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community should  
be woven into every  
stage of life...”

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## SERVICE NATION

Sonia Sodha  
Dan Leighton



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The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors. All errors and omissions remain our own.

Sonia Sodha and Dan Leighton  
2009



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## About the project

This report is based on a six-month research project undertaken by Demos and funded by the Private Equity Foundation. The findings in this report are based on desk-based research, a series of 14 interviews with expert stakeholders (see Appendix 1 for a full list), and a deliberative democracy event held with 54 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities and gender in London in September 2009. A short video of the convention is available to download at [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk). We also held a series of events at each of the party conferences in September and October 2009.



*We are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims  
for itself one part of our birth, and our friends another.*

Cicero



# Summary

The idea of civic service is grounded in normative ideals of citizenship: the idea that we are a citizenry of independent but interdependent citizens who have a duty to each other and the communities within which we live, not just to ourselves. These ideas stem back to civic republican political thought: in the words of Cicero, ‘we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims for itself one part of our birth, and our friends another’. According to this view, citizenship is not just about individual rights and legal status, but about participating in communities with a view to securing the common good: we are citizens not only of a polity but of a community.

Thus civic service encapsulates the idea that there should be an expectation that citizens contribute to their communities by ‘giving something back’ at one – or several – points in their lives. It differs from volunteering, which is more commonly perceived as an add-on to citizenship: something that is morally desirable but not an integral or implied expectation in return for the benefits that citizenship confers.

## The British context

Citizenship has been the ‘motherhood and apple pie’ of public policy: everyone wants to be seen to be doing it, but there has been at best an episodic or fluctuating commitment to this agenda across the political spectrum. For both Labour and the Conservatives, active citizenship has been an agenda of lost opportunities. Both have proposed service schemes as a panacea to a wide range of social ills: children and young people failing to develop the capabilities they need for success, our unattractive celebrity and ‘get rich quick’ culture, social fragmentation and disintegrating civic bonds, and the current and future policy

challenges our public services are going to be strained to meet. In contemporary debate, civic service has been more about fixing a Britain that is broken than about positive notions of citizenship.

The Labour government has taken a piecemeal approach to citizenship, which has lacked a strong government champion since the departure of David Blunkett. It has introduced the citizenship curriculum and spent a considerable amount trying to promote volunteering. There is now a plethora of citizen engagement schemes at the local level, including open budgets, citizen juries and neighbourhood management initiatives. But the citizenship curriculum has not been a particularly effective means of giving young people experience of community service, and volunteering rates – as a measure of active citizenship – have fluctuated since 1997 rather than consistently grown. Their proposals for service – an ambition that all young people should undertake 50 hours of community service by the age of 19 – are disparate and do not add up to a narrative about what active citizenship should look like.

The Conservatives have strong but implicit notions of citizenship in their story about broken Britain, DIY society, a smaller state and an expanded role for philanthropy and charity. But their proposals for service are disappointingly unambitious. There is much to be welcomed in their proposals for a post-16 service scheme – a mix of residential team-building and community social action projects – in so far as they meet their goals of improving experiences of transitions to adulthood for young people from deprived backgrounds. But there is a disjunct between these proposals and their implied narrative about ‘something for something’, personal responsibility and a citizen’s duty.

Meanwhile, there are limited opportunities that currently exist for young people to undertake full-time service and volunteering opportunities, although there have been recent developments such as the rollout of the City Year service scheme in the UK, and V’s Talent Year programme.

## How strong is the case for civic service?

A good case for civic service needs to start with normative arguments about citizenship. But the normative arguments alone are not enough: investment is only justified if there is evidence that civic service can also meet a range of other objectives.

First, there are policy challenges around young people's development. While concerns about a crisis of youth are certainly over-hyped by the media, there is evidence that some groups of young people are not developing the skills and capabilities they need to make the transition to adulthood successfully. These include academic skills such as literacy, numeracy and oracy; metacognitive skills like problem-solving, team-working and creative thinking; and social and behavioural capabilities or 'character capabilities' such as motivation, the ability to stick at a task, empathy and self-regulation. The importance of academic skills has been long understood, and in recent years evidence has emerged showing that that character capabilities have become more important in recent decades in impacting on young people's outcomes. While parenting is crucial to development of these capabilities in the early years, when children are older other influences become increasingly important – and so there is a question over whether service can help to fill this gap by providing children and young people with access to structured, out of school activities and meaningful relationships with adults outside the family.

Second, civic service has been mooted as a solution to social fragmentation, disintegrating civic bonds and a general social malaise. Again, these claims have been over-hyped. But underlying them are two worrying trends. Intergenerational attitudes are much more negative in the UK than on the continent; indeed, we have some of the most negative adult attitudes towards young people in the developed world. Yet a growing evidence base suggests that adult attitudes towards young people independently impact young people's outcomes through collective efficacy – the willingness of adults to get involved in setting cultural and behavioural norms for young people in their local area. There is also very limited opportunity for young people from different social backgrounds to mix. Rather than fixing a general social malaise, then, it is more

important to think about whether civic service could help address these two specific challenges.

Third, there are concerns about active citizenship in a broader sense than just service: low levels of turnout in local elections, low levels of formal political engagement and low levels of civic participation.

Last, it has been suggested that civic service might be able to provide benefits to communities by supporting public services in meeting the current and future policy challenges presented by an ageing population, climate change and some of the social trends that have impacted on children and young people's outcomes, and how they relate to adults. There are certainly some examples of evidence-based programmes that use volunteers to improve outcomes, for example by improving children's reading skills and reducing re-offending rates in the criminal justice system.

Any proposals for a civic service must, therefore, be judged by the following criteria:

- whether they will impact on participants' personal development
- whether they will improve active citizenship
- whether they will provide benefits to the community
- whether they will engage the young people at whom they are aimed

There is also a question over whether a civic service scheme should be compulsory for all citizens to undertake at a certain point in their lives. The case for a compulsory scheme is weak. A culture of service should be something that is grown organically, not something that is mandated or demanded of citizens in a top-down dictat from the state. Yes, if a culture of service is successfully grown, the result will be that service is something that is expected of citizens. But it should be a norm of citizenship, not a requirement. On a practical level, it seems unlikely that a compulsory scheme and the massive expansion of service opportunities that would be required would be high-quality enough to meet the criteria set out above.

