

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

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National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There are two programmes, the National Citizen Service and the National Campaign for Youth Social Action (the [#iwill campaign](#)), which can be considered to meet the definition of a national programme for youth volunteering: they are general, national-wide programmes which are organised, monitored and funded by the state.

National Citizen Service

The [National Citizens Service](#) is the national programme for youth volunteering. It is a government-backed initiative that brings together young people aged 15 to 17 from different backgrounds to help them develop

greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility with a view to creating a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society. It is managed by the NCS Trust, a royal charter body, following the passing of the [National Citizen Service Act 2017](#). In addition to establishing a new NCS Trust by royal charter, the Act revises the NCS' governance and management arrangements, making them more robust, and requires the NCT to publish a business plan at the start of each year, in tandem with annual accounts and an annual report. The Act also supports the promotion of the NCS, allowing the Government to send each young person a letter on behalf of the NCS once they turn 16.

The NCS is delivered in 18 regions. A supply chain of over 300 organisations deliver the programme across the country. They are youth and community organisations including charities, college consortia, voluntary, community, social enterprises (VCSE) and private sector partnerships. From 2020 onwards, NCS works with over 150 partner organisations.

NCS takes place over the school holidays in summer, autumn and spring. The shape of the programme changes slightly depending on the time of year. Participants are placed in groups of 12 to 15 young people from different backgrounds. The programme is organised into a number of phases:

- adventure – young people spend a week taking part in outward bound activities
- skills – young people spend a week away from home (summer holidays only) learning to be self-sufficient, develop new skills and learn about the needs of their local community
- social action – the group decides on and implements a social action programme (30 hours of volunteering) which will make a mark on their local community.

Participants pay a maximum of £50 for a place. Bursaries are available for those unable to meet the cost and support is provided for students with additional needs. Further details are available from the [NCS Trust website](#).

According to an evaluation of the NCS from the [National Audit Office \(2017\)](#), in 2016, 93 000 young people participated in the programme, amounting to 12% of those eligible for participation that year. Since 2011, when the NCS was first piloted, 300,000 young people have participated in it.

Until 2017, the Cabinet Office provided funding for the National Citizen Service (NCS). [European Social Funds \(ESF\)](#) were also used to support the NCS, alongside contributions from programme participants, who pay £50 each. After the passing of the [National Citizen Service Act 2017](#), which made the NCS Trust a Royal Charter Body, the Government provides grant-in-aid funding to the NCS within a strengthened system of accountability. The Government will expand NCS to serve 360,000 participants a year in 2020, at an estimated cost of £1.26bn over the course of the Parliament (ending in 2020).

The government [announced in March 2020](#) that the budget (Comprehensive Spending Review) 2020 would be delayed to enable the government to remain focused on responding to COVID-19, therefore there are no further funding figures available at the time of writing. The [NCS Annual Report 2018-19](#) states total funding of £55.4m was received by NCS Trust in the four month period to 31st March 2019 which included £55.2m of grant in aid from DCMS.

The 2016 [Kantar Public value for money analysis](#) of the NCS programme shows that it has consistently demonstrated monetised benefits that were greater than costs.

In October 2019 the NCS rebranded, and expanded its delivery network to include hundreds of partners. The NCS Trust [advised](#) that programme costs are expected to reduce by 30 per cent in real terms by 2024 but has been [criticised by the Local Government Association](#) for receiving a disproportionate amount of government funding while funding for local youth services continues to be cut.

In 2020, the NCS summer programme was adapted to an online programme to align with social distancing rules guidelines due to COVID-19. You can read more about the digital hub, Staying Connected, [here](#).

National campaign for youth social action

[#iwill](#) is the national campaign youth social action. It is supported by HRH The Prince of Wales and aims to make social action part of life for as many 10 to 20-year-olds as possible by 2020. It is coordinated by the charity [Step Up to Serve](#).

