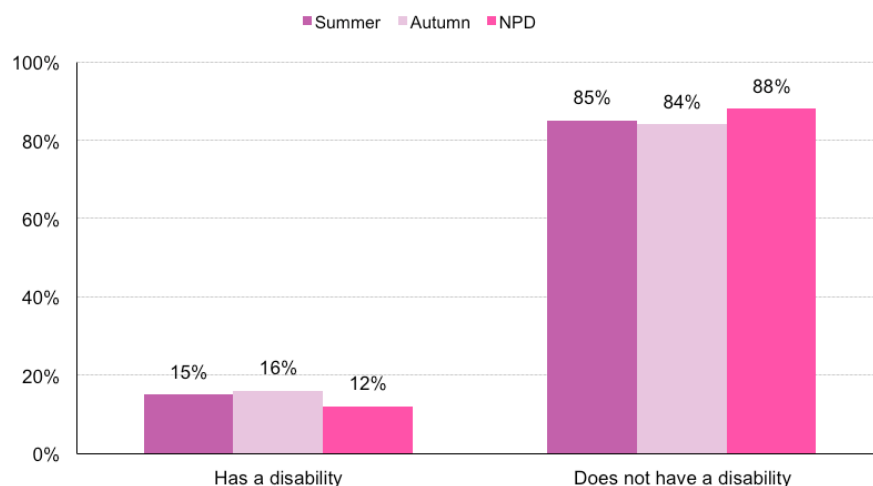


### 3.2.5 Disability

Compared to the NPD sample, NCS had a slightly higher proportion of participants with a disability than the general population. There were no significant differences between summer and autumn in terms of disability.

<sup>3</sup> Other includes participants from a Buddhist (Summer 83, Autumn 16), Hindu (Summer 473, Autumn 67), Jewish (Summer 43, Autumn 11), Sikh (Summer 198, Autumn 28) or other (Summer 336, Autumn 57) religious background. (Figures in brackets refer to number of participants).

**Figure 3.5 NCS participant profile - Disability**

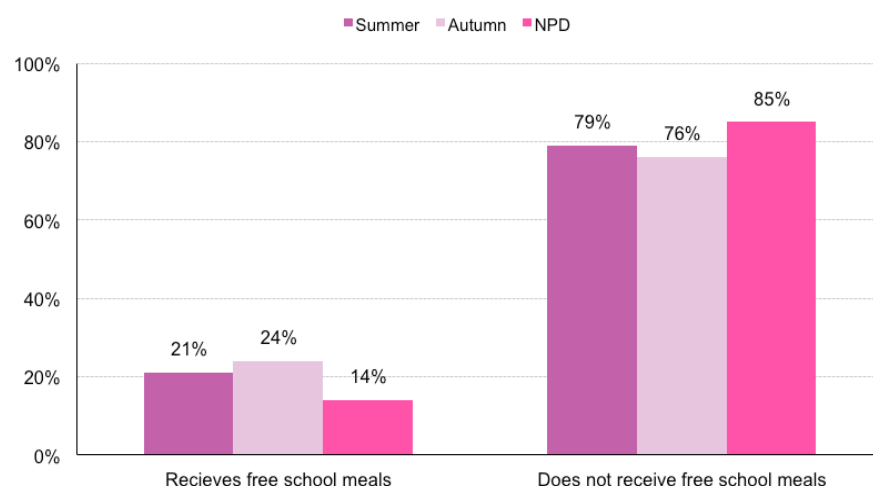


### 3.2.6 Socio-economic background

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

In comparison to the NPD sample, NCS appears to have attracted more young people on FSM. Data from the NPD sample suggests that 14% of sixteen year olds in state-funded secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision received free school meals. The figures for NCS were 21% in summer and 24% in autumn.

**Figure 3.6 NCS participant profile - Free School Meals**



We can also derive socio-economic background by looking at the employment and education status of participants' parents. Participants in the summer programme were more likely to have a father (67% compared to 65%) or mother (71% compared to 64%) in work than autumn participants. In addition, participants who took part in the summer programme were also more likely to

---

have parents who had completed school or college, with 50% in the summer with fathers who had completed school or college compared to 41% in autumn, and 68% in the summer with mothers who had completed school or college compared to 58% of those in autumn.

Providers also collected data on the type of school young people attended through the monitoring information. This data shows that the proportion of young people who were not at school was 2% in summer compared to 4% in autumn. The proportion of those attending an independent school was 5% in summer compared to 1% in the autumn.

### 3.3 Attitudes and behaviours

**Broadly, NCS participants' attitudes and behaviours can be described as more pro-social than the general population of 16 year-olds, i.e. they are more positive about volunteering and their local community. However, differences with the general population are less pronounced than in 2011 suggesting that providers are improving in recruiting more participants who are not pro-socially minded prior to their involvement with NCS.**

The previous section illustrated the profile of NCS participants in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. It is also important for the evaluation to assess whether the programme is more likely to attract particular types of people in relation to their attitudes and behaviours. This section uses data from the baseline survey in 2012 to consider participants' attitudes towards social mixing and pro-social behaviour such as volunteering at the start of the programme. As data was not collected from a comparison sample in 2012, the figures are compared to responses to the same questions from our 2011 NPD comparison sample prior to them being matched to NCS participants. Therefore, this represents a comparison with the general population of 16 year-olds from 2011. When we go on to calculate impacts in Chapter 4, we ensure that these differences are controlled for by comparing NCS participants to a group of young people from the control group who are matched on key demographics, and who are similarly pro-social.

#### 3.3.1 Attitudes towards people from different backgrounds

At the start of the programme NCS participants in 2012 had more positive views towards people from different backgrounds than the general population sample. Attitudes were similar amongst participants in both the summer and autumn programmes with 85% and 84% respectively saying that they enjoy being with people from different backgrounds. Only 67% of the 2011 NPD sample agreed with this statement.

As in 2011, NCS participants in 2012 were more likely to say that they had friends from a different religion and ethnicity than the general population sample. When asked about religion 26% in the summer and 25% of the autumn programme said most or all of their friends were from a different religion (compared to 15% in the general population sample). When asked in relation to race or ethnicity, 31% of the summer sample said that most or all of their friends were of a different race or ethnicity to them, while 27% said the same from the autumn sample (this compares to 16% per cent from the general population sample). However, when asked whether most or all of their friends were from different estates or parts of a village or town the NCS participants appeared to be drawn from more geographically concentrated friendship groups, as 61% in

---

summer and 60% in autumn said most or all of their friends were from different areas compared to 67% in the general population sample.

### 3.3.2 Pro-social behaviour

At the baseline, respondents were also asked about activities and help outside of school hours that they had been involved with during their free time in the past 12 months. These questions were designed to understand the pro-social behaviour participants engaged in prior to starting NCS. Typically, NCS participants were more pro-social than the general population.

At the start of the programme NCS participants in summer and autumn were more likely to have been involved in activities outside of school hours (79% of summer participants and 74% of autumn participants, compared with 67% of the general population sample). In addition NCS participants were more likely to say they would like to do more of these activities (78% in summer and 79% in autumn compared to 47% in the general population sample). Unsurprisingly then, NCS participants in both summer and autumn were more likely to have volunteered outside school hours in the last 12 months (71% in summer and 72% in autumn compared to 56% of the general population sample).

Chapter 6 provides insight into providers' experience of achieving social mix across all their participants and at a team level.

## 3.4 Who completed the programme?

A key challenge for providers, as described in Chapter 6, is retaining young people throughout the programme. The programme is designed to be challenging and requires commitment from the participants and so it is unlikely that all young people will complete the programme. In 2012, the percentage of participants completing NCS during the summer programme was 84%, an improvement of summer 2011 (81%). This increased slightly in the autumn programme to 85%.<sup>4</sup>

There were few significant differences in relation to who completed the programme by socio-demographic characteristics. There were no significant differences in completion rates according to gender, disability, previous voluntary experience or delivery type (i.e. direct or supply chain delivery). Whether providers charged a fee has an inconsistent relationship with completion rates, with participants paying a fee being more likely to drop out in summer, but less likely in autumn. There were some small differences in completion rates according to other characteristics:

- **Ethnicity:** In summer young people from Black and Mixed ethnic minorities were slightly less likely to complete than those from White and Asian backgrounds. In autumn a different picture emerged, with those from White backgrounds slightly more likely to fail to complete than those from Black, Mixed or Asian backgrounds.
- **Provider type:** Young people who started the summer programme with smaller providers and providers who had one year's experience or less delivering NCS were more likely to complete the programme.

---

<sup>4</sup> This is a completion rate for the number of starters we have complete information for; in summer, we have missing data on completion for 370 starters and in autumn for 247.

## 4 Summer NCS



### Summary

- Participants were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences:
  - 98% said they would (definitely or maybe) recommend NCS
  - A large majority agreed that NCS had benefitted them in a variety of ways.
- Estimates of the impact of the 2012 NCS summer programme closely mirror impacts identified in 2011:
  - Improved impacts were found in relation to all outcomes related to communication, teamwork and leadership
  - Impacts were also found in relation to transition to adulthood and willingness to help out in the local area
  - No impacts were found at the programme level in relation to social mixing; however other data sources reveal a more nuanced picture, with positive feedback at an individual level.
- Economic analysis suggests that in the long-term the government and society will receive between £1.50 and £2.80 back for every £1 spent on summer NCS, an improvement on 2011.
- Overall, summer NCS 2012 appears to have been at least as effective as 2011, a positive finding in light of the fact that the programme tripled in size within this time.

This chapter presents findings from the evaluation of the summer NCS programme. We first explore participants' attitudes and experiences of the programme and make a comparison of these findings with data from the 2011 evaluation. The chapter then moves on to describe the estimates of the independent impact of NCS on young people under the four headings: communication, teamwork and leadership; transition to adulthood; social mixing; and community involvement. Findings from the evaluation of the autumn programme are presented in Chapter 5.



## 4.1 What did young people think of the programme?

Overall, participants in NCS in summer 2012 were overwhelmingly positive about their experience, giving the programme an average score of 9/10 for how enjoyable and worthwhile the programme was.

**98%**

Would definitely or might recommend NCS to a friend

Ninety-eight per cent of participants said that they would *definitely* or *might* recommend NCS to a friend, the same figure as 2011. However, there was a small decrease within this figure of those who would definitely recommend the programme, from 92% in 2011 to 88% in 2012.

## 4.2 Attitudes to different phases of NCS

**Phase 2**

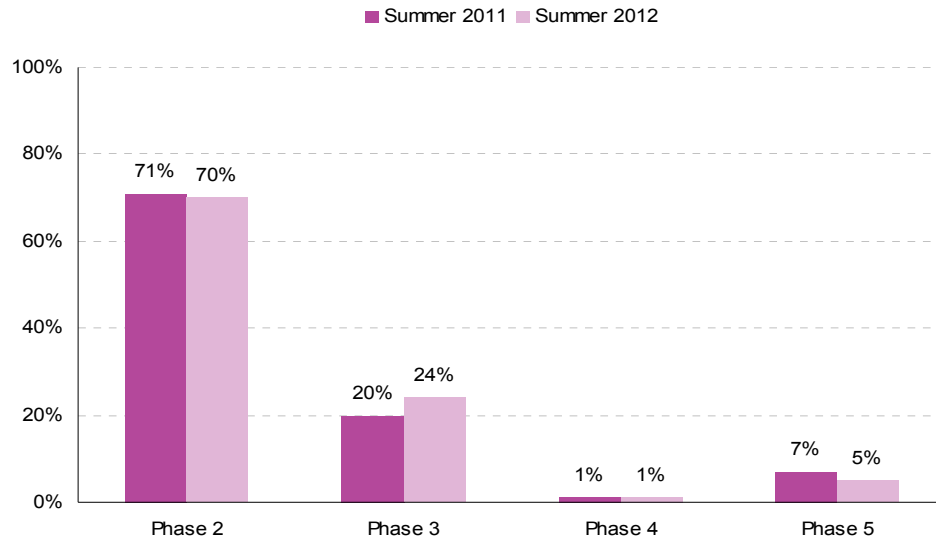
was the most popular part of NCS, scored 9.1 out of 10 by participants

Participants were asked to rate how worthwhile each phase of NCS was out of 10. In both 2012 and 2011 *Phase 2 - Away residential*, was given the highest mean score (9.1 and 8.8 respectively). *Phase 4 - Designing the social action project*, received the lowest score in both years, though at 7.5 and 7.6 out of 10 these scores still suggest that

young people approved of this phase.

Participants were also asked which their favourite and least favourite phases were, and responses reflect the mean approval scores, as illustrated by the two charts below (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Most notably, there was a change between 2011 and 2012 in the percentage of participants choosing *Phase 3 - Community residential* as their favourite phase, with a small but statistically significant rise of 4 points from 20% in 2011 to 24% in 2012. This chimes with learning from the qualitative interviews that suggests experienced providers felt they had improved the delivery of this phase and felt more confident about its role in the overall structure of the programme. See Chapter 6 for further details.