## Civic service: the evidence

This report considers the international evidence on the benefits of service programmes, and of service-learning programmes. Service learning is ‘a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities’.<sup>1</sup> It is thought that because service learning provides an experiential learning experience, it promotes the development of the character capabilities and metacognitive skills discussed above.

The evidence on personal development is promising. Several studies have found that service learning is associated with better academic outcomes and higher levels of engagement with school. There is also evidence that it positively impacts on young people’s social and behavioural skills, such as agency and social-relatedness. Service learning also seems to be associated with lower levels of risk-taking behaviour, for example lower rates of dropping out, smoking and teen pregnancy. Participants in service schemes in the USA and Canada say that taking part in service schemes improves skills like team-working, critical thinking, motivation and public speaking.

There is similarly positive evidence about active citizenship. Participation in both service learning and service schemes is associated with higher levels of political and civic engagement.

In terms of wider benefits to the community, cost-benefit analyses suggest that when run well, service schemes can deliver significant returns to the state in the long run, through their community benefits. For example, it has been estimated that the Katimavik service programme in Canada generates more than twice its costs in terms of benefit. This shows that in theory, a British service scheme could deliver long-term benefits and enable the state to recoup the upfront investment it puts into it. However, this will be predicated on the provision of high-quality, evidence-based programmes that deploy volunteers to improve outcomes effectively. How to do this is discussed below.

Finally, a service scheme needs to be able to engage the young people at whom it is aimed. As part of this research, we held a ‘young people’s convention’, a deliberative democracy event with 54 young people aged 18–24 from a range of social

backgrounds, ethnicities and gender to consult them on the idea of service and the various proposals on the table. These young people were in general opposed to the idea of compulsion – although they were in favour of it for service at school. A significant minority of young people (one in five) said they would consider long-term, structured volunteering opportunities such as those embodied by the City Year, AmeriCorps and Talent Year approaches, although most felt a year was too long. The Challenge was the most popular scheme of those presented, although there was also support for the idea of service opportunities at school. Perhaps the most important finding was that these young people found the idea of ‘service’ and ‘duty’ alien, and disliked the name ‘civic service’. This suggests that it is too late to seek to grow a culture of service at age 18: if we are serious about this as a society, we need to start to develop a culture of service earlier when children and young people are still at school. This response also reveals the importance of branding a scheme so that it appeals to the young people at whom it is aimed – which should be done in conjunction with them.

### The principles that should underpin a lifecycle approach to service

The evidence leads us to conclude that a one-off service scheme operating at a single point in time during the life course will not work. Politicians have tended to look for a ‘big bang’ option that will neatly solve the social issues discussed here. But a specific scheme targeted at a particular age group is unlikely to meet the numerous expectations that will exist for it. If we are serious about growing a greater service culture, a national service scheme for young people must be designed to be organic and to engage the young people at whom it is aimed.

Service can potentially deliver a wide range of benefits: impacting on young people’s development of social and behavioural skills, delivering benefits for the community, and promoting greater levels of civic participation, activism and political efficacy. However, it is important that service schemes such as service learning at school and more intensive full-time

opportunities for young adults are of high quality if they are to deliver these benefits to individuals and the community. A lifecycle approach to civic service should be based on the following principles:

- *A lifecycle approach*: Growing a culture of service will not happen through a one-off scheme. Service has been successful in countries like the USA because there is a life cycle approach to it, beginning with service learning in school right through to Seniorcorps programmes that cater for older and retired volunteers. The same approach needs to be taken in Britain, otherwise the benefits will not be felt.
- *Cultural context*: Any service scheme, however, needs to be sensitive to the British cultural context: we cannot simply transplant service models from other countries with different cultures.
- *Ensuring equitable access*: Young people should get some kind of maintenance support for taking part in full-time service opportunities, otherwise the barriers to taking part will be too great, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- *Universality*: A case for a culture of service and ‘giving something back’ must be applied not just to young people who have been failed by the system, but also to young people who have benefitted the most, such as university graduates who enjoy a high level of state subsidy for their higher education.
- *Building on existing initiatives*: A service strategy should build on service and volunteering initiatives already in existence; it should not look to replace them or crowd them out.
- *A partnership approach*: A successful service strategy will rely on a range of actors to take part – not just central government, but schools, the voluntary and community sector, public services, local government and business.
- *Promote local diversity*: While there is a need for government to set up the structures within which a successful service culture can flourish, it should be up to local communities to decide on the priorities of a local service strategy.
- *Privilege evidence-based practice*: Service schemes should seek to promote and build on evidence-based practice. Innovation is

important as a means to building up and improving the evidence base on what works in improving outcomes, but innovation should not be pursued for innovation's sake.

## A lifecycle service strategy

We propose the following lifecycle approach to service:

- service learning at school
- options to take part in full-time service opportunities as part of 16–18 compulsory education, leading to a vocational qualification
- post-18 gap-year-style service opportunities
- 18–24 structured service opportunities as a route to the labour market for young people who are disengaged
- service for university undergraduates
- postgraduate 'service' opportunities through schemes like TeachFirst
- ongoing service opportunities at work and beyond

### Service learning at school

A lifecycle approach to service learning should begin with school, with compulsory service learning as part of the national curriculum. The foundations should be laid in primary school, and all young people should have the entitlement to take part in an extended social action project during 11–16 learning.

Importantly, delivery would not be left to schools alone: schools would deliver this in conjunction with community organisations and support from local 'service brokers' in the community.

### Options to take part in full-time service opportunities as part of 16–18 compulsory education, leading to a vocational qualification

The compulsory participation age will be increasing to age 18 by 2015. We propose that taking part in a year-long full-time service scheme should be an option open to young people in 16–18 compulsory education and training. This year should include service learning and training elements delivered in

conjunction with further education colleges, and should result in a further education qualification. Young people taking part would be entitled to receive the means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance like other 16–18-year-olds in full-time education and training.

### Post-18 gap-year-style service opportunities

For young people who have finished their compulsory education, there should be a range of intensive full-time service opportunities that function both as routes to university and to employment (and that could also be taken up post university).

Given the barriers to participation in this kind of scheme, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, we propose that young people taking part in these gap-year-style schemes should be entitled to one year of support in the form of means-tested loans and grants between the ages of 18 and 25, in the same way that higher education students are entitled to means-tested maintenance loans and grants.

