



BRIEFING PAPER

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National Citizen Service Bill [HL] 2016-17

By John Woodhouse

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Summary

The *National Citizen Service Bill [HL] 2016-17* was introduced in the House of Commons on 14 December 2016.

The Bill had its second reading on 16 January 2017 where it received cross-party support. It was considered in Public Bill Committee on 24 January 2017 where a number of drafting and technical amendments were moved by the Government.

The Bill will have its remaining stages in the House of Commons on 15 March 2017.

The National Citizen Service (NCS) consists of courses for young people in England and Northern Ireland, mostly aged 16 and 17. The courses take place during school holidays and involve a mixture of activities - adventures, life skills and social action - to encourage young people to engage with their community and develop for the future. The NCS is currently administered by the NCS Trust, a community interest company.

The Bill, in combination with a Royal Charter, would place the NCS on a permanent statutory footing. The Bill's Explanatory Notes state that the Bill:

- Incorporates the new NCS Trust as a Charter body and creates a legislative mechanism to transfer the business of the Company to the new Trust. This creates a legislative framework for the NCS, with the aim of making it a national institution while preserving its independent ethos;
- Aims to secure that the administrative and funding arrangements for the NCS Trust are appropriate for the increased level of public funds the Trust will manage, with proper accountability to government and Parliament; and
- Aims to impose on the NCS Trust an appropriate level of government control for a body in receipt of public funds

In addition, the Bill would enable HMRC to send information about the Trust and its work to young people who are eligible for NCS and invite them to take part.

[The Bill](#) and [Explanatory Notes](#) are available from the [Bill pages](#) on the parliamentary website. A [draft Royal Charter](#) for the National Citizen Service Trust (Cm 9393, January 2017) is also available.

The Bill would extend to England and Wales but would only apply to England.

1. The National Citizen Service

The Conservative Party Manifesto for the 2010 General Election included a commitment to introduce a National Citizen Service (NCS).¹

A Coalition Government document, *Building the Big Society*, said that a flagship programme would be introduced to give 16 year olds “a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities.”²

Twelve groups³ piloted the NCS in summer 2011 with around 8,500 young people taking part.⁴ In 2012, the NCS was offered in the summer and autumn with over 26,000 participants.⁵

A wider roll-out of the NCS has since taken place. There were nearly 58,000 participants in the 2014 programmes with a 91.3% completion rate.

An August 2015 Cabinet Office [publication](#) gave details of participants, by local authority region, from 2011 to spring 2015.⁶ According to this, more than 135,000 young people had participated in the NCS since 2011.

The current NCS programme

The aim of the NCS is to bring young people from different backgrounds together to help them develop greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility. It is designed to encourage personal and social development by working on skills like leadership, teamwork and communication.⁷

The NCS is open to 16 and 17 year-olds in England and Northern Ireland and runs in spring, summer and autumn. Most NCS programmes involve the following phases:

1. A five-day outdoor activity residential stay, aimed at building teamwork
2. A five-day residential stay, often in university accommodation, to learn “life skills”, prepare for independent living and learn about the community

¹ Conservative Party, *Invitation to join the government of Britain*, April 2010, p39

² Cabinet Office, *Building the Big Society*, May 2010, p2; A Library Briefing Paper, *The voluntary sector and the Big Society*, gives wider context to the programme’s introduction

³ “Prime Minister to launch National Citizen Service pilots for young people”, Cabinet Office press release, 22 July 2010; “National Citizen Service pilots announced”, Cabinet Office press release, 10 November 2010

⁴ NatCen Social Research, The Office for Public Management, and New Philanthropy Capital, *Evaluation of the National Citizen Service Pilots: Interim Report*, May 2012, p9

⁵ NatCen Social Research, The Office for Public Management, and New Philanthropy Capital, *Evaluation of National Citizen Service: findings from the evaluations of the 2012 summer and autumn NCS programmes*, July 2013, p1

⁶ Cabinet Office, *National Citizen Service participation data*, August 2015

⁷ Gov.UK website, [National Citizen Service](#) [accessed 10 March 2017]

3. A social-action project, based in their local community, of 60 hours, such as raising money for a charity or organising an event
4. A two-hour “celebration of achievements” for participants and their family⁸

The [NCS website](#) gives further detail of the programme.