Through collaboration and partnership, it is 'spreading the word' about the benefit of youth social action, working to embed it in young people's transition to adulthood and creating fresh opportunities for participation. #iwill asks for pledges of support from education providers, employers and business leaders, the voluntary sector and public bodies in this work. Details of this are set out in its pledge [guidance document](#). One of the [key priorities](#) for the #iwill campaign in 2020 is a youth-led communications campaign outlining achievements since it began in 2013, and to explore youth social action growth post-2020. This priority is in the context of Step Up To Serve, the time-limited charity coordinating the #iwill campaign, closing as planned in December 2020.

The Cabinet Office has commissioned research to track the progress of the #iwill and to provide evidence on the enablers and barriers to taking part in social action. Further details are provided in the section on '[Characteristics of Youth Volunteering](#)'.

Step Up To Serve is funded through a blend of businesses, philanthropists, trusts and foundations and Central Government. Currently, its core funding comes from:

- [The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#)
- [Pears Foundation](#)
- [Garfield Weston](#)
- [The Prince of Wales' Charitable Foundation](#)
- [The Eranda Rothschild Foundation](#)
- [Spirit of 2012](#)
- [Comic Relief](#)
- [Ormiston Trust](#)

The campaign also receives support from 7 Business Pioneers who either contribute financially or in-kind.

National Youth Social Action Fund / #iwillFund

The 2015 [Youth Social Action Fund](#) aimed to encourage youth participation in social action. The funds addressed lower rates of participation in meaningful social action in the East of England and provided extra funding for young people in more deprived or rural areas. The fund responded to some of the issues identified by the Cabinet Office and Step to Serve commissioned [Ipsos Mori Youth Social Action Survey](#) of 2014.

The [#iwillFund](#) was announced in November 2016 and brings together £40m of seed funding from the [Office for Civil Society](#)

and [Big Lottery Fund](#) to create an investment pot in support of the #iwill campaign's goals in England. Delivery partners [Comic Relief](#) are providing social action opportunities for young people in disadvantaged areas and from backgrounds with below-average levels of participation; and [Pears Foundation](#) are funding activities in education, health and social care. [UK Community Foundations](#) distributes grants for local social action opportunities through their network of 43 Community Foundations working in England.

In October 2019, a £5 million investment of Government funding was announced for the #iwill Fund, such as volunteering in their communities by funding groups delivering these programmes. This is part of the Government's £500 million long-term commitment to youth services, the [Youth Investment Fund](#) announced in 2019.

Uniformed Youth Social Action fund

The Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund, launched in 2014 and funded by 10 million in Libor funds (paid by banks following improper actions in the financial markets), aimed to get more young people involved in social action through uniformed groups and to support the Step Up To Serve #iwill campaign. The fund was split into two, although both Funds 1 and 2 had the same aim of encouraging young people in disadvantaged areas or hard to reach communities to get involved in social action by joining a uniformed youth group in the UK.

In 2016, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport commissioned [evaluations](#) of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Funds 1 and 2 by Ipsos Mori. Key findings from these evaluations include that adults benefitting from the social action carried out by uniformed youth groups typically reported that the activities they experienced were very worthwhile (Fund 1); and that the pilots were, on the whole, successful in engaging children and young people who might be considered hardest to reach.

In 2019, the Department for Culture, Media and Society [announced](#) that nine uniformed youth groups organisations are to receive £4.2 million in funding to create more than 6,000 places for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds across England,

Youth Investment Fund

In 2016, the Prime Minister announced £80 million worth of funding for a new [Youth Investment Fund](#), which was open to projects targeting disadvantaged communities. £20 million worth of Government funding was also announced for investment in the #iwill campaign by 2020, alongside an additional £20 million from the Big Lottery Fund. This funding is being used by Step up to Serve for the #iwill Fund, which will support projects which encourage young people to develop a habit of volunteering and community engagement. In October 2019, a £12 million boost to the fund was [announced](#) by the Government to fund youth projects up to 2020/2021.