These service schemes could be provided through a range of organisations in the voluntary and community sector, the private sector and the public sector. Providers would be contracted to provide service opportunities, with funding attached. However, funding would be contingent on these organisations being able to demonstrate a ‘2 for 1’ benefit – both to participants in terms of their skills and development, and public benefit to ensure the quality of service experiences justifies public investment. There could also be a matching element to the provider funding to encourage providers to lever in financial support from the private sector. The logistics of how this system would work are discussed in more detail below.

Like 16–18 service provision, these schemes would result in a qualification. The aim should be to work with employers and universities to get this qualification recognised and respected for the skills young people develop through a service year – although this will of course depend on the quality of the schemes.

### 18-24 structured service opportunities as a route to the labour market for young people who are disengaged

In addition to the above, there should be an option for shorter-term structured service opportunities to be made available to young people who are job seeking, but are a long way from the labour market. A decision to allow a young person to take part in this would be made in conjunction with their personal adviser. Young people doing service as part of specific training to get into work would be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance.

### Service for university undergraduates

A university education brings a wide range of benefits to the young people who benefit from it: on average, university graduates earn around £600,000 more over their lifetime than non-graduates. They receive a huge state subsidy towards their higher education – in the region of £8,000 per student per year.

There are good reasons for this subsidy, including the contribution that having a good number of university graduates adds to economic growth. But given the large private benefits graduates gain, there is a strong case that they should give something back while at university.

We therefore propose we should move to a system in which all undergraduates are expected to undertake 100 hours of community service over a three-year undergraduate degree: this still permits them to work and study, but also asks them to make a real contribution to the local communities in which they live. The aim should be that undergraduates participate in some of the local service schemes described above.

### Postgraduate 'service' opportunities through schemes like TeachFirst

The government should examine the potential to expand the public service ethos of TeachFirst into other areas of public services. TeachFirst is a programme that places high-quality graduates in teaching positions in inner-city schools in deprived

areas for two years. Graduates receive teacher training, but also leadership training and coaching. The intention is that they act as role models for the children they teach – and that the scheme places high-quality graduates in schools in deprived areas that might not normally attract them. TeachFirst is not a service scheme in the strictest sense – its participants are paid teaching professionals – but it is underpinned by a service ethos. There may well be the potential to expand it into other areas of public services like local government and social work.

### Ongoing service opportunities at work and beyond

The above service opportunities should also tie into ongoing part-time service opportunities at work. Many private sector organisations already provide a certain amount of volunteering leave each year, and encourage their employees to volunteer either privately or through corporate schemes. The government could, however, provide more of a lead by giving public sector employees the entitlement to a week's service leave each year in which they would be expected to contribute through service schemes. Part-time service and voluntary programmes could be used to support service programmes for earlier cohorts.

## Implementing a service strategy

### A national body for civic service

A national civic service strategy will require a new government remit for the coordination and support of structured service opportunities from primary school onwards. We suggest this should be embedded in a national body for service, based on the Corporation for National Service (CNS) in the USA, which brought together a range of disparate programmes into one coordinating body that provides a gateway to different service opportunities for Americans of all ages.

A national body for service should be charged with working with the range of actors needed to deliver a national service strategy: schools, colleges, universities, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), the public sector and the corporate

sector. It would be responsible for directly funding service learning and service opportunities. In each local area, there would be 'service brokers' that would work with local government, local strategic partnerships and the range of partners above in delivering a service strategy. This is a similar model of operation to the one that V operates in relation to youth volunteering, and V's remit could be expanded to meet these functions.

The national body would have a specific role in commissioning gap-year-style service opportunities to ensure the '2 for 1' benefit element discussed above in conjunction with local communities. Commissioning would be outcomes-based: in terms of both the impact on participants and the wider community benefits.

The national body would also have overall responsibility for branding a service strategy, and engaging young people in its design and branding.

### **The role of the voluntary, community, public and private sectors in delivering service opportunities for young people**

The starting assumption in debates about civic service is often that service opportunities will be provided by the voluntary and community sector. However, as discussed above, the VCS has limited capacity and it is very unlikely that it alone would be able to meet an expansion in demand for service opportunities that might come as a result of the proposals presented here. We therefore envisage that current VCS organisations, new charitable organisations, social enterprises, the private sector and public services could be contracted to provide service opportunities in conjunction with schools, colleges and universities. It should build on V's Talent Year programme.

### **The role of business and the private sector**

There is huge scope to involve the private sector in a service strategy – for example through matching funding of service opportunities, working with businesses to provide training

opportunities for young people participating in service, providing mentoring and internships for young people, and encouraging employees to get involved in local service schemes in the community.

### The NEET definition

Young people aged 16–19 who are engaged in full-time volunteering or service opportunities are currently classed as NEET (not in employment, education or training). This sends out mixed messages and means that young people undertaking these activities count negatively towards targets for local authorities to reduce NEETs. This anomaly will no longer exist once the participation age is increased to 18 in 2015; until then, it should be ended.

### Costing and funding options

We estimate that a service strategy as outlined here for England would cost in the region of **£449 million** each year (see the full report for detailed methodology). This is a significant investment, but one that should be recouped over the long term as service schemes impact positively on the young people who take part and on the community. This represents an invest-to-save approach.

However, the timescale for return on the original investment is likely to be long, and these proposals require upfront investment, which will need to be found from current budgets. In this tight fiscal climate it is difficult to put forward proposals without considering where the funding might come from.

One potential source is higher education student support. Student loans are heavily subsidised by the taxpayer with a 0 per cent real rate of interest and a 25-year-debt write off. This means the rate of government subsidy varies from anything from 80 per cent of the loan for low-earning women, to 20 per cent of the loan for high-earning men. This is on top of the state subsidy of higher education paid directly to universities, around £5,000 per student per year.

Arguments put forward about the student loan subsidy are often about widening access to education. But once prior attainment is controlled for, the social class bias in higher education falls away; in other words, the problem is not in the system of student support, but in the underperformance of young people from poorer backgrounds at school. New Zealand introduced a 2.5 per cent real rate of interest on student loans, without access to higher education suffering as a result.

The savings made by moving from the current system to one in which student loans have a 2.5 per cent real interest rate are significant: in the region of £1.23 billion a year. We suggest the costs of service should be met from these savings.