The standard price for participation is a one off fee of £50.⁹ This entitles participants to travel, food and accommodation throughout the programme. Discounts are available for those in need of financial support.¹⁰

Delivery and cost

Since December 2013, the NCS has been managed by the [NCS Trust](#), a community interest company established by the Government.¹¹

The NCS Trust contracts with providers in different parts of England to deliver the programme. Over 200 organisations are involved, over 80% of these are public or voluntary sector organisations.¹²

The NCS Trust is grant-funded on an annual basis by the Cabinet Office.¹³

The estimated full unit cost per participant completing the NCS in 2016 was £1,863.¹⁴

⁸ National Audit Office, [National Citizen Service](#), HC 916 2016-17, January 2017, p5

⁹ NCS website, [FAQs – Is there any financial support available?](#) [accessed 10 March 2017]

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ DCMS, [Explanatory Notes to the National Citizen Service Bill \[HL\] as brought from the House of Lords](#), 14 December 2016, para 3; House of Lords Library, [Briefing Note on the National Citizen Service Bill \[HL\]](#), October 2016, p2 footnote 10

¹² [HL Deb 22 November 2016 c180](#)

¹³ DCMS, [Explanatory Notes to the National Citizen Service Bill \[HL\] as brought from the House of Lords](#), 14 December 2016, para 3

¹⁴ National Audit Office, [National Citizen Service](#), HC 916 2016-17, January 2017, p4

2. Evaluation of the NCS

2.1 National Audit Office report (January 2017)

In January 2017, the National Audit Office published a [report](#) on the NCS.¹⁵ This set out the following “key facts”:

- 93,000** estimated NCS participants, 2016
- 23%** current annual growth rate in participants, 2015 to 2016
- 360,000** aim for NCS participants, 2020-21
- £1.26 billion** grant funding committed by government, 2016–2020
- £1,863** estimated full unit cost per participant completing NCS, 2016
- £10 million** estimated amount paid to providers for NCS places that were not filled in 2016 and that may be reclaimed
- 40%** required annual growth from 2016 NCS participants to provide spaces for 360,000 in 2020
- 55%** percentage of young people aware of NCS, July 2016
- 9 months** estimated lead-in time for setting up an NCS programme
- 32%** percentage of participants from minority ethnic groups, 2016¹⁶

The report’s main findings were that:

- NCS has had early successes but it is too early to assess its long-term impact
- Although NCS participation has grown, this has not been as quickly as desired and the extent of potential future growth is unclear
- The management of NCS has not kept pace with its growth¹⁷

On value for money, the report said that the NCS was at a “critical stage”:

It is still early days, but NCS has shown it can attract large numbers of participants and participation has a positive short-term effect on young people. These are no small achievements. However, it remains unclear whether these effects are enduring, whether NCS can grow to become ‘a rite of passage’ available to all 16- to 17-year-olds or whether NCS will realise its longer-term aims of contributing to social cohesion, responsibility and engagement.

NCS is now at a critical stage. Having shown the concept of a national citizen service has something to offer young people, to demonstrate value for money the OCS and the Trust now need to

¹⁵ Further material relating to the report – including a press release and summary – is available from the [NAO website](#)

¹⁶ National Audit Office, [National Citizen Service](#), HC 916 2016-17, January 2017, p4

¹⁷ Ibid, pp7-9

show they can grow NCS as intended and run it at more affordable cost to the taxpayer. As currently constituted, it is not clear how the programme will do this. Weaknesses in governance and cost control need to be addressed. Notwithstanding the limited time available to adjust the next round of contracts, the OCS and Trust need to think carefully about their plans to take the NCS to scale.¹⁸

