

# Tomorrow's People on the National Citizen Service



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## WHAT IS THE POLICY?

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is an initiative that forms part of the Big Society programme. NCS aims to give every 16-year-old the chance to learn new skills that will help him or her make a positive contribution to their community. NCS will act as a gateway to the Big Society for many young people, by supporting them to develop the skills and attitudes they need to get more engaged with their communities and become active and responsible citizens. It will include three elements:

- Mixing participants from different backgrounds to foster a more cohesive society.
- Supporting the transition of young people into adulthood to build a more responsible society.
- Enabling young people to work together to create social action projects in their local communities, leading to a more engaged society.

The NCS will be a programme lasting for about two months. It will include five phases: introduction; residential course involving outdoor work (1 week); work in the local community (1 week); social action task in consultation with the local community (1 week); and 30 hours of part-time action work and recruitment activities (spread over 4 weeks). The Government wants a diverse range of pilot projects. It is therefore looking for a wide range of organisations that can deliver pilots of different types and scale.

Some facts and figures

- Pilot to be launched with 10,000 young people in summer 2011
- Expanded to 30,000 in summer 2012
- Target of 100,000 for summer 2013
- Aimed at 16+ school leavers
- Will work in groups of 12-16 people
- Programme lasts 7-8 weeks
- Attendance is voluntary
- Successful pilot bids announced in October 2010
- NCS graduates to be given a chance to work in developing countries

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## TOMORROW'S PEOPLE THINKING ON THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE

We support the principles of social cohesion, responsibility and engagement that underpin the NCS model. They mirror closely the values that are built into Tomorrow's People's Working It Out projects for young people. We strongly agree with the idea of young people working in the local community to make a practical difference. It is important that young people carry out work in the local community that is of real value. We endorse the fact that the model envisages several organisations working together to deliver the service. We believe that a consortium of organisations bringing different skills and experience is the best model to deliver this service. Finally, running this scheme immediately after 16-year-olds leave school will broaden their horizons and make them more ready for the world of work, especially for those from deprived backgrounds.

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## OUR CONCERNS

We believe that the Government has set an ambitious timetable to enable consortia to be put in place to deliver effective pilot projects while upholding the core values of the NCS. We are concerned that a seven-week programme including one week of social impact and 30 hours of further part time work may not be long enough to deliver real results. While we understand the goal of social cohesion we are concerned that the lack of focus on the young people from more deprived backgrounds will mean that the initiative will not reach the parts of society to which it could be most effectively directed. Our concern is heightened by the reference to that fact that some young people may be asked to make a small contribution to the programme's costs. We are concerned that the absence of any mandatory requirement to attend NCS may undermine the reach of the scheme.

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## WHAT WE WANT FROM GOVERNMENT

We would recommend that the government increase the amount of time that young people on the NCS spend on social impact work from the current proposal of one week plus the 30 hours part time work. Alternatively, arrangements should be put in place to enable NCS graduates to move onto more long-term programmes such as the Working It Out project that Tomorrow's People runs. We do not think that NCS should be made mandatory as that would not fit with the voluntary ethos of the Big Society. However we believe that the advantages of the scheme should be made clearer into

order to encourage greater attendance, particularly from families in deprived circumstances. It should be made clearer that taking part in NCS will greatly increase the opportunities and choices available to people who have left school after their GCSEs. It would be helpful if the Government looked at linking the NCS to existing or future financial incentives such as the Education Maintenance Allowance that encourage people stay in education. This might encourage more people from low-income backgrounds to take part in NCS.

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### **WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

Tomorrow's People supporting with young people into work with Working It Out  
[www.tomorrows-people.co.uk](http://www.tomorrows-people.co.uk)

Cabinet Office announcement of NCS

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news\\_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice/national-citizen-service.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice/national-citizen-service.aspx)