# Introduction

In the last few years, it seems as though national civic service has become the ultimate silver bullet in policy debates. It has been proposed in many different forms – from 50 hours of compulsory community service for school pupils to a compulsory year of service for 18–24-year-olds – to address a wide range of British social ills, including young people failing to develop the skills needed for success, an unattractive celebrity and ‘get rich quick’ culture, and social fragmentation and disintegrating civic bonds. In contemporary debate, national civic service is about fixing a Britain that is broken.

National civic service is grounded in the idea that citizens have a duty to contribute to the society and communities in which they live, reflecting the belief that we are a nation of independent but interdependent citizens. It represents the ambitious goal that citizens spend some period of time ‘giving something back’ to the community. But what promise does it hold?

We argue here that the debate has become messy and confused. There is a disjunct between some of the very specific proposals on the table and the depressingly problem-based analysis to which civic service is presented as the solution.

In this report, we seek to answer some fundamental questions: why do we want a national civic service? To what extent are the arguments in favour of it normative, and to what extent are they empirical? Can a national civic service meet all the expectations that exist for it, or are politicians being hopelessly ambitious? What would an effective national civic service – that builds a culture of service, achieves some of the key objectives around personal development, engages the people at whom it is aimed, and makes a real contribution to society – look like? These are the key issues that we grapple with.

The starting point for a national civic service needs to be normative. This is because what sets service apart from other forms of active citizenship, like volunteering, is the fact that it is grounded in the idea of a citizen's duty to others. This idea stems back to the civic republican tradition of political thought. Civic republicanism focuses on the role of citizens in creating and securing common goods such as democracy, citizenship and resilience, distinguishing it from liberal theories of citizenship, which are focused on individual rights and often exclude questions of values and the good life from politics and social policy. From this perspective service potentially offers a training ground for citizens to become more sensitive to the needs of others, and to help meet social challenges that can only be solved by citizens, governments and businesses working together.

We argue here that active citizenship in the civic republican sense has been neglected by both of the main political parties. Citizenship has been the 'motherhood and apple pie' of public policy: everyone pays lip service to it, but few politicians have been seriously committed to it.

For the Labour government, the active citizenship agenda has been a lost opportunity. They have shied away from properly embedding it, instead relying on a range of different initiatives that fail to add up to a coherent narrative about citizenship. They have introduced a citizenship curriculum, and spent significant sums on promoting volunteering activity – one estimate put the figure at £400 million a year.<sup>2</sup> There is now a plethora of citizen engagement schemes at the local level, including open budgets, citizen juries and neighbourhood management initiatives. The government has set volunteering rates as a public sector agreement target for the third sector, and views it as an indicator of a healthy society.

But to date the government has had limited success in positively influencing norms of citizenship. The citizenship curriculum has been found to have been ineffective at expanding service opportunities in schools, and levels of volunteering have fluctuated since 1997 rather than risen consistently. On active citizenship, the government's record has been poor.

For the Conservative party, the missed opportunity has been even greater. Conservatives have strong but implicit notions of what citizenship is in their story about broken Britain, DIY society, a smaller state and an expanded role for philanthropy and the charitable sector. It would therefore be reasonable to expect that they would be leading the way in the debate about citizenship and its implications. However, there has been a disappointing lack of ambition in their proposals for service. Their post-16 proposals – a mix of residential team-building activities and community social action projects – are to be welcomed in so far as they meet their purported goals, mostly in trying to improve experiences of the transition to adulthood for young people from deprived backgrounds. But there exists a gap between their proposals and their broader narrative about ‘something for something’, personal responsibility and a citizen’s duty.

So we argue here that promoting volunteering falls short of an active citizenship strategy. There is a strong argument for something more distinctive: a commitment to the idea of service, and to a citizen’s duty.

There is also a normative argument about whether a form of national civic service should be compulsory. We argue against a form of national civic service that all young people have to undertake at a set point in their lives. A culture of service should be something that is grown organically, not something that is mandated or demanded of citizens in a top-down dictat from the state. Yes, if a culture of service is successfully grown, the result will be that service is something that is expected of citizens. But it should be a norm of citizenship, not a requirement.

On a practical level, the normative arguments are not strong enough alone to justify significant state investment in a service scheme. In order to do this, we need to look at the empirical evidence that spending money on national civic service will deliver benefits to the citizens who take part, and to the community more broadly. There is good reason to think that making national civic service compulsory will generate such a high volume of need for service placements that quality could be significantly compromised.

However, elements of compulsion are justified in two specific cases. First, there is a good case for making service learning during the pre-16 curriculum compulsory. This would give all children and young people an entitlement to the learning opportunities that service learning provides, discussed later in this report. Limited compulsion can also be justified in the case of undergraduate students in higher education because of the enormous benefits they receive from the state in the form of their subsidised post-18 education. This is a group for whom it is fair to ask that they give something back.

As normative arguments alone are not strong enough to justify significant investment, the next step is to consider the empirical evidence about the gaps service could potentially fill. This report considers the evidence about what works best in developing young people, in promoting active and meaningful citizenship, and in delivering benefits to the community. We think the success of a service scheme needs to be judged with reference to four criteria: to what extent does it work in building a culture of service? To what extent does it achieve key objectives around participants' personal development? How will it engage young people? Will it make a real contribution to society? The project is based on desk-based research, consultation with expert stakeholders, and structured consultation with young people through a 'young people's convention', a deliberative democracy event held with 54 young people in September 2009.

Our assessment of the evidence leads us to conclude that a one-off service scheme that operates at a single point in time during the life course will not work. Politicians have tended to look for the 'big bang' option that will neatly solve all the social issues it has been mooted to address. But a specific scheme targeted at a particular age group is unlikely to meet the numerous expectations that will exist for it. If we are serious about growing a greater service culture, a national service scheme for young people must be designed to be organic, to engage the young people at whom it is aimed and to fit in flexibly with their goals and plans.

This report therefore sets out a set of proposals that make up a lifecycle approach to civic service. Engaging young people

with the idea of service when they are approaching adulthood at age 16 or 18 is too late. There needs to be an entitlement to service learning from much earlier on, while they are still at school. This should be followed up with more intensive service opportunities for young people taking part in compulsory education between the ages of 16 and 18, and post-18 gap-year-style experiences leading to employment or university. Service should also be an expectation for university undergraduates, who receive a large amount of subsidy from the state. Service should not end there – postgraduate schemes like TeachFirst, which facilitate talented graduates to make a contribution to public services in deprived areas, should be expanding from education to other careers like local government and social work. Finally, this should tie into service opportunities throughout the rest of the life course, particularly linking up service alumnae with young people.