**Figure 4.1 Participants' favourite phase of NCS**

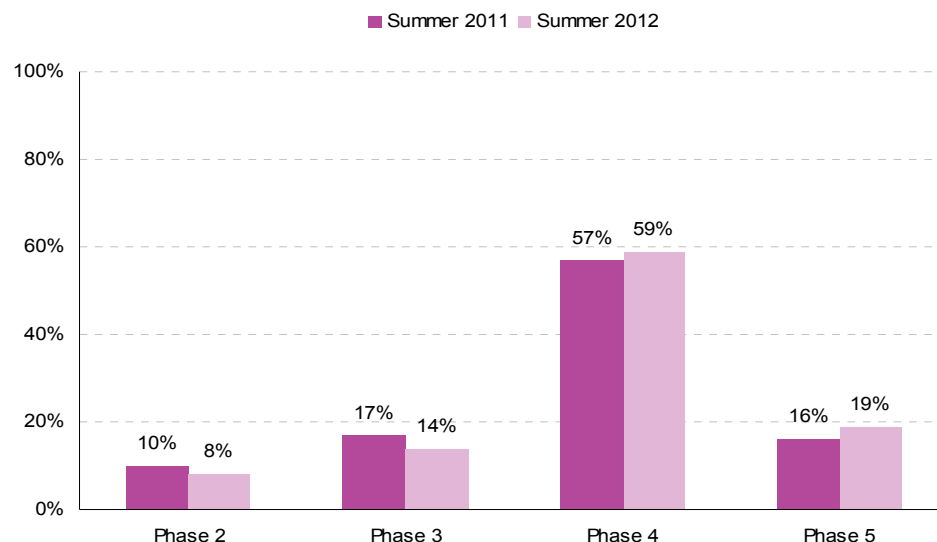


To help us understand these findings further, we asked participants further questions about why a phase was their favourite or least favourite. Three main factors were identified for young people choosing a phase as their favourite:

- The activities: In 2012 38% chose their favourite phase because of the activities involved, compared to 53% in 2011
- Working as a team: In 2012 31% referred to enjoying working with their team as a reason a particular phase was their favourite, compared to 22% in 2011
- Learning new things: In 2012 15% chose their favourite phase because they learnt new things compared to 12% in 2011

Of those who chose *Phase 2 - Away residential*, as their favourite phase, 48%, said it was because they liked the activities, and 30% said it was because they enjoyed working with their team.

**Figure 4.2 Participants' least favourite phase of NCS**



When asked why a phase was their least favourite, 23% chose (from a set of options) a lack of organisation, a seven point increase on 2011. This was also reflected amongst those who chose Phase 4 as their least favourite, 24% of whom said it was because it was disorganised. The proportion who said a phase was their least favourite because they did not like the activities was 11% in 2012, four points lower than 2011.

Participants were also asked about the staff, their graduation event and the opportunities they were given to help find volunteering roles after NCS. As in 2011 participants were very positive about NCS staff, with 96% in 2011 and 95% in 2012 saying they were good or very good. However, while remaining high, the proportion of participants who said that the help they were given to plan and run their project was good or very good decreased by 6 percentage points from 91% in 2011 to 85% in 2012. In 2012, 77% reported that their graduation was good or very good, and 59% reported the same of the help they received to find volunteering opportunities after NCS. These questions were not asked in 2011.

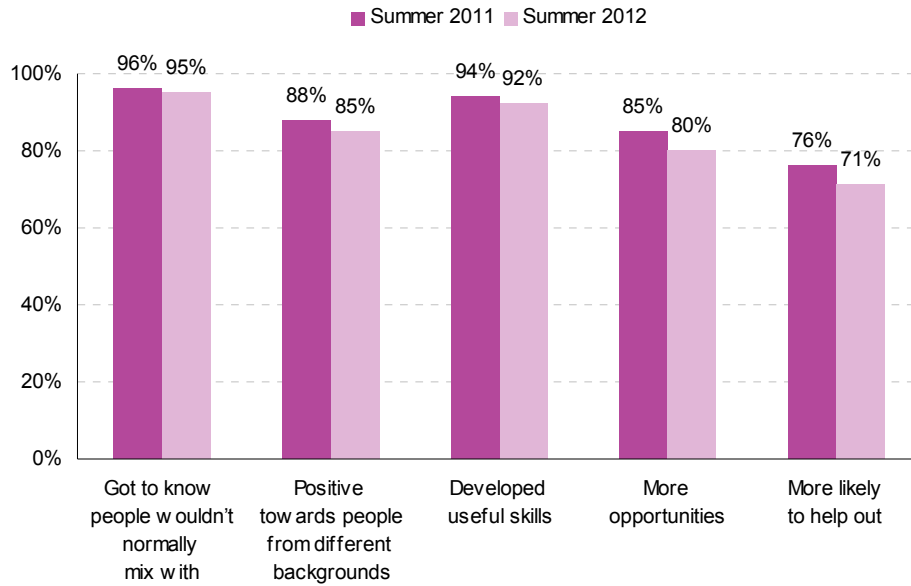
#### **4.2.1 How young people felt they benefited from NCS**

Participants were asked about their experiences of NCS, with questions relating to social mix, attitudes to the future, their local area and personal skills. Responses were overwhelmingly positive with a majority agreeing they had experienced each of these benefits.

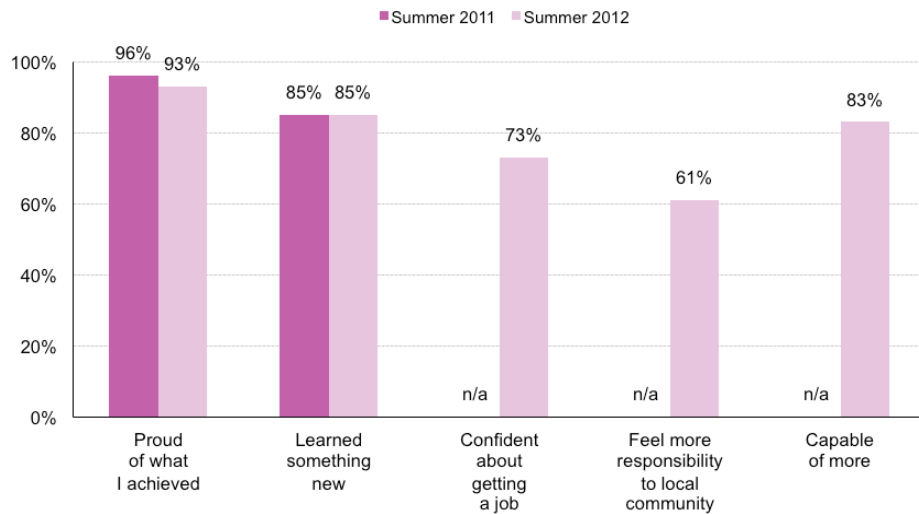
- **Social mix:** In line with 2011, there were positive findings in relation to attitudes towards people from different backgrounds: 95% felt that they had a chance to know people they wouldn't mix with (the highest level of agreement across all feedback measures), and 85% felt they were more positive towards people from different backgrounds after NCS.
- **Personal skills & attitudes towards the future:** An overwhelming majority of participants (92%) felt that they had been given a chance to develop useful skills for the future and (83%) felt they were capable of more than before they completed the programme. The programme also made 80% of participants more aware of opportunities available to them and nearly three-quarters (73%) felt more confident about getting a job in the future.

- Local area: When asked if they were more likely to help out in the future, 71% felt they were in 2012, five points fewer than in 2011. Sixty-one per cent of participants felt they had a greater responsibility to their local community.

**Figure 4.3 How participants felt NCS benefited them**



**Figure 4.4 How participants felt NCS benefited them**



## 4.3 What was the impact of the programme on participants?

### 4.3.1 Measuring impact

As described in Chapter 2 and as in 2011, 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 impacts of the NCS summer 2012 programme, by comparing outcomes for participants to a matched control group of young people who did not take part in the 2011 summer programme. In this chapter, we focus on those outcomes which were measured as part of the 2011 evaluation. The 2012 evaluation measured a number of new outcome areas, for which comparative data for 2011 was therefore not available. Consequently, consideration of these new outcomes from a comparative perspective can only be undertaken in relation to the 2012 autumn programme (and are considered, in this context, in Chapter 5).

In this chapter, we present two types of data on impact:

- Data from before and after surveys of NCS summer 2012 participants and a matched comparison sample of 16 year olds from maintained schools collected in 2011 to measure the independent impact of the programme.
- Data from the qualitative interviews carried out as part of the process evaluation with staff, young people, parents and other local stakeholders. This data helps us to better understand the quantitative data, identifying why impacts may have been seen or not seen in each case, and why differences in impacts may exist compared with 2011.

### 4.3.2 Summary of impacts

The overall picture that emerges is that the NCS summer 2012 programme had a positive impact on young people, with a similar number and range of impacts to its 2011 equivalent, and evidence of an increased magnitude of impact in some areas. This is a positive finding in light of the expansion of the programme to almost three times as many participants. Specifically, we found:

- A range of statistically significant positive programme impacts in relation to **communication, teamwork and leadership**, across all aspects of this outcome area.
- A range of statistically significant positive programme impacts in relation to **transition to adulthood**.
- No statistically significant impacts in relation to **social mixing**, however other data sources reveal a more nuanced picture, with positive feedback at an individual level.
- Two statistically significant positive impacts in relation to **community involvement**.

A range of factors influencing outcomes for young people were identified by the qualitative interviews and can be categorised under four headings:

- The overall structure and ethos of NCS
- Specific phases of the programme
- Cross-cutting delivery practices

- External factors

The following sections explain the extent of these impacts in the four outcome areas and provide additional detail on the influencing factors.

### 4.3.3 Communication, teamwork and leadership

**The NCS summer 2012 programme was associated with large improvements in communication, teamwork and leadership. As in the 2011 evaluation, independent programme impacts were identified in relation to all outcome measures – with the magnitude of the impact increasing in all instances, particularly relating to communication skills.**

The impact survey aimed to measure the independent impact of NCS on young people's communication, teamwork and leadership skills. Table 1.1 illustrates that, on each of the five aspects measured, participation in the summer programme had a significant positive impact – with the magnitude of impact being substantially greater in a number of cases than in 2011. The impacts in the table are considered in turn below.

Table 4.1 Measures of confidence <sup>5</sup>								
Base: All					NCS			
	Results				Impact			
	Baseline		Follow-up		Change over time		Difference in difference	
	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	Summer 2012	Summer 2011
% confident about...								
Being the leader of a team	46	50	64	51	18	1	<b>16.76</b>	13.32
<i>Bases</i>	2712	440	2712	440				
Working with other people in a team	80	80	86	79	6	-1	<b>6.72</b>	3.36
<i>Bases</i>	2706	441	2706	441				
Meeting new people	63	65	79	68	16	3	<b>13.41</b>	3.86
<i>Bases</i>	2710	439	2710	439				
Explaining my ideas clearly	58	63	71	60	14	-3	<b>16.67</b>	4.50
<i>Bases</i>	2710	440	2710	440				
Putting forward my ideas	59	57	71	62	13	5	<b>7.80</b>	6.57
<i>Bases</i>	2709	440	2709	440				

### Leadership

In both 2011 and 2012, the largest impact found by the survey was seen in attitudes to **being a leader of a team**. Slightly fewer than half of NCS summer 2012 participants were confident about this area at the start of the programme;

<sup>5</sup> Percentages in this and subsequent tables are rounded to the nearest percentage; as such difference in difference calculations are made on the actual figure not the rounded figures.

this proportion increased substantially during the period of programme delivery (by 18 percentage points) while it increased only slightly (one percentage point) for the control group. Consequently, participation in NCS summer 2012 was associated with an impact of +17% in confidence about being the leader of a team, a larger impact than was identified in relation to NCS 2011 (+13%).

Staff in the qualitative interviews identified opportunities throughout the programme where young people were required to display leadership skills, a platform not all young people had previously been given. Specific practices of rotating leadership and considering the different leadership styles of young people through guided reflection were important mechanisms driving this impact.

“...every day two of us were the Project Managers, so we had to lead the team as a leader, so I think a lot of us developed this leadership through that 'cause we had to do it if we wanted to complete our task.”  
**NCS participant**

Young people described being more confident in their own leadership abilities having become aware that leadership can take many different forms.

“...within a group of people let others take the lead and they are team players but not perhaps the movers and shakers and the innovators or the resources within a group...but quite a lot of the group leaders recognised that in, there are several people that they came out of their shells during the time and had other things to offer.” **Delivery staff**

## Teamwork

Before NCS, eight in ten NCS participants and the control group were confident about **working with other people in a team**. While this proportion declined slightly for the control group, it increased for 2012 NCS participants. Specifically, a programme impact of +7% was identified, somewhat larger than the impact of +3% identified for NCS 2011.

Qualitative interviews with staff and young people provide evidence that helps to explain how the programme influenced these outcomes. Generally, the overall ethos of NCS emphasises group activity and the sequencing of the programme was felt to encourage team bonding during residential phases and prior to the more challenging teamwork in the social action project. Specifically, young people described how residential took them out of their comfort zone, requiring them to work with people they did not know but in an environment that they felt was supportive. Staff with good facilitation skills were critical to the success of these activities, helping participants overcome the challenge of group dynamics.

## Communication skills

Two outcomes where we see the largest impacts relate to communication skills, suggesting NCS 2012 performed better in this area than NCS 2011.

Initially, NCS participants expressed a similar level of confidence about **meeting new people** to the control group, with just under two-thirds in each case reporting feeling confident about this at baseline. However, by the follow-up stage four in

five participants (79 per cent) said they were confident in doing this – representing a much greater increase than that experienced by the control group (three percentage points). Specifically, we find that participating in NCS 2012 is associated with a +13% impact in this area – a considerably larger impact than was found for the 2011 programme (+4%).

Qualitative interviews suggest that the logic and ethos of the NCS programme were successful in requiring young people to work together with new and different people in a supportive but challenging environment.

“...when you're living in a flat you take responsibility for each others' things and that could help us in the future if we're living, if we're sharing a, a flat with someone else. You know what to do and like how you could be fair for both you and the person. **NCS participant**”

It is difficult, however, to pinpoint specific reasons why the impacts are of a different magnitude compared to 2011. Providers discussed general improvements made to the programme in terms of organisation, logistical support and working with community partners, which are all likely to have improved the delivery of specific activities.

The other area where we see a considerable increase in NCS programme impact between 2011 and 2012 is in relation to confidence in **explaining my ideas clearly**. While NCS participants were slightly less likely than the control group to express confidence about this area at the outset, their confidence had increased substantially by the time of follow-up (from 58% to 71%), while that of the control group had declined slightly (63% to 60%). As a result, participation in NCS 2012 is associated with a programme impact of +17%, considerably larger than the impact of +5% associated with NCS 2011.

There is evidence from the process evaluation to suggest that providers felt that *Phase 3 – Community residential*, where there is opportunity to further hone communication and teamwork skills, worked better in 2012 than in 2011.