The report's recommendations said that the Office for Civil Society and the NCS Trust needed to:

a identify and understand the maximum likely voluntary participation. Undertaking an evidence-based assessment to understand what can be realistically achieved, within what timescale, and at what cost, will allow OCS to set stretching but realistic ambitions.

b think innovatively about how best to achieve NCS's aims cost-effectively. Working with the market, participants and wider stakeholders, the OCS and Trust can think radically about the aspects of the current programme that work. This could include analysing the marginal benefit of each course component to understand what is critical, and can be rolled out at scale, and how other organisations could be involved in providing NCS.

c think innovatively about the best way to manage the supply chain. The Trust has started to engage the market to identify future delivery models. This should consider the full range of options for potentially delivering NCS, from contracting to setting a regulatory framework for a market of providers with greater user choice.

d work alongside government to identify what support is possible and make sure this is given. We have seen how significant NCS growth cannot be achieved without cross-government support. OCS needs to build on existing work with wider government to understand how NCS fits into the government's agenda and to identify and exploit opportunities.

e establish plans to evaluate the longer-term outcomes of NCS for young people and communities. For NCS to be sustainable and continue to attract the funding it has to date, the impact of its short- and long-term outcomes needs to be clear. An approach to assessing outcomes needs to be set up now. This could include OCS using its powers to link datasets across government.

f Allow the necessary time to develop this thinking and the future approach. Considering what can be achieved, and how, for a new and evolving programme takes time. This becomes more difficult when operations and programmes continually expand without pausing to assess progress.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid, pp10-1

¹⁹ Ibid, pp11-2

2.2 Evaluation of the 2011 to 2014 programmes

The 2014 NCS programmes

An Ipsos MORI [evaluation](#) of the 2014 programmes was published in December 2015.²⁰ This reported that 9 out of 10 participants found their experience “worthwhile”.²¹

Participants across the different programmes had positive perceptions of the difference NCS had made to them – around 8 in 10 participants believed the NCS had taught them something new about themselves while around 9 in 10 were proud of what they had achieved.²²

All NCS 2014 programmes had positive impacts on:

- participants’ knowledge and understanding of community involvement
- participants’ perceived ability to make a difference
- participants’ likelihood of voting²³

NCS 2014 also had an impact on helping out and volunteering.²⁴

The NCS was found to have positive impacts in relation to social mixing; transition to adulthood; teamwork, communication and leadership; and community involvement.²⁵

The evaluation estimated the costs and benefits of the 2014 programmes as follows:

- Spring 2014: estimated to have delivered social benefits valued at between £4.4m and £18.3m, at a cost of £5.9m (giving a benefit to cost ratio of between £0.75 and £3.11).
- Summer standard 2014: estimated to have delivered social benefits valued at between £70.8m and £252.6m, at a cost of £63.4m (giving a benefit to cost ratio of between £1.12 and £3.98).
- Autumn 2014: estimated to have delivered social benefits valued at between £14.3m and £25.4m, at a cost of £14.9m (giving a benefit to cost ratio of between £0.96 and £1.71).²⁶

NCS programmes 2011 to 2013

Evaluation of the earlier NCS programmes found that, among other things, they had a positive impact on participants.

Ipsos MORI [evaluated](#) the 2013 programmes.²⁷

²⁰ Caroline Booth et al, [National Citizen Service 2014: evaluation](#), Ipsos MORI, December 2015

²¹ Ibid, p6

²² Ibid, p7

²³ Ibid, p8

²⁴ Ibid, p8

²⁵ Ibid, pp8-10

²⁶ Ibid, p11

²⁷ Caroline Booth et al, [National Citizen Service 2013: evaluation](#), Ipsos MORI, August 2014

NatCen Social Research evaluated the 2011 and 2012 programmes:

- NatCen Social Research, The Office for Public Management, and New Philanthropy Capital, [*Evaluation of National Citizen Service: findings from the evaluations of the 2012 summer and autumn NCS programmes*](#), July 2013
- NatCen Social Research and New Philanthropy Capital, [*The 2011 National Citizen Service pilot: long term impacts*](#), Autumn 2012
- NatCen Social Research, The Office for Public Management, and New Philanthropy Capital, [*Evaluation of the National Citizen Service Pilots: Interim Report*](#), May 2012

3. The Bill

The [Queen's Speech](#) of May 2016 said that the NCS would be “placed on a permanent statutory footing.”