We deal with the practicalities associated with these proposals in more detail later on in the report – but there is a practical point worth making here. One of the biggest gaps in the debate so far has been about the service opportunities on offer. At the moment, full-time structured volunteering or service schemes in the UK remain something that a minority of young people engage in and there is a lack of capacity in the voluntary and community, and public, sectors to expand the limited options already in existence. Unless there is an expansion in supply of places to meet any expansion in demand, service will remain only a marginal part of the transition to adulthood, and one that few young people will take part in. This is not an agenda that can be left solely to the voluntary and community sector – it must be delivered in a partnership between the sector, central and local government, schools, universities and the private sector.

The proposals presented here may be regarded as being too centralist. We think that this is an area in which government needs to take a lead in setting up the structures and frameworks within which a service culture can flourish. Once this has been done, then it is right that service should develop differently in different communities to serve their unique needs. However, we

believe that without the structures proposed in this report, it will be difficult for a service culture ever to get off the ground; for evidence of this, we only need look to history.

The structure of the rest of this report is as follows. In the next chapter, we consider the normative arguments for service in more detail. Chapter 3 looks at the evidence about the social challenges that civic service might address: young people's development, reversing social fragmentation, promoting active citizenship and helping public services meet some of the huge challenges they face over the coming decade. Chapters 4 and 5 analyse the UK and international policy contexts around service. In chapter 6, we consider the evidence on whether service and service learning can help to meet these challenges. Chapter 7 sets out the findings from our young people's convention. Finally, chapters 8 and 9 present our proposals for a national civic service strategy, based on a lifecycle approach service; they include costings and potential sources of funding.





# 1 The idea of service: an independent but interdependent citizenry

The debate about the difference between service and volunteering is often reduced to a practical one: how these two concepts differ in terms of what they look like for the people taking part. Because the differences between the two can be quite subtle in practice, the debate has often been confused, with questions over whether service and volunteering are two separate things – or whether service is a subset of volunteering – never really having been cleared up.

In distinguishing between service and volunteering, we instead need to start from the normative rather than the practical – and consider their relationship to citizenship.

The concept of service is closely related to the ideal of active citizenship, which has its origins in civic republicanism. This is a strand of political philosophy that, starting with Aristotle and Cicero, emphasises the importance of civic virtues such as courage, wisdom and moderation and the active responsibility of citizens in maintaining common goods such as liberty, democracy and the rule of law. According to Cicero: ‘we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims for itself one part of our birth, and our friends another’.<sup>3</sup> On this view, a citizen is not merely someone with a particular legal status, but someone who participates in decision making and the community with a view to securing the common good. We are citizens not only of a polity but of a community: human beings are necessarily interdependent and the stability of our liberty and wellbeing is dependent on how we behave towards each other.

An important variant on this republican idea, articulated by thinkers such as JS Mill and Tocqueville, is that participation in collective decision making expands the individual’s sense of being part of a community and their sensitivity to the interests of others. Participation in this view is not merely an expression of

public spiritedness, but a means of cultivating it.<sup>4</sup> In this republican vision, citizenship consists of more than going to the ballot box and casting a vote – these acts of formal political participation are necessary but not sufficient for the maintenance of a thriving civil society and robust democratic institutions. In addition, citizens need to be involved in actively and responsibly exercising the social, political and economic power associated with belonging to a community – from participating in formal public structures, to participating informally in the local community.

Taking this even further, some civic republicans would argue that citizenship implies a duty as citizens to contribute to the community and to society more broadly. In this view, service offers a related but distinct way of thinking about active citizenship and the duty this entails.

Volunteering, in contrast, is commonly perceived to have a different relationship to citizenship. Volunteering is something that is regarded as morally good and desirable in most societies. However, it does not carry with it the same association with a citizen's duty, and an expectation that citizens make a contribution to society as a norm of citizenship, that service does. One way of expressing this is that volunteering is a desirable add-on to citizenship, but is not entailed by it. On the other hand, service is integral to citizenship: it is a norm or expectation that sits alongside the privileges that citizenship confers.

In practice, there are undoubtedly overlaps between service and volunteering, but it is possible and necessary to distinguish between them. It is wrong to sell service as a subset of volunteering, and it is likely to generate confusion among participants, policy makers and providers of opportunities across the voluntary and community, public and private sectors.

The Global Service Institute argues that what makes service distinctive from other forms of volunteering is the intensive ongoing commitment required by service as opposed to more occasional or one-off volunteering, and the structured, programmatic form within which it is offered. It defines service as 'an organised period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community,

recognized and valued by society with minimal monetary contribution to the participant'.<sup>5</sup>

Clarifying the meaning of the term service is vital to an understanding of what it would entail to introduce civic service in Britain. To what extent is service distinct from volunteering? Is it simply an extension of certain types of volunteering or an activity that can be considered distinct in kind rather than degree? There is some confusion as to what a civic service scheme would add to the existing ecology of volunteering activity, not least because there is a lack of conceptual clarity over the term itself.<sup>6</sup>

In Britain, definitional disputes on the difference between service and volunteering have tended to turn on the issue of stipends and compulsion. For example the definition of volunteering used by the Compact Code on Volunteering (1998) is: 'an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives'.

This has led some academics to argue that compensated or compulsory elements are what distinguish 'service' from volunteering.<sup>7</sup> Yet this distinction is arguably too rigid: in reality both compensation and compulsion are continual dimensions.<sup>8</sup> Civic service schemes can and do have elements of both: for example, there may be a token monetary award to cover basic living allowances and service may be 'required' for the award of qualifications or credit for higher education or training.

The Global Service Institute summarises the elements that distinguish service from occasional volunteering and employment as follows, based on a cross-national study of service schemes:

- The service experience is likely to be intense and of long duration. It is scheduled and definite. These aspects of the service role address the expectations and accessibility of the service institution.
- Service is carried out through a programme or organisation that has defined a service role, which an individual then 'fills'. Role expectations could relate to eligibility requirements, or to the nature and length of the experience.