“I think in the third week they then put it [skills acquired in phase 2 and 3] into practice, and because they know each other they're like “oh you're good at that so you do that and we'll do this”...they had to apply themselves for the money, so they had to take responsibility of that, so that was good. **Delivery staff**”

The impact on participants' confidence in **putting forward their ideas** slightly increased for the 2012 summer programmes compared to 2011. Specifically, participation in NCS 2012 was associated with an impact of +8% on confidence around putting forward ideas, compared to an impact of +7% for the 2011 programme. While the proportions of the 2012 participant and control group who expressed confidence about this at baseline were broadly similar (slightly less than six in ten), the confidence levels reported by participants had increased much more following the programme (59% to 71%) than had those of the control group (57% to 62%).



#### 4.3.4 Transition to adulthood

**NCS summer 2012 was associated with large impacts on participants' transition to adulthood. A range of independent impacts were identified in relation to these outcome measures, similar to 2011**

Impacts on transition to adulthood are grouped into four categories: personal qualities, life skills, progression into education, employment and training and reduction in challenging and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

##### Impacts on personal qualities

The impact survey asked respondents about two types of personal qualities: well-being and feelings of personal efficacy.<sup>6</sup>

Sense of **personal wellbeing** was measured using an 11 point scale (0-10) for four outcomes:

- life satisfaction (ten on the scale represented being completely satisfied with life nowadays)
- happiness (ten on the scale represented feeling completely happy yesterday)
- whether things you do are worthwhile (ten on the scale represented feeling things you do are completely worthwhile)
- levels of anxiety (ten on the scale represented feeling completely anxious yesterday).

In 2012, the NCS summer programme was not found to have a significant impact on any of these aspects of personal well-being, whereas in 2011, participation in NCS was found to be associated with increased happiness, feelings that the things you do are worthwhile and decreased anxiety. However, it is worth noting that the impact of NCS 2012 on levels of happiness was +6%. This is a similar level of change to that detected in 2011; however due to the smaller sample sizes in 2012 this is not statistically significant. This suggests that a programme impact might have been found in this area, given the availability of a larger control group.

Young people were also asked a series of eight questions in the impact survey to glean how **in control of their lives they felt**. We found impact in one area, specifically, the proportion of participants disagreeing that 'how well you get on in this world is mostly luck'. This remained stable over the period of programme delivery for NCS 2012 participants while declining by 11 percentage points among the control group. Participation in NCS 2012 was therefore associated with a +10% impact in this area (an increase on the impact of +5% found in 2011). However, the significant programme impact identified in 2011 in relation to the proportion agreeing that "if someone is not a success in life, it's usually their own fault", was not sustained in 2012.



When answers to these questions were combined into a composite measure, as in 2011, 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 (this had increased substantially for both groups during the period of the programme).

---

<sup>6</sup> Self-esteem was not measured as part of the 2012 survey, although no programme impact was identified when this outcome was measured in 2011.

The qualitative interviews provide mixed evidence of impacts on these personal qualities. Generally, there was a sense that impacts in this area were far more apparent for young people who arrived with challenging behaviour or lower well-being. Baseline survey results would suggest that these participants were in a minority which may explain why effects are not seen at the programme level. More specific research may help to uncover what impact NCS can have on well-being and young people's sense of control.

Qualitative interviews did provide some individual examples of impact in this area. Staff and young people identified clear examples of the programme improving well-being and self-esteem through providing a challenging but also supportive environment.

 *She's definitely more confident, her self-esteem is a lot higher...what worried her before you know, to do with her friends at school...she realises what the important things are and it's not so much about your image, it's about things like working together and helping each other.* 

**Parent of NCS participant**

Young people were able to do more than they thought they were in relation to some of the activities in the *Phase 2 - Away residential* and this also caused them to reassess what they were capable of more generally.

### Impacts on life skills

The impact survey asked young people how confident they felt about five different life skills; four of these (having a go at things that are new to me, managing my money, staying away from family and friends and getting things done on time) were also asked about as part of the 2011 evaluation, while the fifth (being able to make decisions) was asked about for the first time in 2012. The latter measure is therefore only included in analysis of the relative impact of the summer and autumn programmes in Chapter 5.

While no programme impact was identified in relation to life skills in 2011, in 2012 a significant positive impact was identified in relation to “having a go at things that are new to me”, as shown in the table below. While the levels of confidence of NCS 2012 participants and the control group in relation to this area were almost identical at baseline, these had increased substantially for NCS participants by the time of the follow up survey, while remaining stable for the control group. As a result, participation in NCS 2012 was associated with a significant positive impact of +8% in this area (compared to the impact of +2% found in 2011, which was not statistically significant).

**Table 4.2 Life skills**

Base: All					NCS			
	Results				Impact			
	Baseline		Follow-up		Change over time		Difference in difference	
	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	Summer 2012	Summer 2011
% confident about...								
Having a go at things that are new to me	76	75	85	76	9	1	8.27	2.48
Bases	2709	441	2709	441				

It is difficult from the qualitative interviews to identify evidence as to why this impact should be present in 2012 but not in 2011. It is clear that residents were able to instil belief in young people about doing things they had not previously done in both evaluations, through specific activities or taking on specific roles such as a leader of a team.

*A lot of them grew in confidence and their attitudes were a lot better from when we started off with them...more pleasant and willing to get involved, whereas at first everything was a job for some of them to do something. But by the end of it they wanted to be involved.*  
**Delivery staff**

However, providers did not describe offering new or different activities that might affect this outcome, so it is most likely that this improvement is a result of some of the general improvements in organisation and delivery discussed further in Chapter 6.

### Progression into employment, education or training

Participants were asked in the impact survey about their attitudes to education and their plans for the future. NCS summer 2012 had different impacts in this area, compared to NCS 2011.

Participants were asked about their attitudes to education – in terms of how far they agreed that “education is worthwhile” or disagreed that they were “not interested in doing any more learning”. In 2012, participation in NCS was found to have a significant impact on the former attitude not the latter; the reverse was true in 2011.

Almost all summer 2012 participants and respondents in the control group agreed at baseline that “education is worthwhile”. Over the duration of the programme this proportion increased slightly for participants (96% to 97%) while declining marginally for the control group (98% to 95%). As a result, participation in NCS 2012 was associated with a small but significant positive impact on the view that education is worthwhile of +3%. A comparable impact was identified in relation to disagreement with the view that the young person responding was “not interested in doing any more learning”, but this was not found to be statistically significant. Despite the change in the identification of significant differences between 2011

and 2012, the precise extent of the impacts identified suggests that programme impact in these areas was broadly similar in the two years.

Participants were also asked about their plans for the coming autumn (and, at follow up, what they were doing in practice) and could choose as many categories from a list as they wished. The vast majority were planning to continue with their education by studying AS/A-levels or for another qualification in a sixth form or college. This was the case for 95% of NCS 2012 participants at baseline and 96% of the control group. These proportions did not change substantially over the period of programme delivery and NCS did not make a significant impact in this area. This is perhaps unsurprising - there was little room for improvement in terms of increasing the proportion planning to (and later actually) participating in education as young people would have been likely to have already made plans for sixth form when they completed the baseline survey.

Finally, participants were asked to choose from a list of activities they expected to be doing in autumn 2014 (or, for the control group, autumn 2013). Around three-quarters of NCS participants and the control group (74% and 78% specifically) anticipated studying for an educational qualification at that point. Over the duration of the programme, these proportions remained relatively stable and participation in NCS was not associated with a significant impact in this area.

Evidence that NCS could help progression with education was provided in the qualitative interviews with NCS staff and young people. There were examples of young people feeling that the programme had provided clarity for them in terms of their next steps; for others, specific skills and having NCS on their CV was felt to be useful in achieving future aspirations.

“...because the college looked at what he'd done on NCS, and his engagement with NCS, that demonstrated something that they couldn't see from just the results he had. So in terms of, you know, the potential for it to change his life, I think it's been quite dramatic. **Delivery staff**”

However, there was an impression that these effects would be felt at the margins as many young people had already made decision about their next steps in education or employment. Staff also felt that some young people might find NCS useful in gaining further work experience (through internships or volunteering) that might lead to employment and their experience on NCS would equip them well to identify and make the most of these kinds of opportunities.

### 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), it is also 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, and as in 2011, 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.

In 2012, there was a positive programme impact for the response to the statement that “some young people want to stay out of trouble”, as being “quite

like me” or “just like me”. At baseline, 87% of participants stated that this was the case, compared to 93% of the control group, suggesting a small difference in terms of likelihood of engaging in anti-social behaviour between the NCS participants and the comparison sample. The proportion agreeing with the statement increased for NCS participants between baseline and follow-up (from 87% to 91%), while remaining static (at 93%) for the control group. As a result, participation in NCS was associated with a positive impact of 4% in agreement with this view. NCS was also found to have comparable positive impact, albeit not one that is statistically significant, in relation to the other measure of anti-social behaviour (“Some young people want to sort out the problems in their lives”). In 2011, NCS was found to have a significant positive impact in relation to the first of these measures and not the second. This suggests that, despite the alteration in those impacts found to be significant, the magnitude of impacts in this area were broadly similar in 2011 and 2012.

There is limited evidence from the qualitative interviews on impacts on anti-social behaviour. Staff did describe some young people who had behavioural issues making improvements in this area but they were isolated and unlikely to be picked up at a programme level. Staff discussed how some NCS participants with behavioural problems described the programme and their team as feeling part of something tangible. This, in some cases, was not something they had previously experienced and it made them reassess their actions towards others and their hopes for the future. However, it was also suggested that the impact of this experience also manifested itself in improved communication skills, so the impact may have been picked up elsewhere in the survey.

#### 4.3.5 Social mixing

**NCS was not seen to have any positive independent impact in relation to attitudes towards and behaviours arising from social mixing. This is slightly different to the summer 2011 programme, where both positive and negative impacts were identified. However evidence from the qualitative interviews suggests a more nuanced picture, with some evidence of positive impacts at the individual level and of social mixing leading to impact on other areas rather than being an impact in itself.**

Measuring programme impacts in the area of social mixing is challenging, as young people's attitudes and behaviour in this area will be influenced by a range of factors including where they live, their current friendship circle and the extent to which potential exists for it to expand. It is therefore difficult to word questions in a way that will adequately capture changes in attitudes for social mixing and that is relevant for participants who took part in NCS and for the control group, who did not take part.

#### Attitudes and values for social mixing

As described in the Chapter 3, NCS was largely successful in recruiting young people from different backgrounds. The impact survey also asked questions of young people to determine whether this had affected their 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 was slightly higher than for the control group at baseline, with the two proportions being identical at follow-up. Consequently, NCS was not found to have a significant impact on this outcome, whereas in 2011 it was found to have a negative impact on attitudes in this area. It is difficult for NCS providers to control the type of impact young people's experiences might have on this measure. Young people may be involved in an effective social action project, but

it might also raise their awareness of difficulties and divisions within their communities. It would be worth re-considering the theory that NCS can be expected to have an impact in this area.

While 2012 NCS participants were more likely to agree with the statement ‘I enjoy being with people from different backgrounds to me’ at the start of the programme (89%, compared to 80% of the control group), this attitude had declined by the time of the follow up – at which point agreement with this view was almost identical in the two groups. Therefore, participation in NCS was associated with a negative impact in this area of -9%. This finding was also identified in 2011. Theoretically, it is easy to understand why such an impact might occur as part of the process of participating in NCS. As this was explicitly intended to increase experiences of mixing with those from different backgrounds, it is unsurprising that the very high proportion who agreed that they enjoyed this at baseline, would reduce – as a minority would inevitably find this experience to be challenging. It is envisaged that the control group, who had not participated in NCS in 2011, would not have encountered this extent of experience in this area, and so we would expect their views to change to a lesser degree.

As in 2011, the impact survey also identified no significant impact of participation in NCS on trust in people in the local area. This remained relatively static for both participants in 2012 (69% at baseline and 67% at follow up) and the control group (70% at both equivalent points in time). As with young people’s views on how well local people get on together, impacts here may be somewhat out of control of NCS providers. Views of NCS participants are likely to be influenced by the actions of local people; the theory that NCS can affect this outcome may need reconsidering.

## 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 (in terms of coming from different estates or parts of the village or town, being of a different race or ethnicity or being of a different religion to them). In 2012, no significant impacts were associated with participation in NCS in terms of the composition of participants’ friendship groups. While the proportion who indicated that “most” or “all” of their friends were from different areas or religions increased slightly for both 2012 participants and the control group, the reported composition of friendship groups remained static for both groups between baseline and follow up. Interestingly, NCS 2011 appeared to have impacts in this area – with participation in the programme being associated with friendship groups becoming slightly, but significantly, more homogenous in terms of area but more diverse in terms of religion. These impacts were not found in 2012.

As in 2011, qualitative findings shed some light on the challenges for the programme in this area. The programme ethos and structure certainly requires young people to mix with different people; it also allowed young people to spend time with and improve their understandings of people different from them.



*... sometimes when you see people you'd just judge them straightaway. But on NCS when we've first seen them we might have thought we weren't going to get along with them, but you get to know them because you have to, and end up getting along.* **NCS participant**





---

However, in some metropolitan areas, where friendship groups were already very diverse, providers suggested it could be more difficult for NCS to make an impact on attitudes to social mixing, particularly in relation to religion, ethnicity and socio-economic background. While there may have still been opportunities to mix with other young people from different schools or local areas, this would be more difficult to pick up given the design of the survey questions. Conversely, in other areas it was not always possible for providers to construct cohorts and teams that were sufficiently different along the dimensions of differences measured in the impact survey to necessarily see this difference at a programme level.

It is also the case that this kind of social mixing, i.e. whether friends are from a different area, ethnicity or religion, might not have been in people's minds when responding to these survey questions; young people talked about difference in more nuanced ways relating to personality and interests. Equally, while understanding of differences may improve, there may be other barriers to continued friendship beyond the programme that NCS cannot tackle. Staff and young people did describe some specific teams that were not able to overcome local differences and divisions amongst participants.