The *National Citizen Service Bill [HL] 2016-17* [HL Bill 64] was introduced in the House of Lords on 11 October 2016.

The Bill, in combination with a Royal Charter, would reform the legal framework for the NCS Trust. According to the Bill's Explanatory Notes, the Bill and Charter:

- Incorporates the new NCS Trust as a Charter body and creates a legislative mechanism to transfer the business of the Company to the new Trust. This creates a legislative framework for the NCS, with the aim of making it a national institution while preserving its independent ethos;
- Aims to secure that the administrative and funding arrangements for the NCS Trust are appropriate for the increased level of public funds the Trust will manage, with proper accountability to government and Parliament; and
- Aims to impose on the NCS Trust an appropriate level of government control for a body in receipt of public funds²⁸

In addition, the Bill would enable HMRC to send information about the Trust and its work to young people (and their parents and carers) who are eligible for NCS and invite them to take part.

The Bill received cross-party support in the House of Lords. The Bill was not amended in Committee. One amendment to the Bill was agreed at Report Stage. Two Government amendments were agreed at Third Reading. Details of these amendments are given in the following overview of the Bill's main provisions.

The Bill [No 114] was introduced in the House of Commons on 14 December 2016. It had its second reading on 16 January 2017 when it received cross-party support. Minor drafting and technical amendments were made to the Bill at Committee stage.

[The Bill](#) and [Explanatory Notes](#) are available from the [Bill pages](#) on the parliamentary website. A [draft Royal Charter](#) for the National Citizen Service Trust (Cm 9393, January 2017) is also available.

Territorial extent and application

The Bill would extend to England and Wales but would only apply to England.²⁹ During debate on the Bill in the Lords, Lord Ashton of Hyde (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the DCMS) said:

²⁸ DCMS, [Explanatory Notes to the National Citizen Service Bill \[HL\] as brought from the House of Lords](#), 14 December 2016, para 5

²⁹ Annex A to the Explanatory Notes includes a table summarising the Bill's extent and application in the UK

NCS is a devolved matter so we would not be able, and certainly would not want, to force NCS upon the devolved Administrations...

(...) England and Wales are one legal jurisdiction. The Bill, if passed by Parliament, would form part of the law of England and Wales even if it applied only to England. That is why the relevant clause is written as it is.

Within this jurisdiction, the Bill restricts the trust's activities to England. NCS is a devolved matter, so that is entirely appropriate...³⁰

The National Citizen Service Trust

Under **clause 1**, the National Citizen Service Trust (NCS Trust), to be established by Royal Charter, would have the following primary functions:

- to provide or arrange for the provision of programmes for young people in England with the purpose of:
 - enabling participants from different backgrounds to work together in local communities to participate in projects to benefit society, and
 - enhancing communication, leadership and team-working skills of participants, and
- to promote the programmes to:
 - young people in England,
 - parents and carers of young people in England,
 - schools and other educational bodies, and
 - local authorities and other public bodies.

Under **clause 1(2)**, "young people" means 16 and 17 year olds, but may also include other people aged 15 or who have reached the age of 18 and are under 25. The introduction to the draft Royal Charter states that this is to ensure that the NCS is accessible to those who cannot take part aged 16 or 17 due to their individual circumstances.³¹

Young people are "in England" if they are resident in England, or receive education or training there.³²

Detailed provisions on the constitution, procedure and powers of the NCS Trust are contained in the draft Royal Charter. These include the methods by which its members and chief executive are to be appointed; remuneration of members and employees; delegation of functions; regulation of procedure; and the powers of the Trust.