- Service is distinguishable from employment, because any monetary award for service is not equivalent to market wages. Incentives may also be provided for participation, including development of skills or receipt of educational credit, for example. Civic service roles may also be compensated by such benefits as stipends, awards and educational scholarships.
- The service institution may provide information and facilitation or support via training, supervision, reflection sessions and mentoring. There may be other important forms of incentives or compensation for service, such as personal satisfaction and social connections.<sup>9</sup>





## 2 If service is the answer, what was the question?

Civic service has been mooted as a panacea to a number of different policy challenges – fears about how the current generation of young people are making the social transition to adulthood; worries that they are failing to develop the skills they need as the economy evolves; a concern about social fragmentation and weakening civic bonds; and looming policy challenges presented by future trends in the economy and demographics.

But these kinds of social concerns are well known for being over-hyped by a media often keen to paint a picture of a Britain on a downhill slope to social decline. An effective assessment of the empirical case for a national civic service must therefore start with an objective analysis of the problems it is supposed to be addressing. In this chapter, we consider the evidence on these social trends in turn: young people's skills and their transition to adulthood; social fragmentation and weakening civic bonds; active citizenship; and the role of service in meeting broader policy challenges.

### **Young people's skills and their transition to adulthood**

Concerns about whether children and young people are developing the skills and capabilities they need for a successful and fulfilled life have been mounting over the last few years. These concerns were given a particularly renewed focus in the wake of the publication of a Unicef report in 2006 that put the UK at the bottom of an international league table on child wellbeing, generating widespread perceptions of there being a 'crisis' in today's youth.

There is no question that these claims have been over-hyped – both by a media that often demonises young people<sup>10</sup> and by politicians sometimes keen to push policy programmes

such as the Respect agenda in response to public concern generated by this media hype.

But underneath the hype, there is an objective cause for concern. While many young people do successfully make the transition to adulthood, there is a minority who do not, and who are not developing the core skills and capabilities they need for adult life. This is manifesting itself in poor outcomes for British children and young people compared with their international counterparts. Academic outcomes are average at best,<sup>11</sup> and British young people engage in negative risky behaviours more than their peers abroad: levels of teen drinking are highest in the UK in OECD comparisons, and the UK has the fourth highest teen pregnancy rate.<sup>12</sup> There are also concerns about mental health and wellbeing: one study found that the incidence of conduct problems in 16-year-olds more than doubled between 1974 and 1999, and the percentage of 16-year-olds with emotional problems increased from around 10 per cent to 17 per cent over the same time period.<sup>13</sup> It is in this context that service has been proposed as one medium through which a gap in young people's skills could be addressed.

### The skills young people need

The skills young people need can be thought of as roughly falling into three groups, although there is considerable overlap and reinforcement between them.

The first set of skills are academic skills like literacy, numeracy and oracy – without being able to read, write and communicate, young people have little hope of leading successful and fulfilled lives. Children who fail to develop these skills are more likely to truant, be excluded from school, not to be in employment, training and education (NEET) between the ages of 16 and 19, and ultimately to go on to suffer a range of poor outcomes in adulthood.<sup>14</sup> Yet eight in 100 11-year-olds leave primary school with literacy and numeracy levels below those of the average seven-year-old: a significant minority, most of whom simply never catch their peers up and whose lives become blighted by their lack of these core skills.

A second group of skills are what are often referred to as ‘metacognitive’ or ‘learning to learn’ skills like independent enquiry, creative thinking, being able to work as part of a team and being able to reflect on your own learning. These skills are more difficult to measure than skills like literacy and numeracy but are undoubtedly important in explaining why it is that young people with higher levels of qualification go on to enjoy better life outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

The third set of capabilities is ‘character capabilities’. This skill set has variously been dubbed social and emotional competencies,<sup>16</sup> emotional intelligence<sup>17</sup> character capabilities,<sup>18</sup> emotional literacy and soft skills, to name but a few. Whatever it is called, this set of skills contains several familiar social, emotional and behavioural competencies:

- *self-understanding*: having a positive and accurate sense of oneself, acknowledging one’s strengths as well as recognising responsibility towards others, and being realistic about one’s limitations
- *understanding and managing feelings*: for example, knowing how to soothe oneself when troubled or angry, cheer oneself up when sad, and tolerate some degree of frustration
- *motivation*: showing optimism, persistence and resilience in the face of difficulties; planning and setting goals
- *social skills of communication*: getting along with others, solving social problems, and standing up for oneself
- *empathy*: being able to see the world from other people’s point of view, understand and enjoy differences, and pay attention and listen to others<sup>19</sup>

The importance of these skills is intuitive, but research in the last couple of decades has demonstrated that these skills are just as important to later life outcomes as some of the more conventional skills like literacy and numeracy. However, just as there is a socio-economic gap in academic attainment, there is also inequality in the development of these social and emotional skills.<sup>20</sup>

This is worrying in light of the fact that these skills have become much more important in the labour market in recent

decades, in particular for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>21</sup> This is the result of several important changes to the economy: the shift from a predominantly manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy; the loss of more established career trajectories; and the loss of mid-skill ‘stepping stone’ jobs, which have been replaced by information and communication technology, resulting in an hour-glass-shaped demand for skills in the economy.

These concerns about young people’s skills are being amplified by the current economic context. In times of recession, employers become even more demanding in the skills they look for. The UK has a particularly high youth unemployment rate for 18–24-year-olds compared with those aged 25 or over, and higher than average rates of 16–19-year-olds who are NEET.<sup>22</sup> This is concerning: unemployment while young has more of a ‘scarring’ impact on later employment than unemployment later in life, and it also impacts on later life satisfaction and self-reported health.<sup>23</sup>

### Explaining inequality in skills development: a child’s environment

The foundations for young people’s skills development are set in the early years before they even start school. Parenting and the quality of a child’s home learning environment have a profound and lasting impact on their development – both their academic skills, and the broader set of social, emotional and behavioural skills.