### 4.3.6 Community involvement

**The impact of NCS 2012 on community involvement represented an improvement from 2011. A positive programme impact was identified on attitudes towards volunteering and young people's perceptions of their ability to make a difference.**



NCS aims to impact a number of areas related to community involvement. The impact survey was able to measure outcomes in relation to two of these areas: views on helping out in their local community; and how able young people feel to make a difference.

#### Impacts on willingness to help out in the community

The impact survey asked whether participants would like to spend more time helping out in a range of different ways. This can be interpreted as a measure of their willingness to help within their communities. As shown in the table below, the summer 2012 programme was shown to have an impact on this measure. While the proportion who reported that they were willing to help out declined in both the 2012 participant group and the control group between baseline and follow up, this decline was much less marked among NCS participants. As a result, participation in NCS was found to have a positive impact of +6% in this area. This could be interpreted as having had the effect of reducing decline in willingness to help out that would have happened without the influence of NCS. In 2011, the impact of NCS in this area was negative – though not significantly so; therefore the 2012 findings represent a positive improvement to an important element of the programme.

Table 4.3 Willingness to help out in the future								
<i>Base: All</i>					<i>NCS</i>			
	Results				Impact			
	Baseline		Follow-up		Change over time		Difference in difference	
	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	NCS summer (2012)	Control (2011)	Summer 2012	Summer 2011
Would like to help out	74	75	67	62	-6	-13	6.29	-6.95
<i>Bases</i>	2773	480	2773	480				

As with the improvement in views on the value of local people coming together to make a difference, qualitative interviews suggest that improved social action projects are likely to be behind this impact. In particular, staff and young people described making a tangible difference with their projects showed them the difference it was possible to make and encouraged them to seek out other opportunities to do so.

 *You see what difference it makes. Like the festival we ran yesterday, then you think that, if you did it near us, you could make a big difference to the community...* **NCS participant** 

Examples of good social action projects and recommendations for key ingredients are provided in Chapter 6.

In 2012 participants were asked whether they had helped out in the recent past and whether they would be willing to help out in the future. In terms of recent experiences of helping out, NCS 2012 participants 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 2012. This question asked NCS participants to *exclude* anything they had done as part of the programme.

In 2012, no significant programme impact was found in relation to helping out a neighbour or a range of specific ways of actually helping out. The surveys asked whether young people had helped out over the summer. NCS participants were asked, when answering this question, to exclude the 30 hours of social action they were expected to complete as part of the programme. There was a substantial decline in the proportion of young people who reported helping out, between baseline and follow up; this reduced from 81% to 61%. An almost identical decline was evident among the control group. In 2011, while the programme did have an impact on helping out a neighbour, there was no impact on helping out more generally. Other evidence from nationally representative surveys suggests that there is a drop-off in helping out and other pro-social activities when young people leave school as fewer opportunities are readily available.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Lee et al (2011) Barriers and facilitators to pro-social behaviour amongst young people: a review of existing evidence, Department for Education, available:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183475/DFE-RR188.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183475/DFE-RR188.pdf)





## Ability to make a difference

Participants in the impact survey were asked whether they felt listened to and how able they thought they were to make a difference to their local area.

The 2012 NCS participants saw a slight decrease (55% to 54%) between baseline and follow up in the proportion agreeing that when local people campaign together they can solve problems; this decrease was more marked for the control group (from 56% to 47%) and, consequently, participation in NCS was associated with an impact of seven percentage points in this area. While this impact was not sufficient to be defined as statistically significant, it would have been, given a larger sample size.<sup>8</sup>

Evidence from the qualitative interviews suggests that improvements providers had made to support young people to create and deliver social action projects could explain any increase observed in impacts here. Providers in 2012 were keen to ensure projects were achievable and would provide young people with a tangible outcome – for example teaming up with other local people to refurbish a community centre. See Chapter 6 for further details on the learning for delivering Phase 4 planning the social action project and Phase 5 delivering the social action project.

 ..... I think the last two weeks [Social action project] have been good, because I didn't ever think I would help out in the community in such a big way...it's been something good to do. I just think it's been dead good. 

**NCS participant**

Participants in NCS 2012 and the control group were more likely to feel listened to by their families at baseline (around three-quarters in both cases) but were less likely to feel their views are taken seriously by local people (less than one-quarter in both cases). There was no clear pattern of change over time between baseline and follow up, and no significant impact (in either direction) associated with participation in NCS. The proportions who felt they cannot change the way things are done locally were similar in both groups, both at baseline and follow up, with no significant programme impact being identified in this area.

## 4.4 What was the value for money of the programme?

**The societal benefits of the NCS 2012 programme are estimated to be between 1.5 and 2.8 times the cost of delivering NCS in 2012. This is an increase on the 2011 programme where the societal benefits were initially estimated to be between 1 and 2 times the cost of delivering NCS.**

The remainder of this chapter explains how this ratio was calculated, and compares the value for money of the programme in 2012 to estimates from 2011 (both immediately following the programme and one year on). As with the analysis of the 2011 programme, only the impacts described in Section 4.2 above that were statistically significant (i.e. unlikely to arise simply as a matter of chance) were included in the economic analysis of the summer 2012 programme.

---

<sup>8</sup> The 2011 evaluation included an item measuring agreement with the view that the “government listens to people like me”, for which no significant impact was found. This item was not included in 2012.

### 4.4.1 Estimating benefits

The clearest economic benefits of NCS come from two main sources: the value of the volunteering provided and the development of non-cognitive skills and changes in pro-social attitudes. These lead to three distinct economic benefits of NCS:

- Short-term benefits resulting from the time spent volunteering by the participants as part of their programme;
- Anticipated future benefits resulting from increased communication, teamwork and leadership; and
- Anticipated future benefits resulting from participants progressing into education and training.

For the 2012 NCS programme, the estimate of the net present value of these benefits to society based on the short-term impacts described above is estimated to be up to **£101.9 million**. This comprises:

- the equivalent of £1.4 million in time donated by volunteers over the course of the programme;
- £54.1 million in increased earnings for NCS participants because of increased confidence in teamwork, communication, and leadership; and
- up to an additional £46.3 million increase in earnings for NCS participants because of greater take up of educational opportunities. Because the evidence of impact on the outcomes associated with education and training opportunities is not consistent (see Section 4.2.4), these benefits are given as a range instead of a point estimate to reflect the uncertainty inherent in the estimate.

A portion of these benefits of £102 million to society accrue to government in the form of tax revenue and National Insurance contributions. Specifically, the present value of the benefits to government is estimated to be up to £42.2 million, which is made up of:

- £22.7 million due to the increase in future earnings of NCS participants because of increased confidence in teamwork, communication, and leadership; and
- up to an additional £19.5 million from the future increase in earnings for NCS participants because of greater take up of educational opportunities.

### 4.3.2 Bases for the estimates of the benefits

The estimates of the three economic benefits described above were calculated as follows.

- **Volunteering:** The estimate of the value of volunteering was based on the average number of volunteering hours completed by NCS participants during the course of their social action project (21.6 hours). Using the figure of £3.68 as the minimum hourly wage for workers above school leaving age but under 18, the total value of volunteering hours for all NCS participants completing the programme ( $n=18,108$ ) would be  $18,108 \times 21.6 \times 3.68 = £1.44$  million.
- **Communication, teamwork and leadership:** To estimate the economic benefits of increased confidence in communication, teamwork and leadership we first estimated the net present value of lifetime earnings of a typical NCS participant at £609,000.<sup>9</sup> Based on research by Kuhn and Weinberger<sup>10</sup>, we

<sup>9</sup> The methodology is described in full in the technical report.

---

assumed that the increased confidence and skills would lead to a 4% increase in lifetime earnings, and based on participants going on to full-time employment. This corresponds to a net increase of £24,359 per person. With this increase, the net present value of each participant's lifetime earnings would be £633,334. The impact analysis above shows that the proportion of NCS participants who experience an increase in confidence is estimated to be 12.3% (or 2,222) of the 18,108 NCS participants. The total benefit to society would therefore be approximately £54 million ( $£24,359 \times 2,222 = £54.1\text{m}$ )

- **Education:** We used a similar approach to estimating the economic benefits of the greater take up of educational opportunities. Section 4.2.4 notes that the impact of NCS on the take up of such opportunities is uncertain, so we present this impact as a range. The lower end of the range is zero. For the upper end, based on internal research for the then Department for Children, Schools and Families<sup>11</sup>, we assumed that NCS participants who agreed that “education is worthwhile” after participating in NCS would experience an increase in 14% of the net present value of their lifetime earnings (i.e.  $£609,000 \times 14\% = £85,257$ ). This change in attitude towards education affected approximately 3% of all participants (see Section 4.2.4 above), giving total benefits of  $3\% \times 18,108$  participants who completed NCS  $\times £85,257 = £45.6$  million.

To estimate the government revenue, we estimated that from these increased earnings, the government would receive income and expenditure (VAT) taxes. For this salary band, the effective tax rate is 12.6%, and approximately 24% of earnings would be spent on taxable expenditures<sup>12</sup> and hence taxed at 20 percent. Including employee and employer national insurance contributions, the total revenue would be between £22.7 and £42.2 million, reflecting the range of the impact on the uptake of educational opportunities.

## 4.4.2 Comparing benefits to costs

Table 4.5 illustrates both the costs and the benefits of NCS. As the 2012 summer programme cost the government nearly £37 million to deliver, the societal benefits are estimated to be between 1.5 and 2.8 times the costs.

---

<sup>10</sup> Kuhn and Weinberger. 2003, Leadership Skills and Wages, Departmental Working Papers, Department of Economics, UCSB, UC Santa Barbara

<sup>11</sup> McIntosh, S. (2007) 'A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Apprenticeships and Other Vocational Qualifications.' Research Report No 834; and Jenkins, A. Greenwood, C. & Vignoles, A. (2007) 'The Returns to Qualifications in England: Updating the Evidence Base on Level 2 and Level 3 Vocational Qualifications.' Centre for the Economics of Education

<sup>12</sup> This is derived for summing the taxable components of household spending based on ONS Components of Household Expenditure, 2008, Table A1.

Table 4.5 Costs and benefits of NCS 2012		
<i>Base: All</i>		
	2012 Programme	
Costs	£36.8 million	
	Benefits to Society	Savings to Govt.
Current benefits of volunteering	£1.4 million	Not applicable
Benefits from future increased earnings of NCS participants due to increased confidence	£54.1 million	£22.7 million
Benefits from future increased earnings of NCS participants due to take up of educational opportunities	£0 - £46.3 million	£0 - £19.5 million
Total	£56 - £102 million	£22.7 - £42.2 million

As with most cost benefit analyses of social programmes, the actual benefits may be higher than the calculated estimates. In relation to NCS there are three possible reasons for this:

- First, 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.
- Secondly, 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 that is not captured.
- Thirdly, the 2012 NCS programme appeared to have an impact on some outcomes, but not to the high level of statistical significance (95% confidence) to warrant inclusion in the analysis.

Similarly, however, these calculations of the monetary benefits are also subject to the caveats that applied for the NCS 2011 programme, although we have more confidence now that the benefits of the programme in building up confidence in leadership and communication are due to the programme, and not coincidental. The main caveats are that:

- 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, and thus these estimates are subject to high levels of uncertainty.
- The economic research literature itself is not always consistent about the size of the economic benefits of improved leadership and benefits of education.
- 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.

### 4.4.3 Comparing to previous NCS programmes

Table 4.6 below compares these estimates of the impact of the 2012 programme with the estimates of the 2011 programme. The estimates, while they reflect much uncertainty, suggest that NCS 2012 appears to have a greater economic impact than NCS 2011. The value for money of the 2011 programme has been estimated at two time points:

- 1) The initial estimate, following the end of NCS in 2011, was that the benefits to society were in the range of £11 million to £28 million, or an estimated benefit to cost ratio of between one and two.
- 2) A revised estimate, based on the results of a follow up survey one year on from NCS, was between £10 million and £11 million, or at the lower range of the initial estimate. The difference between the two estimates was mainly due to the fact that positive attitudes of the NCS participants in 2011 towards education were not reflected in the actual uptake of educational opportunities between 2011 and 2012. Thus the anticipated economic impact of NCS 2011 on education did not appear to materialise. However, as discussed in the 2011 longer-term evaluation report, there are limits to the changes that could have been witnessed at this stage, and to the measures included in the follow up survey – as such this should be taken as an estimate only.

The comparison of the initial estimate of the 2011 programme with the 2012 programme shows an increase in the range of the cost-benefit ratio from between 1 to 1 and 1 to 2 (ie, between £13.3M : £11M - £28M) to a range between 1 to 1.5 and 1 to 2.8 (ie, between £36.8M : £56M - £102M). The main reason for this increase was the greater changes in confidence in leadership etc. brought about by the 2012 programme (12.3% of NCS participants benefitted in 2012 compared to 6.3% in 2011).

The revised estimate of the 2011 programme showed that the ratio dropped by this point in time, as some impacts were not sustained. However significant changes have been put in place for the 2012 graduates, to encourage and support the participants and as such it could be expected that longer-term outcomes may be stronger than seen in the 2011 cohort. Such graduate activities include:

- Graduate volunteering programme
- Leadership Academy
- Alumni programme.

As such it is not necessarily applicable to extrapolate the changes in the 2011 ratio to the 2012 findings. However, it should be noted that the ratio of 1.5 to 2.8 outlined above is dependent on such impacts being sustained in the longer-term, and as such it will be important to track such findings in future years to understand the true impact of the programme. Based on the findings of the 2011 12 month follow-up survey, if the impacts from the 2012 summer programme are not fully sustained, the benefit to cost ratio would be at the lower end of this range rather than the upper end.