³⁰ Lord Ashton of Hyde at [HL Deb 16 November 2016 cc140-1](#)

³¹ DCMS, *National Citizen Service Trust Draft Royal Charter*, Cm 9393, January 2017, p5

³² Clause 1(2)(b)

Objectives of the NCS Trust

Article 3(4) of the draft Royal Charter states that in exercising its primary functions, the NCS must:

- treat the need to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of participants as the paramount consideration, and
- have regard to the desirability of-
 - promoting social mobility,
 - promoting the personal and social development of participants,
 - promoting the employment prospects of participants by equipping them with relevant practical skills,
 - encouraging participants to take an interest in debate on matters of local or national political interest, and promoting their understanding of how to participate in national and local elections, and
- ensuring value for money.

Why incorporate the NCS Trust as Royal Charter Body?

During the Lords Second Reading debate, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Conservative) referred to the “clumsiness and inflexibility of the royal charter structure”. He was not convinced that the necessary oversight of the NCS could not be achieved with a continuation of the present community interest company formula.³³

When the Bill was considered in Committee, Baroness Barker (Liberal Democrat), said that she “did not see the need “to use the proposed structure for the NCS and that it could exist as a community interest company.”³⁴

In response, Lord Ashton of Hyde (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the DCMS), said that a programme of the scale of the NCS “requires a distinct public body to deliver it that is accountable for its performance”:

(...) Royal charter status carries certain associations particularly appropriate to NCS. The first is a distance from government...as a youth movement, NCS should not seem too close to government. The second is stability. If the nation is to embrace NCS as a rite of passage for the young then they need to be assured that we intend it to endure. The third is neutrality and respectability. The association with the monarch would be a constant reminder that this organisation must act in a manner worthy of a national institution and maintain public trust. The charter will enable the trust to retain operational independence from government. It will serve as the trust’s constitutional document by laying out the primary functions of the trust and how the board will be appointed and governed...³⁵

³³ [HL Deb 25 October 2016 c154](#)

³⁴ [HL Deb 16 November 2016 c120](#)

³⁵ [HL Deb 16 November 2016 cc132-3](#)

Transfer schemes

Clause 2 introduces Schedule 1 of the Bill. This enables the Secretary of State to transfer the staff, property, rights and liabilities of the NCS Trust community interest company to the NCS Trust.

Finance, accounts and audit

Clause 3 would give the Secretary of State the power to fund the NCS Trust through grants out of money provided by Parliament.

Clause 4 sets out the accounting and audit requirements to which the NCS Trust would be subject. It would require the Trust's accounts to be examined by the National Audit Office and laid before Parliament.

Business plan and annual report

Under **clause 5**, the NCS Trust would be required to publish an annual business plan setting out its main priorities and activities for the year ahead. This would provide a "yardstick" for assessing the Trust's performance.

Clause 6 would require the NCS Trust to publish an annual report, to be laid before Parliament, giving details of:

- the extent to which the proposed strategic priorities of the NCS Trust for that year have been met
- the extent to which the proposed main activities of the NCS Trust for that year have been carried out
- the quality of the programmes provided or arranged by the NCS Trust
- the number of participants in those programmes for that year
- the number of those participants who have a disability within the meaning of section 6 of the *Equality Act 2010*
- the extent to which participants from different backgrounds have worked together in those programmes
- the number of hours spent volunteering in community projects through participation in those programmes
- the extent to which the NCS Trust has obtained value for money in the exercise of its functions.

The requirement to give details of participants with a disability (within the meaning of s6 of the *Equality Act 2010*) was added to the Bill following a Government amendment moved during the Bill's Third Reading in the House of Lords.³⁶

The Secretary of State would be able to publish a document, to accompany the annual report, giving comments on the report and/or information about activities undertaken by government departments to promote the NCS Trust and its work (**clause 6(4)**).