For example, it has been found that a mother’s highest qualification level and the quality of a child’s home learning environment is the strongest predictor of academic outcomes at ages 10 and 11.<sup>24</sup> One large-scale US-based study showed how children from families on welfare hear on average only 600 words per hour, compared with the 2,100 words per hour that children from professional families hear. This unsurprisingly has a lasting impact on communication and literacy skills.<sup>25</sup> Original analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study by Demos’s Capabilities Programme has shown that parent–child relationships characterised by warmth and love, stability and

authority best promote social, emotional and behavioural development.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, by the time children start school at five, those from the richest income quartile who score in the lowest quartile of cognitive ability tests at 22 months have caught up with children from the poorest quartile who score in the top quartile of the tests – and they soon overtake them.<sup>27</sup> So although genes obviously have an influence on skills development, family background also has a very significant impact. Socio-economic background is more strongly associated with attainment in the UK than in many other European countries.<sup>28</sup>

There are some who would argue, therefore, that participation in service might have a limited impact on a child's development. But it would be mistaken to think that the die is cast before a child starts school. Development is an ongoing trajectory and children need to build on the progress they make in the early years in their home, school and community environments. Recent advances in brain development research suggest that the development of social, emotional and behavioural competencies continues throughout adolescence and early adulthood, with the part of the brain that is responsible for many of the social competencies seen as desirable in adults (for example, the ability to delay gratification, make complex decisions and self-regulate behaviour) not developing until late adolescence.<sup>29</sup>

Schools are thought to contribute around 14 per cent to a child's outcomes – this is certainly not an insignificant amount, and high-quality learning and emotional environments at school can help to compensate for a lack of these in the home.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, it has been found that the impact of what goes on outside school is important too for development, and can act as a protective factor against poor parenting – for example, participation in structured extra-curricular activities has been found to be associated with better development of social and emotional competencies like agency and application.<sup>31</sup> The structured, high-quality interaction with adults that service schemes could potentially offer has thus strengthened the arguments in favour of service.

### Explaining inequality in skills development: broader trends

There are a number of social trends that have been increasingly impacting on the way young people develop and make the transition to adulthood, however.<sup>32</sup> Psychologists have for decades pointed to the central importance of good adult–child interactions in childhood and adolescence in promoting successful development.<sup>33</sup> But there is some evidence that British young people spend less quality time with adults than young people in many countries on the continent do, and more unstructured social time with their peers.<sup>34</sup> This is likely to be because of differences in social structures: in southern European countries, young people are more likely to grow up in large extended families, interacting frequently with adults in the family other than their parents; in Scandinavian countries that have similar labour market structures to ours there is much greater provision of high-quality childcare in the early years and structured out of school activities for school-age children and young people with working parents. In the UK, almost half of parents (47 per cent) and six in ten working fathers said they feel they do not have enough quality time with their children.<sup>35</sup>

These trends are underpinned by a number of profound social and economic shifts in the last half century, which have implications for parenting. These include steadily rising rates of women's labour market participation, a 'long hours' working culture compared with the rest of Europe<sup>36</sup> and much greater diversity of family forms: while 92 per cent of children lived in a two-parent family in the early 1970s, in 2005 this figure was 76 per cent.<sup>37</sup> Of course much of this social change has been positive and positive parenting is not determined by family form, but these trends have had an indisputable knock-on effect, with nearly four in ten children born in 2000 who lived with their mothers having no contact with their father in 2003.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the one in five young people who can be characterised as 'extreme risk takers'<sup>39</sup> in the National Survey of Parents and Children were found to have very low levels of self-esteem and more strained family relationships – they were less likely to get on well with their parents, to talk to them about things that really matter, to enjoy

spending time with the family, to have fun with their family and to say that their parent expresses affection.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond these trends within the family, there have been wider social trends around a society becoming increasingly concerned with commercialisation and consumerism, and increasing access to media and technology, which have impacted on children and young people's development. The development of a children's consumer market in its own right in the last couple of decades has undoubtedly contributed to documented trends in the increasing 'adultification' of children, with ever-younger groups engaging in adult behaviours and taking on adult sexual identities. Recent estimates suggest children are now a £30 billion industry.<sup>41</sup> The advertising industry has become increasingly aggressive and sophisticated in targeting children, particularly the 'tween' 6–12-year-old market.<sup>42</sup> Products previously aimed at teenagers – such as those concerned with diet, beauty and sexuality – are now directly marketed at this younger group. Advertisers have been using new media in inventive ways – for example, Skittles reportedly paid the social network Bebo a six-figure sum to establish a brand 'profile' on the site that young people can befriend and submit content to, and to enable it to recruit young people aged 13 upwards to become 'brand ambassadors'.<sup>43</sup> The distinction between advertising and editorial content is becoming increasingly blurred on the internet, with companies such as Haribo and McDonald's hosting games on their website to attract children.<sup>44</sup> The impact of this commercialisation is intensified by the fact that children's access to the media through television, the internet and mobile phones is becoming increasingly unmediated by adults.<sup>45</sup>

This has been accompanied by fears that children's aspirations are being impacted on by our celebrity, 'get rich quick' culture. A recent survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers suggested that 60 per cent of the teachers they surveyed thought their pupils most aspired to be David Beckham, and 32 per cent aspired to be Paris Hilton. Half of teachers said their pupils tried to emulate their celebrity role models in terms of behaviour and dress.<sup>46</sup> Many fear that our

celebrity culture is producing a generation of young people who think the best way to success is through celebrity rather than success at school and a career.

It has also been argued that just as social, emotional and metacognitive skills have become more important, the pressure on schools to focus on fairly crude measures of academic performance in the form of SATs has meant that the ability of schools to develop these skills in young people has been squeezed. There is certainly evidence that pressure to meet targets in SATs has squeezed the curriculum and access to broader forms of learning<sup>47</sup> – although because we do not track development in these skills in the same way we do literacy and numeracy this has not gone unchallenged. There has been a renewed focus on social and emotional skills through initiatives like the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme in schools, and the addition of personal learning and thinking skills to the 11–14 curriculum. However, the impact of these has been constrained by the tensions between the government's standards agenda, focusing on pushing up narrow measures of attainment, and the more holistic Every Child Matters agenda, focusing on child development across a broader range of outcomes. While there is no tension in theory, the way these agendas have manifested themselves in education policy over the last decade means there is often a tension in practice.<sup>48</sup> At any rate, there is no question that experiential learning opportunities – learning through doing – are too often limited to post-14 work-based learning opportunities, despite the fact that there is strong evidence that they are an important way to engage children and young people in their learning, and are linked to better academic and non-academic outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

There are also concerns that the English education system fails those young people not destined for further academic study at university; vocational qualifications are held in poor regard in this country and do not provide the same boost to life chances.<sup>50</sup> The 14–19 agenda has been a fast-moving area of policy but many have regarded the introduction of diplomas in response to this policy challenge as disappointing and ineffective – we still have a two-tier education system where vocational education is

seen as of lower status than academic education and remains poorly perceived by employers.