## 5 Autumn NCS

### Summary

- Participants were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences of autumn NCS:
  - 98% said they would recommend it to a friend
  - A large majority agreed that NCS had benefited them in a variety of ways, with scores slightly lower on some measures compared to summer
- For 34 out of 41 outcomes, participation in the autumn programme was found to be associated with similar relative outcomes to participation in the summer programme
  - For the majority of measures related to *communication, teamwork and leadership*, participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on two outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes
  - For the majority of measures related to *transition to adulthood* participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on four outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes
  - For the majority of measures related to *social mixing* participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on one outcome, autumn participation was associated with improved outcomes
  - For measures related to *community involvement* autumn participation was associated with similar outcomes across all measures.
- The evidence from this evaluation suggests that the autumn pilots produce a similar participant experience and are associated with broadly similar outcomes to the summer programme, suggesting that it is worth extending and refining the NCS autumn programme following further evaluation in future years

This chapter presents findings from the evaluation of the first NCS pilots to take place in autumn. The programme was delivered following a similar structure to the summer programme but with some distinct differences due to the differing time available for completion. The programme started in autumn half-term. Due to the shorter length of the half term holiday, the autumn 2012 NCS model was a compressed version of the summer model. Full details about the delivery of the autumn programme are set out in Chapter 1.

The chapter first describes young people's views of autumn NCS and how they rated their experience and compares this to equivalent findings from the summer programme. We then move to a discussion of autumn outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 2, we do not have a counterfactual (i.e. a meaningful comparison group) against which to measure the independent impact of the autumn NCS programme. Instead, we are making a different comparison, comparing participation in the autumn programme with participation in the summer programme. This involves using statistical matching techniques to make an estimate of what the outcomes would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in summer NCS instead. Where we find no difference in these outcomes, it does not follow that autumn therefore has the same impact as summer, as we do not know what the equivalent change in a control group would have been, but it does provide a useful indication of the comparative experiences of participants on the two programmes.

## 5.1 What did young people think of the programme?

**As with both summer NCS programmes, participants in autumn 2012 were overwhelmingly positive about their experience on NCS, with participants rating the programme 8.9 and 9 out of 10 for how worthwhile and enjoyable the programme was.**

**98%**

Would definitely or  
might recommend  
NCS to a friend

Eighty-six percent of young people said they would definitely recommend NCS to a friend. A further 12% said they might recommend it, meaning the aggregate number saying they would definitely or might recommend NCS was the same as in summer (98%).

### 5.1.1 Participants' attitudes to phases

As outlined in Chapter 2, while the broad structure of NCS is the same in summer and autumn, there are slight differences in the nature of specific phases and the timings of these phases. This section compares the ratings of the phases of the autumn programme with the most equivalent phase in summer. Overall, findings are again very positive and follow a similar pattern to summer, with some variation.

**Phase 2**

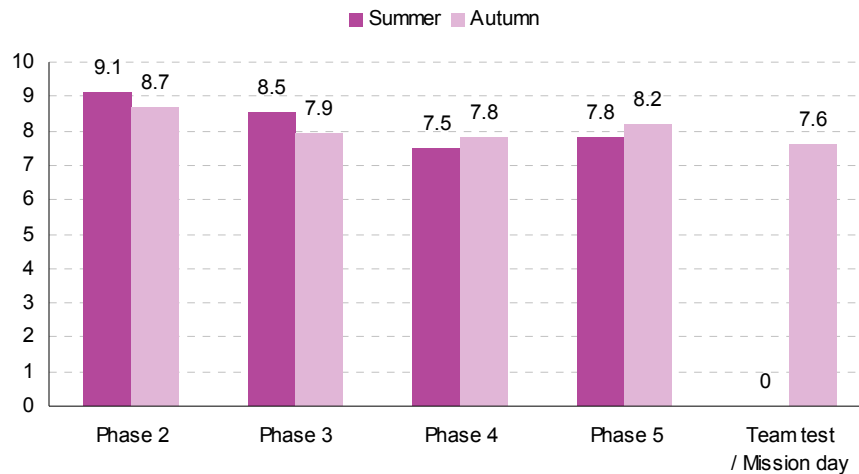
was the most  
popular part of NCS,  
scored 8.7 out of 10  
by participants

Autumn participants' sense of how worthwhile NCS phases were differed slightly from summer, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. Autumn participants were more likely to say that Phase 4, planning the social action project, and Phase 5, delivering the social action project, was the most worthwhile phase than summer participants; conversely, in summer participants were more likely to choose Phase 2 or 3.

The team test and mission day were unique to the autumn programme and cannot be compared to the summer programme. However, compared to the other elements of the programme, the team test or mission day phase was seen as the least worthwhile element, though still with a positive mean score of 7.6 out of ten.

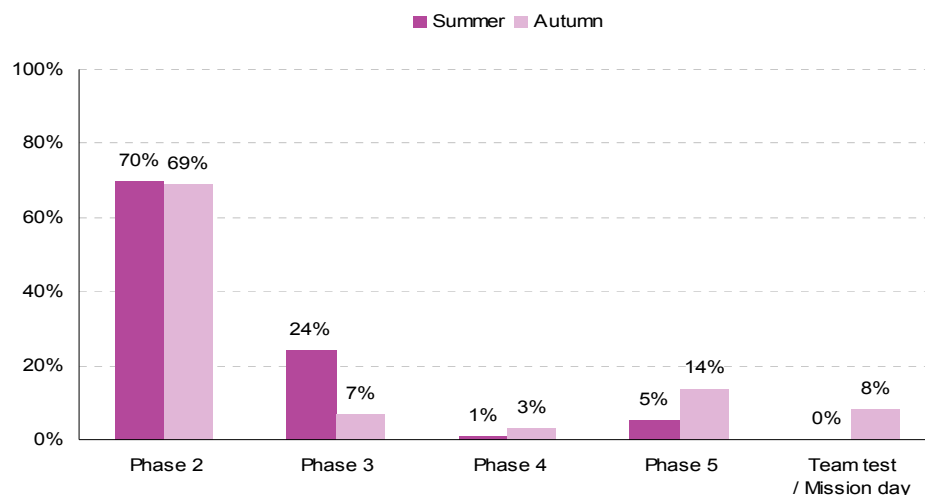


**Figure 5.1 Mean scores of NCS phases**



As might be expected given the mean scores of how worthwhile participants found each phase, there were also differences between the summer and autumn 2012 participants when asked which was their favourite and least favourite phase. When asked about their favourite phase, compared to the summer programme there was a fall of seventeen points amongst those who chose *Phase 3 - Learning about the home community*, with 24% choosing this in the summer programme and 7% in autumn 2012. This phase was non-residential in the autumn programme and providers were less clear about the role in some cases, which may explain this change. More detail on this is contained in Chapter 6. In contrast, the proportion of autumn participants choosing the *Phase 5 - Delivering the social action project*, as their favourite phase was 14%, 9 percentage points higher than summer 2012 (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2 Participants favourite phase of NCS autumn**

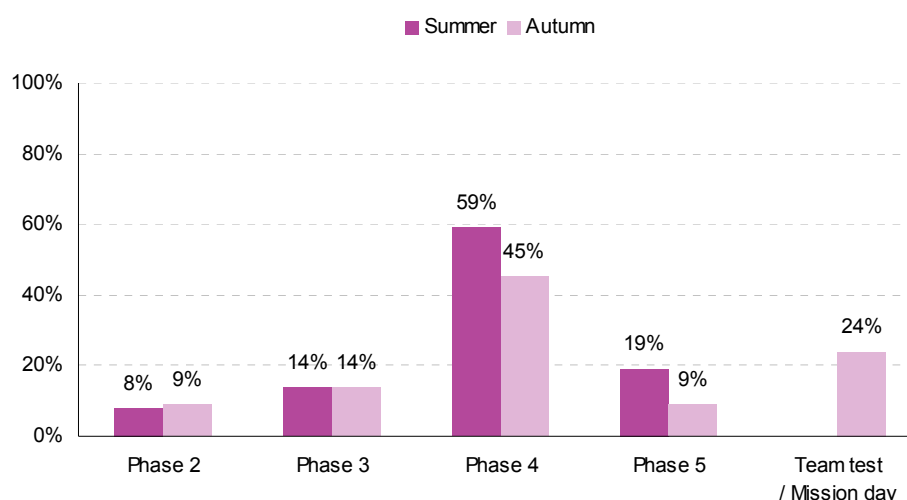


*Phase 4 - Designing the social action project*, was the least favourite phase in autumn. However the proportion that chose it as their least favourite phase was 13 points lower in autumn (45%) compared with summer (59%). Those who said that *Phase 5 - Delivering the social action project* was their least favourite phase was also ten points lower in autumn (9%) than in summer (19%). The elements



unique to autumn, the team test or mission day, were the second most likely choice for participant's least favourite phase (see Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3 Participants' least favourite phase of NCS autumn**



Participants were also asked why a phase was their favourite or least favourite phase. When asked about their favourite phase, there was a change from the summer programme – 32% said it was because they liked the activities in autumn 2012, compared to 38% in summer. Alongside this change, there was an increase in the proportion choosing their favourite phase because they enjoyed working with their team, from 30% to 35%. These two reasons were also the most popular reasons amongst participants choosing the first week as their favourite phase.

When asked why a phase was their least favourite, there was a fall compared to summer in the proportion of those who felt it was because it was disorganised, from 23% to 18%, and amongst those who said that they did not like the activities, from 11% to 9%, but a rise in the proportion who said they did not learn anything new, from 11% to 14%.

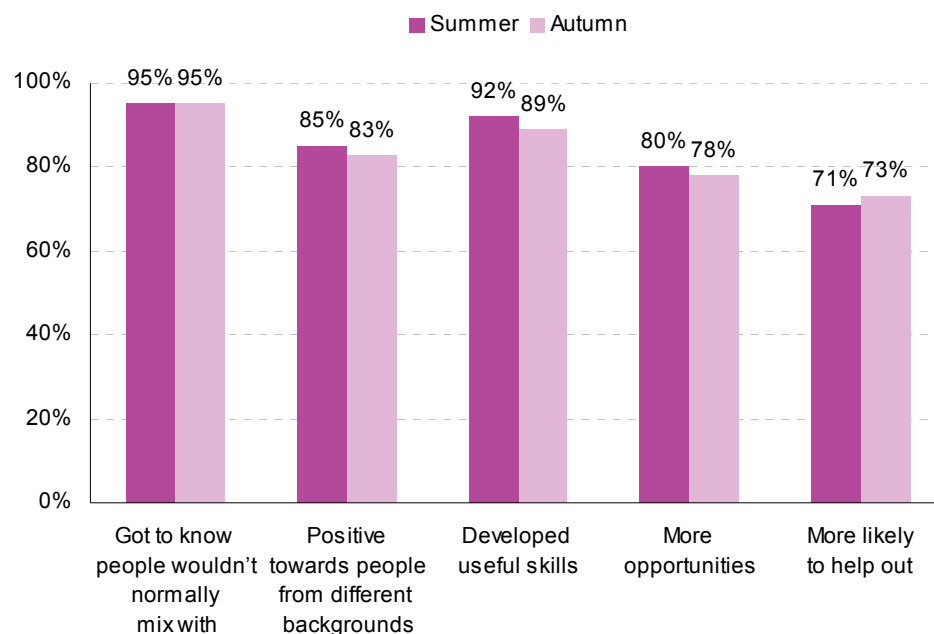
When asked about the staff, graduation events and the help they were given after NCS, the proportions of participants saying they were very good or good were higher amongst autumn participants - with 91% saying the help they were given in their projects was very good or good compared to 85% during the summer, and 96% saying that the staff were very good or good, compared to 95% during the summer. The lowest scoring aspect was the help they were given after they completed NCS, though a majority of 64% still responded positively in relation to this (increasing 5 points from 59% in summer). The team test or mission day was exclusive to the autumn programme, and was the second least popular aspect, though again still a majority of participants, 69%, said that this was good or very good.

### 5.1.2 How young people felt they benefited from NCS

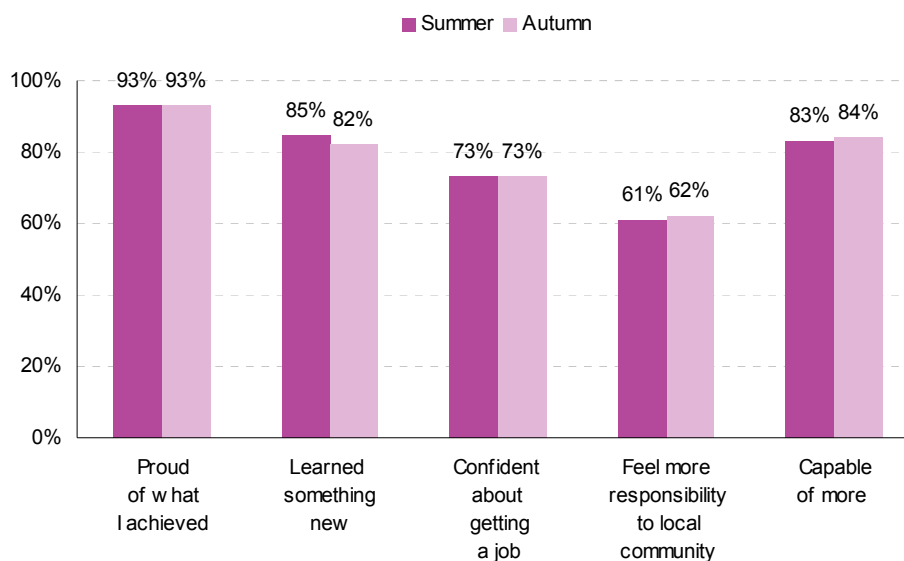
Overall, the vast majority of autumn participants felt they had benefited from the autumn programme in a range of ways, though some measures saw a slight fall compared to summer. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 illustrate some of the ways participants suggested they had benefited.