COVID-19 Additional Funding

The government [pledged £750 million](#) to support Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including £200 million for the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, along with an additional £150 million from dormant bank and building society accounts. The DCMS funding allocated £360 million from individual government departments to charities in England based on evidence of service need, and £310 million allocated for smaller, local VCSEs working with vulnerable people in England.

Funding

See the individual programmes above for details of how they are funded.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

The Cabinet commissions Ipsos MORI to carry out the annual Youth Social Action survey to measure the proportion of 10-20 year olds taking part in social action across the UK.

Results of the [2018 survey](#) published in March 2019 show a gradual decrease over the timespan of the research in the proportion of young people taking part in social action frequently and a shift in the duration of time spent on social action activities, from longer acts of social action to shorter ones. Rates of participation in specific types of social action in 2018 are as follows:

- Fundraising / sponsored event - 43 per cent
- Gave time to charity / cause - 26 per cent
- Supported people - 23 per cent
- Tutored, coached, mentored someone – 17 per cent
- Helped improve local areas – 16 per cent
- Campaigned for something - 8 per cent.

Generally, targets for young people or particular groups of young people's participation are not set. Where they are, for the National Citizens Service, they are described within the programme information above.

Support to young volunteers

The government is keen to reduce barriers to participation in the National Citizen Service (NCS) and therefore provides bursaries for those unable to meet the cost. Other than this there are top-level policy support measures for young volunteers.

Young volunteers are not entitled to any special social security provisions. Benefits may still be payable while volunteering, for example where the only form of payment received by the individual is in the form of travel expenses. More detail on volunteers' entitlements is available from the [gov.uk website](#).

Quality Assurance (QA)

There are no regulations on standards of quality in youth volunteering programmes. Quality standards are, however, built into contracts with delivery organisations. In addition, organisations in receipt of government funding are expected to provide value for money. The [National Audit Office](#) uses three criteria to assess value for money:

- economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs), that is, spending less

- efficiency: the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them, that is, spending well
- effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes), that is, spending wisely.

The National Audit Office ([NAO](#)), whose legal basis is set down in the [Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act 2011](#), scrutinises public spending on behalf of Parliament. Independent of government, it audits the accounts of all central government departments and agencies, as well as a wide range of other public bodies. The NAO reports to Parliament on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which these bodies have used public money. For example, the 2017 NAO [review of the National Citizen Service](#) examined how the NCS represents value for money, including examining its performance, aims and targets and management.

The National Citizen Service Trust and other programme providers place a great deal of emphasis on evaluating the impact of the programme. All young people who take part in the NCS programme complete detailed questionnaires before and after the programme. These results are compared to a control group of similar young people, so it can be checked that the programme is making an impact.

Moreover, since 2017, following the passing of the [National Citizen Service Act 2017](#), the National Citizen Trust has been required to publish a business plan at the start of each year, in tandem with annual accounts and an annual report.

Since 2014 Ipsos MORI has been commissioned by the Cabinet Office and Step Up To Serve to measure the proportion of 10-20 year olds taking part in social action across the UK. Details of the findings of this review are provided above (see [characteristics of youth volunteering](#)).

Target groups

Current official policy documents do not specify a target group for youth voluntary activities.

The [National Citizen Service](#) is open to young people 15 to 17 years. It is aimed at young people from all social, cultural and religious backgrounds so that it can create a balanced social mix of young people. Government funding aims to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation. Young people with additional needs are also supported so that they can participate in the programme.

The [#iwill](#) campaign is aimed at all 10 to 20 year olds whatever their social background.

Central government has also made specific funds available to address young people in deprived communities and hard to reach groups. Under the third round of the [Uniformed Youth Fund](#) in 2018, funding was awarded to:

- Create 5,500 places for young people to join uniformed youth groups such as police cadets, Scouts, Guides and faith-based organisations
- Support expansion and development of new groups.

The Fund will be distributed and managed by [Youth United Foundation](#), a member organisations for uniformed youth groups. The announcement follows the 2018 [Civil Society Strategy](#) where the government promised to work alongside uniformed youth groups to consider how they can expand in disadvantaged areas.