³⁶ Amendment 1 at [HL Deb 14 December 2016 cc1258-9](#)

Notification of financial difficulties and criminal conduct

Clause 7 would require the NCS Trust to “promptly notify” the Secretary of State if any NCS Trust provider³⁷ was:

- in serious financial difficulty, or
- in breach of contract with serious consequences for the NCS Trust³⁸

The Secretary of State would also have to be informed where a member of staff of the NCS Trust or of an NCS Trust provider:

- commits fraud,
- is in breach of the member’s contract of employment with serious consequences for the NCS Trust, or
- is the subject of a police investigation into an allegation of criminal conduct which could have serious consequence for the NCS Trust³⁹

The latter sub-clause was added to the Bill following a Government amendment moved during the Bill’s Third Reading in the House of Lords.⁴⁰

Participation fees

Clause 8 (1) would enable the NCS Trust to continue to charge a fee for participation in a programme provided by the Trust or on its behalf.

The Bill’s Explanatory Notes state that the fee “does not represent the cost of the programmes; it is an incentive to ensure attendance”.⁴¹

Clause 8(2) would enable the NCS Trust to “charge different fees for different descriptions of participants, for the purpose of enabling participants from different backgrounds to participate” in NCS programmes.

HMRC functions

Under **clause 9 (1)**, HMRC would be able to send NCS information to young people and their parents and carers. This would be to assist the NCS Trust in promoting its programmes.

“NCS information” means “communications for the purposes of”:

- informing young people and their parents and carers about the NCS Trust and its work, and
- inviting young people to take part in programmes provided by the NCS Trust⁴²

³⁷ As defined in clause 7(1)

³⁸ Clause 7(2)(a)(i) and (ii)

³⁹ Clause 7(2)(b)(i)-(iii)

⁴⁰ Amendment 2 at [HL Deb 14 December 2016 cc1260-2](#)

⁴¹ DCMS, [Explanatory Notes to the National Citizen Service Bill \[HL\] as brought from the House of Lords](#), 14 December 2016, para 24

⁴² Clause 9(2)

“Young people” means 15, 16 and 17 year olds.⁴³

Clause 9(3) states that the “content of NCS information must be determined by the NCS Trust”. An amendment, agreed at Report Stage in the Lords, removed “may” from the sub-clause and replaced it with “must”.⁴⁴

During debate on the Bill in the House of Lords, Baroness Scott of Needham Market (Liberal Democrat), expressed concern about the role of the HMRC:

It is very important that we focus on how this scheme [the NCS] is to be promoted within hard-to-reach groups. I am a bit concerned about the emphasis being put on mailings from HMRC to promote it as that seems rather dependent on parents receiving mailings and then acting on them. In dysfunctional families, this may very well not happen, and those who need it most may be passed by.⁴⁵

She also referred to Lord Blunkett’s comment that young people do not to like government schemes⁴⁶ and said that if “they do not like government schemes generally, something coming from HMRC might be particularly problematic for them...It also seems odd that in a scheme designed to transition young people into adulthood, the first engagement is through their parents...”.⁴⁷

At Committee Stage, concerns about the role of the HMRC were also raised – on the costs, confidentiality issues, and the value of using HMRC to market the NCS.⁴⁸ Lord Ashton of Hyde said that using HMRC was just one “marketing measure” that the NCS Trust would use and that the power:

(...) is a means of ensuring, as far as government can, that as many young people as possible have the opportunity to hear about the NCS. HMRC will send on the information but it will not feel or look like an HMRC communication...it will be written by those at the trust who know how to communicate with young people effectively.

(...) The charter specifies that in all it does the trust must have regard to value for money and I think this is a principle that we all agree on. HMRC will recover the costs it incurs from the use of its staff, time and resources. These costs will therefore be met from the budget allocated to the NCS rather than from HMRC’s own budget...