- 
- **Social mix:** In-line with summer findings, 95% of participants in autumn felt that NCS had given them a chance to mix with people they wouldn't normally mix with, and 83% felt more positive towards people from different backgrounds.
  - **Personal skills and attitudes towards the future:** Participants were also largely positive about the impact of NCS on their future: 89% felt that NCS gave them a chance to develop useful skills for the future, 78% felt that NCS had helped them to realise more opportunities were available, and 73% were feeling more confident about getting a job in the future. Ninety-three per cent of participants were proud of what they achieved, 82% felt they had learnt something new and 84% now feel they are capable of more than they thought they were.
  - **Local area:** A smaller majority, 62%, felt that after NCS they had a greater responsibility to their local community and 73% said that they were more likely to help out in their local area – a slight increase compared with the summer programme.

**Figure 5.4 How young people felt they benefited from NCS (i)**



**Figure 5.5 How young people felt they benefited from NCS (ii)**



## 5.2 How do outcomes in autumn compare to summer?

The overall picture that emerges from the matching of 2012 summer and autumn participants is that, on balance, outcomes are similar for autumn and summer participants except for a small minority of cases. This suggests that the autumn programme appears to be a viable addition to the summer programme but requires further evaluation and refinement in future years.

## 5.2.1 Comparing outcomes

This section describes the findings of an assessment of the outcomes of participation in autumn NCS compared to the outcomes of participation in summer NCS. To do this we matched autumn participants to summer participants on a range of characteristics and baseline measures. This produced an estimate of the outcomes that would have been observed for autumn participants had they gone on the summer programme instead.

More information on the methodology for measuring the relative outcomes of the autumn programme, as compared to the summer, is contained within the technical report.

## 5.2.2 Summary of outcome comparison

**Evidence suggests that on the majority of measures the autumn NCS programme is associated with broadly similar outcomes to the summer NCS programme.**

For 34 out of the 41 outcomes we measured as part of the impact study, there appears to be no significant difference in the outcomes associated with participating in NCS in the autumn compared to the summer. Across the four outcome areas, the majority of the outcomes are similar, though with a small number of inferior or improved outcomes:

- For the majority of measures related to **communication, teamwork and leadership**, participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on two outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes
- For the majority of measures related to **transition to adulthood** participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on four outcomes, autumn participation was associated with inferior outcomes
- For the majority of measures related to **social mixing** participation in autumn was associated with similar outcomes to summer; on one outcome, autumn participation was associated with improved outcomes
- For measures related to **community involvement** autumn participation was associated with similar outcomes across all measures.

In the subsequent sections we identify for each outcome area those measures that appear to be unaffected by whether young people participate in autumn or summer and then look in more detail at the outcomes where there appears to be a difference.

## 5.2.3 Communication, teamwork and leadership

In summer 2011 and 2012, communication, teamwork and leadership was the outcome area where NCS had the greatest and most consistent impact on participants. On the majority of outcomes, we find that participation in the autumn programme in 2012 is associated with broadly similar outcomes. However, there are two outcomes where this is not the case illustrated in Table 5.1 which we discuss in turn.

Table 5.1 Measure of confidence				
<i>Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants</i>				
	Outcomes		Relative effect	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
% confident about....				
	%	%	%	
<b>Meeting new people</b>	79	75	<b>-3.99</b>	0.038
<i>Weighted Base</i>	687	718		
<b>Explaining my ideas clearly</b>	71	67	<b>-4.54</b>	0.031
<i>Weighted Base</i>	686	717		

- Meeting new people:** For autumn participants, 75% said they feel confident about meeting new people at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 79%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are four percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.
- Explaining my ideas clearly:** For autumn participants, 67% said they feel 'confident about explaining my ideas clearly' at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes for this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 71%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are four percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.

In the qualitative interviews conducted as part of the autumn process evaluation, there was a sense that it may be more difficult to improve outcomes in this area of teamwork, communication and leadership compared with summer due to the slightly different stage of their lives that participants were at. On the one hand, providers described some young people as being more mature and as having better developed communication skills from their early experiences of further education. Conversely, however, young people and staff also described how the programme improved confidence in leadership and team working. Providers did not identify any specific phases or activities that worked differently in autumn rather than summer, but focused more on the importance of the incremental nature of the programme. In particular, where *Phase 3 - Learning about the home community* was well run, staff felt that these outcomes were improved even further by Phase 4 and 5 when young people had the opportunity to demonstrate new found confidence within the wider community.

## 5.2.4 Transition to adulthood

On the majority of outcomes designed to assess transition to adulthood, participation in autumn does not appear to be associated with significantly different outcomes. No significant improvement or decline in outcomes was found in relation to progression into employment, education or training for autumn participants who participated in the autumn programme, rather than the summer programme. However, participation in the autumn programme was found to lead

to lower outcomes in the other domains considered under transition to adulthood: personal qualities, life skills and reduction in anti-social behaviour.

## Impacts on personal qualities

In relation to personal qualities, participation in autumn NCS was associated with similar outcomes for a range of measures of wellbeing and how in control of their lives young people felt. Our analysis did identify some relative impacts on two measures, illustrated in Table 5.3 and 5.4:

- **Life satisfaction:** For autumn participants, 68% reported high satisfaction with their lives at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 73%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are four percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.
- **Feeling in control of your life:** Thirty-two per cent of autumn participants agreed with the statement that 'If someone's is not a success in life it's their own fault' at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 37%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are five percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.

**Table 5.2 Measure of wellbeing**

*Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants*

	Outcomes		Relative effects	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
	%	%	%	
<b>High satisfaction with your life</b>	73	68	<b>-4.45</b>	0.032
<i>Weighted Base</i>	681	714		

**Table 5.3 Locus of control**

*Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants*

	Outcomes		Relative effects	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
% agreeing...	%	%	%	
<b>If someone is not a success in life it's their own fault</b>	37	32	<b>-4.83</b>	0.023
<i>Weighted Base</i>	686	716		

## Impacts on life skills

On a range of life skills measured, such as managing money and staying away from home, participation in autumn NCS appeared to be associated with similar outcomes to participation in summer. There was one measure on which this was not the case:

- **Time management:** For autumn participants, 72% felt confident about getting things done on time at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 77%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are six percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.

Table 5.4 Measures of confidence				
<i>Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants</i>				
	Outcomes		Relative effects	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
% confident about...				
	%	%	%	
<b>Getting things done on time</b>	77	72	<b>-5.65</b>	0.004
<i>Weighted Base</i>	686	716		

## Reduction in challenging and Anti Social Behaviour

Participation in autumn NCS compared to summer NCS appeared to be associated with similar outcomes on one of the measures of anti-social behaviour the response to the statement 'some young people want to stay out of trouble'. In response to the statement 'some young people want to sort out the problems in their lives', participation in autumn appeared to be associated with inferior outcomes.

Table 5.5 Measures of anti-social behaviour				
<i>Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants</i>				
	Outcomes		Relative effects	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
Some young people want to sort out the problems in their lives				
	%	%	%	
<b>Quite like me / Just like me</b>	80	77	<b>-3.75</b>	0.044
<i>Weighted Base</i>	686	716		

- **Dealing with problems:** For autumn participants, 77% felt they wanted to sort out the problems they had in their lives at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 80%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are six percentage points lower than if they had participated in the summer programme.

In the qualitative interviews, staff and young people described a range of skills and qualities acquired by young people that related to transition to adulthood, and that echo the findings from the summer programme. However, more barriers to achieving impact in this area were also identified. In particular, with *Phase 3 - Learning about the home community*, being shorter in the autumn, staff felt there was less time to develop some of the life skills and carry them out in practice, which may affect young people's confidence in getting things done. Equally, staff and young people had less time to get to know one another. It was felt that some

of the activities that might affect self-esteem and locus of control in Phase 3 and Phase 4 were made more challenging to complete as a result of this. One positive impact of this however, was that some providers felt this forced them to focus the delivery of phase three more towards preparing directly for Phase 4 which may have improved the delivery of the social action project (see Chapter 6 for more details).

### 5.2.5 Social mixing

On the vast majority of the measures capturing attitudes to social mixing, autumn participation appears to be associated with similar outcomes to summer participation. There appears to be no relative differences in relation to a range of young peoples' attitudes towards their local area and on the diversity of their friendship groups. In one of the outcomes being used to measure social mixing, however, participation in the autumn programme, rather than the summer programme, led to an improvement in attitudes.

Table 5.6 Attitudes to mixing				
Base: Participants autumn and matched sample of summer participants				
	Outcomes		Relative effects	
	Summer	Autumn	Difference	P value
My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together				
	%	%	%	
<b>Agree</b>	51	56	<b>5.05</b>	0.024
<i>Weighted Base</i>	686	716		

- **Attitudes to local area:** For autumn participants, 56% felt that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together at the follow-up survey. Our estimate of what the outcomes on this measure would have been for autumn participants had they taken part in the summer programme is 51%. We therefore estimate that for autumn participants, taking part in the autumn programme leads to outcomes that are five percentage points higher than if they had participated in the summer programme.

Opportunities for improving attitudes towards social mixing were identified by staff and young people in the qualitative interviews. In the same way as the summer programme facilitated meeting new people, young people described opportunities the programme provided to understand how, and the circumstances in which, different young people live their lives. NCS also exposed them to new ideas and different ways of thinking. There is no real evidence from these interviews, however, that explains the findings in Table 5.7 that suggest experiences of interacting with the local community were any more positive than in the summer programme. Similar challenges to those expressed about the summer NCS programme were described by providers, though staff did sense an improvement in how they approach and involve local stakeholders. Further research may be required to understand why this difference exists if it sustains in the 2013 evaluation.

### 5.2.6 Community involvement

The evidence suggests that the autumn NCS programme was broadly as effective as summer on these measures. Our analysis did not identify any significant improvement or decline in outcomes for autumn participants who took



---

part in the autumn programme had they taken part in the summer programme instead.

As in the summer programme, the qualitative interviews revealed that the nature of social action projects was critical for improving attitudes towards community involvement. In some cases, providers felt that they had more of a role in ensuring that social actions projects were achievable in autumn given the constraints they were under in only being able to rely on young people to contribute at the weekend and in the evenings.

### **5.2.7 Perceptions of the autumn structure and timings on impact amongst staff and young people**

Across all four of the outcome areas, the qualitative interviews revealed mixed views on how the overall structure of autumn might affect participant outcomes compared to the summer programme. Broadly, there was a concern that some aspects of the format and structure of the autumn programme would 'dilute' the impact it could have by limiting the availability and range of activities known to contribute to impacts in summer programmes. Firstly, mixing was more limited. The cold weather and dark evenings for residentials meant that there was not as wide a range of activities available to providers; participants described having to spend some of the time indoors in smaller groups rather than working in larger or multiple teams. The smaller cohorts that providers were working with also restricted wider opportunities to mix across teams. Secondly, the lack of a clear distinction between Phase 3 and Phase 4 may have reduced the effect a social action project could have on young people's outcomes. With less time and scope for social action projects to be youth-led and become embedded within the group, young people may have felt less of a connection to outcomes of the project. Finally, the timing of Phase 5, in the run-up to Christmas, also meant that attendance could not always be expected.

Despite concerns about these barriers, the evidence comparing autumn and summer outcomes suggest that these concerns only had an impact on a small number of outcomes. Furthermore, in comparison with summer, providers also described some advantages of the autumn programme that might have cancelled out the effect of the disadvantages described above. In particular, there was a view that the timing of programme meant that some of the positive impacts the programme may have on young people could actually be reinforced by other activities they were engaged in. The circumstances in which young people participate in NCS in summer are very different to autumn participation: during summer, with young people on holidays and unlikely to be engaged in other activities similar to NCS; in autumn, participants are likely to be in further education or in training. Conversely, the activities autumn participants would be involved in outside of NCS would also be aiming to improve skills and outcomes in relation to communication, teamwork and leadership as well as encouraging young people's transition to adulthood. Young people talked about being able to take what they learnt from NCS and apply it immediately in other activities and vice versa. The implication of this and some of the findings from the quantitative comparison of outcomes between summer and autumn is that while the unique impact of NCS in autumn may be of a lower magnitude in some areas it can still provide additional, supplementary effects to other influences that are shaping young people's lives.

---

## 5.3 What is the cost effectiveness of the programme?

It is not possible to directly compare the cost-effectiveness of the summer 2011, summer 2012, and autumn 2012 NCS programmes. This is because data were not collected for a comparison group for autumn and, therefore, we do not have estimates of the independent impact of the autumn programme. We have therefore aimed to compare the costs and *outcomes* for the three programmes.

We would expect the costs of NCS to differ across the three programmes for two reasons:

- As the government and providers become more experienced with managing and running the programme, the cost per outcome achieved should decrease. This is the shape of the typical “learning curve.”
- As the autumn and summer programmes were different by design, the unit costs also differed

However, a comparison of costs and outcomes provides a mixed picture of the cost-effectiveness of the three different programmes. While the cost of the autumn programme was less than the summer programme, and on the majority of measures was associated with similar outcomes, there were a number of areas (notably in teamwork, communication and leadership) where outcomes for autumn were lower than in summer. Therefore it is difficult to judge which programme is most cost-effective. In future, it is recommended that the evaluation is extended to incorporate a matched control group for autumn (as well as summer) in order to fully compare the cost-effectiveness of the two variations of the programme.

---

## 6 Lessons for implementation and delivery

This chapter provides evidence from the process evaluation in the form of key learning for providers and the NCS Trust in planning for and delivering future NCS programmes. These findings have been shared in a formative way throughout the evaluation and fed directly into changes in strategic commissioning and planning decisions that have taken place in relation to the 2013 programme. We draw on three elements of the process evaluation:

- Qualitative interviews with NCS staff, young people, parents and community stakeholders in both summer and autumn
- Quantitative data on attitudes and experience from the survey of participants in both summer and autumn
- Findings of a multi-level regression model (MLM) that aims to identify whether any characteristics of young people or providers are associated with improved or inferior outcomes. We only present findings from the model for the summer programme as no statistically significant differences emerged from the autumn model, perhaps due to smaller sample sizes.

The next three sections describe the key messages in relation to recruitment and engagement, achieving a social mix, staffing and programme delivery, and are enriched by case illustrations of the experiences of young people and providers we interviewed. In general, findings relate to both the summer and autumn programmes, though we make clear where experiences and lessons are drawn specifically from the autumn programme.