[On] the need for confidentiality of HMRC information...HMRC is using the data—only names and addresses—on the NCS’s behalf specifically to prevent it leaving HMRC custody and to keep it confidential. It will maintain its centuries-old commitment to keep confidential all information about individual taxpayers. In fact, this is about not taxpayers, but child benefit recipients. HMRC suits

⁴³ Clause 9(4)

⁴⁴ Amendment 10 moved by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara and accepted by the Government: [HL Deb 7 December 2016 c847](#)

⁴⁵ [HL Deb 25 October 2016 c130](#)

⁴⁶ [HL Deb 25 October 2016 c119](#)

⁴⁷ [HL Deb 25 October 2016 c130](#)

⁴⁸ Baroness Barker (Liberal Democrat) at [HL Deb 22 November 2016 cc189-90](#) and Lord Cope of Berkeley (Conservative) at [HL Deb 22 November 2016 cc190-1](#) and Lord Lucas (Conservative) at [HL Deb 22 November 2016 c191](#)

this purpose because it has central government's best data on young people because of child benefit data. At the age of 16, young people receive their national insurance number from HMRC, which marks the transition to adulthood. At the same time, they become eligible for the NCS, an experience we want to become a rite of passage...⁴⁹

Other issues raised in the House of Lords

A number of other issues were raised when the Bill was considered in the Lords.⁵⁰ These included:

- the need for the NCS Trust to work collaboratively with other organisations in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) as well as local authorities
- the NCS Trust's commissioning process and whether other organisations in the VCS would lose out to the NCS
- making sure NCS programmes reach the most socially excluded
- appointments to the NCS Trust Board
- the reporting requirements for the NCS Trust
- whether schools would have a duty to promote the NCS⁵¹

⁴⁹ [HL Deb 22 November 2016 cc191-2](#)

⁵⁰ See the Second Reading (25 October 2016) and Committee Stage debates (16 and 22 November 2016)

⁵¹ The [Briefing Notes](#) (May 2016) to the Queen's Speech said that the NCS Bill would put "a duty on all secondary schools, including academies, sixth-form colleges and independent schools to promote the NCS to young people and their parents" (p40)

4. Debate in the Commons

4.1 Second reading

The Bill had its [second reading](#) on 16 January 2017.

Steve Reed, the Shadow Minister for Civil Society, said that Labour was “delighted” to support the Bill.⁵² However, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Shadow Minister for Sport, did raise a number of concerns:

First...the NCS finds its unique selling point in its ability to successfully mix people from all backgrounds and to allow young people to interact with others with whom they might otherwise never have had the opportunity to build relationships...Having said that, I do not believe that the Bill goes far enough in emphasising the importance of that interaction. I and others, both Members of this House and those who deliver the programmes on the ground, would have hoped to see the Bill’s wording include “social integration.” ...

Secondly...Barriers are what stop people applying, or even knowing about the NCS...Dedicated work to include the hardest-to-reach groups is a necessity, as we are already seeing a falling percentage of NCS graduates coming from the lowest-income families. Will the Minister commit to ring-fencing a proportion of funding to engage with the hardest-to-reach groups?

Thirdly...With the commitment of a funding injection of £1 billion, there is concern that this will squeeze out other youth service operators, as well as other operators who support the work of the NCS, and that they will not receive adequate resources to be able to do that to best effect. I was, however, pleased to learn that the Minister for Civil Society has written to the chair of the NCS Trust to outline his expectation that the trust will report on relationships with the voluntary sector. It would be comforting to hear this commitment again today from the Government...

Finally, integration and inclusion should come at not only at participant level, but all levels of the NCS. All too often, young people are looked over for governance roles, but there would be nowhere better suited for a young person to play an active role in the development of a programme and organisation than in this instance.⁵³

At the end of the debate, Rob Wilson (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Civil Society) responded to some of the above issues:

[On] social integration...The royal charter includes an objective “to promote social cohesion by ensuring equality of access to the programmes by participants regardless of their background or circumstances”.

The Bill requires the National Citizen Service Trust to report on the extent to which participants from different backgrounds have mixed on the programmes...The NCS will continue to play an important role in promoting social integration, but I am of course willing to consider what has been said today.

⁵² [HC Deb16 January 2017 c692](#)

⁵³ [HC Deb16 January 2017 c733-4](#)

On the duty to promote the NCS to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, the trust's primary functions include enabling participants from different backgrounds to work together. The trust is tasked to be absolutely focused on promoting NCS to young people, regardless of their background.

On the National Audit Office report and some backgrounds being disproportionately represented, the NCS is working to increase the representation of disadvantaged people...

Young people are at the centre of the NCS. There is a national youth board that feeds views into the trust from 19 regional youth boards throughout the country. There are also 120 NCS leaders...who are ambassadors for the programmes and represent the interests of their peers. Under the new arrangements, a new board will be appointed as part of the process and will look at all suggestions for whom that might include.

(...)

A number of Members talked about the detriment to other local authority services. This is additional funding that we have announced. There is also funding for other programmes such as #iwill and the Youth Investment Fund, and that is additional to local authority funding. There are some very good examples of local authority provision on youth services...⁵⁴

4.2 Public Bill Committee

The Bill was [considered](#) in Public Bill Committee on 24 January 2017.

Two minor and technical amendments on the Bill's extent and commencement, moved by the Government, were agreed.⁵⁵

Amendment 3, moved by the Government, was also agreed. This is a technical and procedural amendment to remove the privilege amendment made at Third Reading in the House of Lords.⁵⁶

The effects of these three amendments can be seen in a tracked changes [version of the Bill](#) (as amended in Committee).

No substantive amendments were made to the Bill in Committee although Labour moved, and withdrew, amendments on:

- the need for the NCS Trust to encourage social integration (amendment 4)⁵⁷
- making the need to target hard-to-reach young people a primary function of the NCS Trust (amendment 5)⁵⁸
- the annual report of the NCS Trust to include details of:
 - (i) the measures taken to encourage NCS participants to play a role in governance and the extent to which this leads to direct representation within the formal governance arrangements of the NCS Trust

⁵⁴ [HC Deb 16 January 2017 cc736-7](#)

⁵⁵ i.e. [amendments 1 and 2](#) to clauses 13 and 14; Rob Wilson spoke to the amendments at [Public Bill Committee 24 January 2017 cc27-31](#)

⁵⁶ Rob Wilson spoke to [amendment 3](#) at [Public Bill Committee 24 January 2017 c30](#)

⁵⁷ [Public Bill Committee 24 January 2017 cc4-5](#)

⁵⁸ [Public Bill Committee 24 January 2017 cc4-5](#)

- (ii) the extent to which participation in the programmes has led to long-term volunteering by NCS graduates (amendment 6)⁵⁹

5. Comment

The [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) (NCVO) welcomed the Bill. However NCVO Chief Executive, Stuart Etherington, has called for further collaboration between the voluntary sector and the NCS:

NCS has clearly made a big difference for lots of young people, empowering them to take action in their communities and helping them develop skills and experience which will be valuable throughout their lives

We think further collaboration with the voluntary sector could help it to make an even bigger difference...⁶⁰

The [Local Government Association](#) (LGA) has said that the NCS is a “good scheme that provides positive experiences for many children and young people” and that “volunteers play a key role in working alongside council staff to improve services, enrich our communities, and bring benefits to the economy”.

However, “the volunteering component of NCS should be more closely aligned to the local community, working in partnership with councils and local voluntary organisations to develop the scheme and encourage a commitment to volunteering that goes beyond the short-term confines of the scheme”.

The LGA has also warned that “the funding committed to run the NCS should not be at the expense of local services for young people”.⁶¹

⁶⁰ [“National Citizen Service should work more closely with local charities, says NCVO”](#), Press release, 12 October 2016; See also Emily Graham, [“National Citizen Service bill: a first look”](#), NCVO Blog, 12 October 2016

⁶¹ LGA, [Briefing for Second Reading of the National Citizen Service Bill in the House of Lords](#), October 2016

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