### 6.1 Recruitment and Engagement



#### 6.1.1 How did this work in 2012?

Providers used a range of strategies to recruit young people and discussed the successes and challenges of their recruitment approach and engagement activities in the qualitative interviews. Learning from 2011 allowed experienced providers to more carefully consider recruitment resulting in a more diverse range of activities being undertaken; providers also delivering the autumn programme reported both challenges and opportunities.

- Recruitment began much earlier in 2012. This longer lead in time allowed providers to better plan for recruitment and engage with young people earlier in the year.
- The importance of engagement activities during this period was more widely recognised by providers in 2012. Social media, face to face meetings and email contact were used by providers to facilitate an ongoing relationship with young people before Phase 2.
- Face to face recruitment (especially within schools) remained the most effective way of achieving recruitment success. Experienced providers with established relationships with schools in 2011 could more easily identify school staff as advocates for NCS to provide support with recruitment and engagement activities.
- In autumn this was of particular value given that recruitment overlapped with the delivery of the summer programme, particularly where schools had seen NCS benefit their pupils in the summer.

 *“Schools are now pushing it on our behalf...helping to show students how it can help their UCAS forms. We’re not having to try to get into school and push any more. We’ve just had a few letters back from head teachers about the graduation, lovely letters saying how delighted their young people have taken part and how amazed they are about what they’ve achieved along the way.”*  **Delivery staff**

- Recruiting through schools also enabled providers in autumn to approach the same young people twice, targeting those who wanted to take part in summer but had not been available on specific dates. However, this could make it difficult to decide who to target.
- Given the different timing of the autumn programme, providers also used slightly revised strategies in emphasising what young people could potentially gain from the programme, particularly objectives related to citizenship curricula, CVs and UCAS forms.
- Having NCS graduates involved in recruitment activities in summer and autumn was an effective resource for experienced providers, bridging the gap between provider and young people. Graduates were able to demonstrate through authentic, real life examples the impact the programme can have.

 *“Many of the graduates are so vocal about how brilliant it is... when we go into an assembly they say so much more than we can say because they are a peer saying they had a brilliant time and they got so much out of it. We can say that in an assembly and it doesn’t mean so much coming from us but it is great when other young people say it.”*  **Strategic staff**

- Engaging parents was particularly important when recruiting challenging young people. Home visits were key to establishing these relationships.

### 6.1.2 Remaining challenges

Despite some clear lessons learned around recruitment, some challenges remain in relation to lead-in time and expansion of the programme.

- Questions continued to be raised by providers around the awareness of NCS, particularly in schools not approached in 2011. There remained a feeling that providers were ‘going in cold’ in these schools.
- New providers’ experience of recruitment was mixed; whilst valuable information sharing with more experienced providers was encouraged, take up of these opportunities remained sporadic.
- Challenges were also faced around multiple providers recruiting in the same areas, with some approaching the same schools and colleges.



## Recommendations

- Providers should start planning and recruitment as early as possible
- Formalise sharing of learning between providers to benefit those new to NCS
- Ensure only one provider operates in a single catchment area
- Link autumn recruitment to summer recruitment so that young people have the opportunity to sign-up in advance without jeopardising summer recruitment

## 6.2 Achieving a social mix

Achieving a social mix within teams and NCS cohorts remains an important element of the programme. In 2011, providers were concerned about the definition of social mix and in 2012 were provided with clearer guidance on how to interpret this locally. Experienced providers described making a number of changes to achieve a more socially mixed cohort in 2012, yet there remained a sense that achieving social mix was not always possible at the team level.

### 6.2.1 How did this work in 2012?

Experienced providers described making a number of changes when addressing social mix in 2012.

- Where possible, utilizing partners or collaborators who work closely with ethnic minority or challenging young people was effective; these individuals helped to identify young people suitable for the programme and appropriate recruitment approaches.
- In summer, the **multi-level model (MLM) backs-up this finding**, suggesting that providers with supply chains, which would likely include organisations with specialist expertise or knowledge, were associated with improved outcomes around social mixing.
- Home visits for 'harder to reach' young people worked effectively for those providers who had sufficient time and resource.
- Providers discussed how bursaries and subsidized places were utilized successfully when attracting young people from more deprived socio-economic backgrounds.
- Retention, at times, outweighed the benefits of diversity at team level with a number of providers deciding to keep some groups of friends together in one team.

“Even though NCS is about making new friends and challenging yourselves, young people do want to see at least one friendly face or they find it a little bit daunting.” **Delivery staff**

- In autumn, there was a sense among providers that participants were a different profile of young people in terms of what motivated them to join the programme. Autumns participants, it was felt, were more motivated by improving their CVs and volunteering and less by filling their summer holiday; this may restrict the cohort in terms of how pro-social participants are.

## 6.2.2 Remaining challenges

- Not all providers worked in a diverse area and continued to struggle with recruiting a socially mixed group. There remained concern over how to appropriately interpret 'social mix'.
- Concern over social mix targets was thought to divert attention away from overall recruitment and place pressure on providers.
- Providers also noted girls were far easier to recruit than boys, as the survey data and MI data suggests. Staff reported that girls were more pro-social and, in some cases, more mature and more likely to recommend the programme to friends.



*"Maybe girls are more sort of conscientious or concerned at that, that moment about their CVs or their careers or doing something positive. And maybe they're just a little bit more mature and they can see the benefit of it."* **Delivery staff**



Providers continued to face challenges when trying to achieve a socially mixed composition within NCS teams. Those experienced in working with diverse populations took advantage of expertise in the field with varying degrees of success. There remained discussion about the suitability of the programme for those with complex needs. In some cases, providers encouraged a view of social mix that was not just about young people but mixing with the wider community. Despite this, Chapter 3 shows that NCS was broadly representative of all groups across a range of demographic characteristics.



### Case illustration – A broader understanding of social mix

*"I think the team challenges are really an important one where they do go out to meet a community group that's completely different to them. Whether it be a disability sports group or an elderly care home"*

**Delivery staff**

For one provider, NCS teams were encouraged to meet and interact with groups in their community who they may be less likely to encounter on a day to day basis, such as disability or elderly groups. The provider viewed this interaction as an important part of social mixing beyond meeting other young people taking part in NCS.



## Recommendations

- Give clear guidance on what social mix looks like at the regional level in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic groups and disadvantage
- Providers and grant managers to work together to agree what is possible in relation to social mix
- Identify potential partners early to recruit groups that providers do not typically have contact with.

## 6.3 Recruiting staff

### 6.3.1 How did this work in 2012

Providers discussed their views and the overall design of recruitment and staffing structures during qualitative interviews and workshops. Providers benefited from learning taken from 2011 delivery and were able to structure training and organisation of staff and volunteers more effectively. Whilst refining these strategies, there remain areas in which further consideration needs to be taken as the programme expands.

- Providers who had delivered in 2011 were able to draw on the experience of staff from the previous year. This was particularly the case for autumn delivery as providers were able to retain staff across a longer and continuous period. Where possible, experienced staff were utilised in the recruitment and training of new recruits.



*“One member of staff is permanent but all others were recruited as summer staff and were rated excellent so we asked them to come back for autumn. All the qualified practitioners had worked for us before too so that was easy.”* **Delivery staff**



- Recruiting staff from schools or with existing youth work experience was effective as they were able to ‘hit the ground running’ with limited supervision; those new to working with young people required more support.
- Training experiences varied; whilst recruitment strategies became more specific and standardised, on occasion, providers struggled to recruit team leaders and other more senior roles due to lack of relevant experience in the sector.
- Emphasis was placed on obtaining a blend of skills; relevant work experience, personal skills and having a clear sense of the aims of the programme.
- Staff that performed well across both programmes were energetic and enthusiastic, resilient and supportive, and also able to develop a good rapport with a whole range of young people.





*“More than anything they’ve got to be able to talk to me about young people and why they want to get involved in National Citizen Service.”*  
**Team Leader**



### 6.3.2 Remaining challenges

- Retaining seasonal staff and volunteers from one year to the next remained a critical concern for providers. Having gained experience with implementing the programme, losing this experience was seen as an opportunity missed.
- Ensuring existing staff shared the NCS ethos was also seen as a challenge for future years of the programme in light of continued expansion.



#### Recommendations

- Running NCS throughout the year will help retain and develop staff
- Explore links with other organisations that could provide appropriate staff for NCS programmes, for example formalising the involvement of Teaching Assistants through partnerships with schools
- Standardise staff development programme and explore options for formal accreditation of this training

## 6.4 Staffing the programme

As in 2011, there was a strong sense among providers that getting the right staff is critical to the success of NCS. The role of team leader in particular requires an exceptional level of commitment for the intensive phases of the NCS programme and there remains a concern amongst some team leaders that strategic staff are not always aware of the extent of their workload. However, in general the programme appears to have been better staffed in 2012, particularly in relation to employing a sufficient level of support staff.

### 6.4.1 How did this work in 2012?

- Staffing models consistently adopted a three-tier structure, reflecting learning from 2012. Providers added further support staff in comparison with 2011. This system had now become embedded and aided the success of the programme.
- Concerns related to staffing levels appear to centre on providers not adequately anticipating the level of support needed in teams where young people had specific needs or challenging behaviour. This was widely recognised as an area for improvement.
- Where staffing levels remained low, extra organisational staff and volunteers were brought in to fill the gaps. These adjustments to the staffing structure were thought to benefit the programme overall but there remained some signs that this led to disjointed delivery in some cases.
- In the autumn programme the use of summer graduates as volunteers or helpers had mixed success. While it could help recruitment, some found that being the same age as their peers and knowing them from school meant that it was difficult to take on a role of authority within the group.



- For smaller providers, several roles were still covered by a single person. This could be beneficial, meaning that strategic staff were closer to the delivery of the programme, but this depended upon the capacity of the individual filling both those roles.
- The ratio of staff to young people remained higher during Phase 2 and Phase 3 with a steady reduction as the programme progressed. Staff ratios were kept high where teams with challenging needs were identified.

## 6.4.2 Remaining challenges

- Views differed on workloads of strategic and front line staff. Those who felt supported tended to work in more structured tiered systems and reported workloads as manageable. In contrast, those who worked under less structured systems, holding multiple roles, or working specifically with more challenging young people, reported more stressful or pressurised conditions.
- Providers reported problems in some cases with the staffing levels provided by delivery partners. Ensuring forward planning on staffing takes place amongst partners was recommended.



### Recommendations

- Staffing structure should be appropriate to provider needs and ensure sufficient staff are in place at key points of the programme
- Ensure staffing contingency in place to react to specific incidents or unforeseen circumstances
- When using NCS graduates as volunteers to deliver the programme, ensure age gap with participants is sufficient to differentiate them from participants

## 6.5 Programme delivery

In the qualitative interviews and workshops, providers and young people discussed their views on the overall design of the programme and the successes and challenges of different components. Experienced providers also reflected on the changes to the programme model since 2011 and how their own approach to delivery had changed over time.

### 6.5.1 Views on overall structure

- As described in Chapters 4 and 5, young people's experiences of NCS continued to be overwhelmingly positive - NCS scored around 9/10 for whether the programme was worthwhile and enjoyable in the 2011 and 2012 surveys of NCS participants.
- In 2012, the most favoured phase of the programme continued to be Phase 2 and Phase 4 the least popular.
- The revisions made to Phase 3 in 2012 appeared to have been in the right direction as young peoples' views of this element of the programme was slightly, but significantly, more positive compared with 2011.

- Staff delivering the programme continued to have broad support for the delivery model and concerns about the ordering of the residential phases voiced in 2011 appeared to have largely dissipated.
- Questions continued to be raised by staff in qualitative interviews about the suitability of the length of the programme: those who favoured reducing the length of the programme, either by reducing length of individual phases, or combining phases (such as 4 and 5), felt this would deliver benefits by broadening the appeal of the programme to a wider range of young people who were currently deterred by the time commitment required. In contrast, other staff were in favour of increasing the duration of the social action phases to enable young people to undertake more challenging and sustainable social action projects.



## Recommendations

- Providers should plan early for all stages of the programme
- Cabinet Office and providers should ensure logistical arrangements are sufficient and in place as early as possible
- Cabinet Office should formulate and articulate an NCS ethos for all providers to inform curriculum, design, planning and recruitment
- Cabinet Office and providers should induct and train all staff working on NCS

## 6.5.2 Phase 1

Providers have some flexibility over how they deliver Phase 1. There are providers that use this phase just for recruitment activities; others use this as an opportunity to carry out some initial engagement activities with the young people, to orientate participants to what the programme entails.

- The purpose and value of Phase 1 was varied and included: articulating the aims and purpose of NCS; personal development; relationship building between staff and young people and between peer groups; and social action planning.
- In 2012, longer lead in times enabled providers to more effectively engage with young people during Phase 1.
- Successful Phase 1 activities helped with orientation for NCS participants, by engaging and sustaining young people's interest in the programme.
- Variation in the mode of contact (e.g. face-to-face; telephone; online) and the involvement of NCS alumni had helped achieve this and ease participants into the programme - but sustaining the interest of early recruits was a challenge for providers.
- As in 2011, delivering substantive phase 1 activities in parallel with recruiting young people could be difficult to balance for some providers.



#### Case illustration: Phase 1

NCS teams of young people took part in a national programme of social action events within their local communities before starting the programme. The activities provided young people with a flavour of what they could expect on NCS and the chance to get to know their team mates. Taking part in a national programme of locally based events also helped foster a shared experience amongst young people across the country. Social media platforms helped young people in different locations to easily connect and share experiences of NCS and to feel part of something 'bigger'.



#### Recommendations

- Formalise the substantive nature of Phase 1 but provide guidance on how to manage these activities alongside recruitment
- Organise co-ordinated events to enable mixing of different teams
- Formalise involvement of NCS alumni where possible

### 6.5.3 Phases 2 and 3

**Phase 2 was consistently given the highest approval scores (9.1/10 for both summer and autumn); it is also young people's favourite phase**  
**Phase 3 receives lower but still high approval scores of 8.5 for summer and 7.9 for autumn**

Experienced providers described two main changes to Phase 2 - the away residential in 2012:

- More effective planning and communication increased the understanding of the aims of NCS amongst outdoor residential staff and led to more consistent approach to working with young people.
- Larger scale residential also increased opportunities for young people to work across NCS teams.

The importance of the home residential was more widely recognised by providers in summer 2012 compared to 2011. Where Phase 2 is about bringing the young people together in an enjoyable way, Phase 3 aims to consolidate these bonds but with greater focus on learning. Consideration has been given by experienced providers to how to knit the activities of Phase 3 with the overarching objectives and incremental nature of the programme.

- Providers approached Phase 3 in different ways: a focus on building relationships between young people and their communities was one approach; other providers put greater emphasis on the skills and experiences needed by young people in their transition to adulthood. However, providers were expected to cover both aims within this phase.
- This distinction was more apparent in autumn when Phase 3 was shorter, so providers were required to prioritise activities. Where prioritising did not happen staff and young people felt that community learning could feel lost amongst other activities.
- Defining and clearly articulating the purpose of Phase 3 remained a challenge for new providers and could impinge upon the cohesiveness of the week.

- Longer lead in time and better planning had increased opportunities for youth involvement in the home residential week of the summer programme. Conversely, providers felt that there was less opportunity for activities to be youth-led in autumn due to constraints of time.
- There was also a concern amongst staff and former NCS graduates that autumn NCS participants missed out on some of the 'softer' elements of the home residential, such as the evening down time, as well as harder outcomes around transitions to adulthood when the young people cook for each other as a team.
- Providers also described success rebalancing the nature, pace and structure of the home residential week to make it more varied, fun and engaging for young people - but this view was not always shared by young people themselves.



### Case illustration: Different emphases of Phase 3

The key purpose of the home residential was for young people to meet members of their community and for the interaction to have a positive effect on young people's perceptions of people from different backgrounds. The aim is that participants also learn new skills in the process. Both the quality and intensity of the interaction between young people and members of the community were thought to be important to the success of the home residential.

One effective approach was for young people to learn a new skill, share it with members of the community and work collaboratively on a project with their community partner. For example, an NCS team worked with members of the community accessing a drug and alcohol dependency service on a photography project. Collaborating on the project was said by young people to have been fun and to have made them think differently about the needs of others.

Other providers placed greater emphasis on young people gaining new skills and experiences during the home residential. Employment, education and training were a particular focus for some providers. For example, young people visited local colleges and employers to find out about opportunities in their local area. Another focus of the home residential was on preparing young people for independent living. Being responsible for planning and preparing their own meals was one in way in which young people were given a flavour of 'adult' life during the home residential.



## Recommendations

- Ensure all Phase 3 activities are challenging and enjoyable
- Work with strategic partners of NCS to develop modules of activities for providers to draw on
- Ensure sufficient logistical support to avoid affecting 'flow'
- Share provider insight on articulating value of Phase 3 - MLM suggests this is particularly important for providers with multiple partners

### 6.5.4 Phases 4 and 5

**Phase 4 is consistently the least favourite part of NCS for young people, though it still received approval of around seven to eight out of 10**  
**Phase 5 is the third favourite phase and receives approval scores of over 8 out of ten**

- In 2012, experienced providers thought they had greater success than in 2011 in maintaining the fun, pace and variation of the tasks during the social actions phases (4 and 5).
- Young peoples' enthusiasm for the social action phases varied; in some cases Phases 4 and 5 seemed to be less exciting to young people and lack variation compared to the earlier parts of the programme.
- Similarly to 2011, young people's experiences of planning and delivering social action were affected by whether there had been an appropriate degree of youth involvement and the extent to which social action was perceived by young people and communities to be a success. Ensuring that planning for the social action project began before the formal planning week helped young people to have adequate involvement in social action and enough time to plan and deliver successful projects.
- Young people's relationship with community partners was also important to their experiences of the programme and had been improved by:
  - Community partners having an appropriate role in the programme which played to their strengths
  - Providers being clear about the role of community partners and sharing the information needed by partners to be effectively involved in programme
  - Community partners having adequate time to plan and prepare for their involvement
  - Successfully involving community partners in the programme continued to have its challenges, particularly where supply chains were involved as providers were not always able to ensure a standardised approach.



## Recommendations

- Develop criteria for the selection of appropriate social action projects that are achievable and have tangible outcomes and benefits
- Develop clear guidance for providers on how young people can take forward social action planning to ensure it is youth-led and develops project planning skills, as well as resulting in a meaningful outcome.
- Provide full briefing and discrete and appropriate tasks for community partners

### 6.5.5 The social action project

This section provides a range of case studies of social action projects demonstrating good practice and the varied application of this to deliver effective projects. It concludes with recommendations for what makes a good social action project. The following case illustrations provide real examples of these characteristics.



### Summer – Planning the social action project

Working with the provider, young people decided to help organise a tea party for older people. Young people were responsible for planning and hosting the event, including shopping for ingredients, preparing the food, and decorating the venue. The success of the event was attributed by staff and community partners to good prior planning and preparation such as sourcing the venue and making links with the community partner in advance. Time for young people to meet with staff from a local organisation supporting older people was also essential. This helped alleviate any anxieties young people may have had about hosting an event for older people and gave them time to think about topics for discussion. During the event there was plenty of time for young and older people to better understand each others lives which was important in debunking myths about age. The event was thought to have had the greatest impact on young people who had a particular interest in the social action project.



### Summer – Picking the right social action project

A group of young people with special educational needs carried out a project to renovate a disused area of land. The nature of the activity, degree of youth involvement and balance between time spent planning and delivering social action were thought to have been well suited to the needs and interests of the group of young people. This was helped by the skills and experience of staff in working with young people with special educational needs, staff having good local knowledge and connections to identify opportunities and careful advance planning.



### Summer – An effective social action project

An NCS team who were concerned that communities were not socialising together handed out pairs of teabags to passers by on their local high street with a message to ‘do a favour for your neighbour’. The simplicity and innovative nature of the project and the clarity of the aims made for an effective project which was deliverable within the timescales and resources available. Young people were said by staff to have enjoyed and benefited from developing and delivering the campaign, but would have liked for the event to have generated more social media interest.



### Summer – Challenges with youth-led social action projects

A group of young people fundraised for local charities by selling home baking and items donated by local businesses. Positive aspects of the project were

that the local community was generous in donating items and supporting the team's fundraising activities; young people also enjoyed and benefited from the experience of managing the market stall and selling items. Experiences of engaging community stakeholders varied. Where engagement had been less positive this was felt to be due to a lack of awareness of NCS. Another challenge was striking a balance between young people taking a lead and staff providing input at appropriate points. This resulted in aspects of projects not being as well planned and achievable as they could have been with more structured staff support.



#### Autumn – Extending social action projects beyond NCS

At one provider, the young people chose to fundraise for a local cancer charity and do an anti-bullying campaign. Young people felt engaged and committed to their projects because they had chosen topics that were personally meaningful to them; however the trade-off was that some of the things they wanted to do proved unfeasible in the time available. It meant that time was taken up exploring ideas which were later abandoned due to budgetary or health and safety constraints, before getting on with the actual project tasks. However, the team doing the anti-bullying campaign arranged to finish it at school after the end of the NCS programme and the result was that the young people felt a great deal of pride and ownership of the end project:

*'It wasn't easy to come up with the ideas – there were too many so we had to eliminate the ones for health and safety reasons, and money as we only had £300 for each and after we used the budget that was it. But it made me feel proud – it's not something we'd normally do.'* Young person

A teacher from the local school described how the young people would be presenting the anti-bullying campaign in assembly. She felt the campaign would have a positive impact upon the school, but also commented that this would be a new departure for the specific young people involved who previously had poor behavioural records:

*"They will be in assembly, giving out anti-bullying leaflets and wearing their NCS t-shirts. It will be quite new for these three young people to be part of the assembly – something they will have not done before."*Teacher



#### Autumn – meaningful social action project

With one provider the social action project had two elements: fundraising for a charity, and devising and carrying out a campaign on a topic of their choice. Both of these aspects worked well. Young people were emotionally engaged with the local voluntary organisations for which they did the fundraising,



because a) the organisations were emotionally impactful in terms of their focus, for example, a hospice, a sexual health service and an elderly care home and b) having spent time with the service users and staff, they felt motivated and committed to fundraising for them. The campaign also worked well because the young people chose topics of relevance and interest to them, for example, some young people from foster homes chose to focus their campaign on foster care.

*'It's fun but challenging. E.g. going to homeless shelters, sexual health clinic, terminal hospice, elderly – they get very emotionally involved in what they are doing and what it's for. This helps them link into local communities and understand service users' needs and how they could help – realising they can help if they want to, it's empowering.'* Delivery staff

*'We want to make sure it will work so we brief the charity, but we do let the young people decide exactly how they should do the fundraising.'* Delivery staff



#### Autumn – Setting up the social action project in advance

Another provider set up a social action project in advance which was offered to the young people as an option, although they were also able to discuss other possibilities. The project was renovating a community garden. Young people then had a choice in terms of which tasks they undertook within the garden. They took pride in this and staff reflected that it was being maintained well following the project, demonstrating the value that the young place on it.

*'Young people have the most pride in this part of the programme because they can see that they have done something good. Getting them to feel ownership means that the garden stays looked after.'* Delivery staff

*'The lodge had been wanting to do the garden for a long time but the decision wasn't forced on us, we had lots of choice and discussed other ideas but in the end we all thought the garden seemed a sensible project because it was for the community and we all wanted to do it. It's important you get to choose what you do. Actually doing the garden – it was amazing – everyone went for it, turning up early, skipping the tea break, we just wanted to see it happen, we wanted it to work so everyone gave it 110%. It was amazing, you wouldn't think it would happen with 16 year olds!'* Young person



## Recommendations

- Ensure that successes of social action projects are visible to young people, especially where the outcomes are less tangible
- Ensure young people learn from successes and challenges of the social action project through guided reflection
- A good social action project should be:
  - Achievable (within timescale, resources, capacity of young people)
  - Able to utilise skills and strengths of young people, and expertise of community partners
  - Well planned and executed with sufficient support
  - Community based (either an interest or place)
  - Able to produce tangible benefits for local people
  - Sustainable beyond the life of NCS
  - Appropriate in terms of the degree of youth involvement (according to capacity of young people)

### 6.5.6 The team test and mission day

An additional element of the autumn programme was the Team Test and Mission Day pilots that took place after the completion of the social action project. This section describes providers' and young people's views on how these elements were delivered and experienced.

#### Team Test

The Team Test received mixed reviews. Broadly, providers that sent young people to participate felt that the principle of getting more young people to mix with others from across the country was a good one, giving them the opportunity to learn more skills and apply developed during NCS so far. In practice, however, there were a number of issues including:

- Short lead-in time to the events meant that providers were not able to explain adequately to their teams what was going to happen or what to expect.
- Logistical issues (timing, weather, transport etc.) meant that some teams arrived very late meaning there was no complete evening briefing on arrival.
- Splitting the teams up on arrival meant that young people could be put with people they did not know, and team leaders were not always aware where their young people were in the evening (although this was rectified the next morning).
- Physical activities were seen to be less challenging than those on the half-term residential and the 'flood test' was seen to be quite academic and more challenging.
- The 'tone' of the event was less nurturing and more directive than the rest of NCS.

- As a result the Cabinet Office has decided not continue this element of the pilots in 2013.

## Mission Day

Those attending a Mission Day for Phase 5 did not refer to it by this name but generally found it an enjoyable event with the activities feeling consistent with the rest of NCS, for example, working in their teams to complete a community project. As was the case for the rest of the programme, weather was a consideration with outdoor activities or conservation-type projects being less viable than during summer. There were also some logistical challenges in coming up with an activity suitable for a large number of young people as teams came together for the Mission Day.



### Case illustration: delivering the Mission Day

One provider brought all of their teams of YP together with the intention of doing some work in a youth centre, but it turned out that there would not be enough to do for a large number of young people. They changed the plan to designing and holding a Christmas party at a homeless shelter. The provider thought that this option could be scaled up effectively in future at other large institutions such as care homes.



### Recommendations

- For the Mission Day, if retained, run smaller, more regional events at a different time of year so that young people can mix and work together but on a more manageable basis.

## 6.6 Changes to the programme

Since 2012 the NCS programme has evolved significantly. It has incorporated lessons learned from the pilots, taking on board some of the recommendations set out above. Cabinet Office have made a number of improvements:

- The introduction of contracts for 2013/14 has provided a framework for delivery and have enabled providers to plan much further ahead.
- Contracts also set out clearly what is required in terms of social mix for each cohort and team – a Payment by Results element to the contract, linked to Local Authority data, underpins this.
- Programmes now run year round in spring, summer and autumn, giving providers a more sustainable business model on which to employ staff and improve the stability and sustainability of their NCS workforce.
- A Management Information System has been rolled out through regional leads to all Local Delivery Partners in 2013. Together with regular policy and operational guidance from Cabinet Office, this helps to ensure consistency of approach.

- 
- Working with experts and providers, the 'NCS ethos' has been consolidated and articulated in standardised way, providing greater clarity on Guided Reflection and the other essential elements of the programme.
  - All providers are now required to undertake workforce training, underpinned by the NCS ethos, including on Guided Reflection and best practice by phase.
  - Considerable work has been done on strategic partnerships, and on developing a range of high quality modules for Phase 3 that are available to all providers.
  - Guidance has been provided on design and implementation of Social Action Projects, to ensure that they are appropriate, achievable and produce tangible outcomes for the community.

---

NatCen Social Research  
35 Northampton Square  
London EC1V 0AX  
T 020 7250 1866  
[www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk)

A company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England No.4392418  
A Charity registered in England and Wales (1091768) and Scotland (SC038454)