In relation to service, the question is whether a service culture has a role in filling in some of these gaps. Can service help young people develop the skills they need for a successful and fulfilling life? Does it have a role in giving young people access to a ‘learning by doing’ approach, important in developing these skills, which schools and classrooms have not generally been very good at doing? Can it give young people the access to structured interaction with adults that some groups are currently lacking? And finally, does it have a role to play in helping the young people who do not follow the academic university route to employment in preparing for the workplace? We return to these questions later on.

### **The argument about social fragmentation and weakening civic bonds**

The case for civic service is often linked to a narrative about social fragmentation, declining levels of social trust and weakening civic bonds. But to what extent is this something service might address?

This narrative has become increasingly popular over the last decade or so.<sup>51</sup> It posits that as societies have become more fragmented, people are mixing increasingly with people like themselves. There has also been an accompanying narrative about western society becoming more and more individualistic, and lacking in ‘community spirit’.

This claim has been made in particular about the USA. But we should be careful about over-extending the analysis to society in the UK. Superficially, we do not seem to be doing too badly in terms of community cohesion: in 2008–9, 84 per cent of people agreed that their local area was one where people from different backgrounds get on well with each other – and if anything, this figure has been increasing since earlier in the decade.<sup>52</sup>

However, other evidence – for example, levels of fear of immigration and increasing support in some areas for far-right

parties such as the British National Party – provide some fuel to the case that social fragmentation is increasing. While headline statistics about mixing with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds suggest that levels are quite high at the superficial level,<sup>53</sup> more in-depth research suggests people are forming meaningful relationships with those from different backgrounds to a lesser extent, and that the majority of white Britons cannot name a non-white person in their circle of 20 best friends.<sup>54</sup>

Mixing of different ethnic and religious backgrounds between young people tends to be higher than for older people (92 per cent of 16–24-year-olds said they mixed socially with people from different ethnic backgrounds compared with the national average of 81 per cent).<sup>55</sup> However, there is a stronger concern about whether young people have the opportunity to mix with others from different social backgrounds, and it has often been argued that civic service has a role to play here.

One of the most distinctive – and indisputable – trends about social fragmentation has been the degree of intergenerational fragmentation. British adults have some of the most negative perceptions of young people in the developed world. For example, analysis of the British Crime Survey suggests that more than 1.5 million British people had thought about moving away from their local area in 2004–5, and 1.7 million avoided going out after dark, because of ‘young people hanging around’.<sup>56</sup> Underpinning these attitudes is a very stereotypical coverage of young people in the media (with terms such as ‘yobs’, ‘feral youth’ and ‘hoodies’ common parlance among many journalists) and barely a day going by without negative coverage of young people in the press: the number of national and regional press articles about anti-social behaviour was over seven times higher in 2005 than in 2000.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the nature and level of media coverage, negative attitudes are not, however, grounded in the reality of what is going on. Levels of youth anti-social behaviour and youth offending have not increased in recent years.<sup>58</sup>

These negative attitudes are concerning given the increasing evidence base about the importance of adult attitudes

towards young people in a local area in terms of their outcomes. Collective efficacy – the willingness of adults to engage with young people locally and to monitor and control their behaviour<sup>59</sup> – has been linked to more positive outcomes for young people when compared by area, particularly in studies based in the USA (where most of the work on this has been done). This research has found that higher levels of collective efficacy, including more positive attitudes towards young people, are associated with lower levels of violence and disorder in the community,<sup>60</sup> lower teen pregnancy rates,<sup>61</sup> and improved health and lower levels of obesity among young people.<sup>62</sup> Collective efficacy itself has been found to be associated with the socio-economic characteristics of a place: concentrated disadvantage and, in particular, low levels of home ownership are associated with lower levels of collective efficacy.<sup>63</sup>

Psychologists have suggested that this is because when adults take pride in their local area and care about the children and young people who live near them, they are more likely to act to protect their wellbeing, to intervene in problems and to support local parents in creating a safe environment. This in turn impacts on young people's perceptions and behaviour, making it more likely that they will behave well and feel positively towards local adults, therefore respecting their norms and expectations.<sup>64</sup> This points to what is intuitively quite obvious: adult norms and behaviours affect children and young people's outcomes, not just through influences in the home but also at the community level.

However, levels of collective efficacy in the UK are low. For example, in a 2006 MORI survey, over one in three people said they would not intervene if they saw two or three teenagers being loud, rowdy or noisy outside their home, and almost four in ten that they would not intervene in the case of teenagers spray-painting graffiti on a building in their street (see below). Adults in the UK are also less likely to say they would intervene in youth violence than in other countries: 65 per cent of Germans, 52 per cent of Spaniards and 50 per cent of Italians say they would intervene compared with just 34 per cent of British adults.<sup>65</sup>

It is too ambitious and unrealistic to think that civic service could tackle a general social malaise, and indeed the evidence on

whether this exists is quite patchy. However, in light of the evidence presented above there is a much stronger case for looking at whether it could:

- help to challenge some of the poor intergenerational attitudes in the UK by promoting greater intergenerational mixing in local communities
- promote greater mixing between young people from different social backgrounds

### The idea of active citizenship

The arguments linking service to active citizenship discussed in chapter 2 relied on a normative case, arguing that service is itself by definition active citizenship. However, there has also been an empirical case made linking the two: the argument that taking part in service has a knock-on impact on other dimensions of active citizenship like formal political engagement and volunteering. But how does the UK fare on these broader active citizenship measures?

Levels of active citizenship as measured by formal political engagement are low in the UK, even when compared with the low turnout in local elections. In 2008–9 10 per cent of people had participated in civic activism – direct decision making about local services or issues, or participation in the provision of local services, for example as a magistrate, school governor or councillor.<sup>66</sup> Almost one in four had engaged in civic participation – for example, by contacting a local councillor, signing a petition, or attending a public meeting.

Levels of volunteering activity tend to be higher – although unsurprisingly the figures for regular volunteering are lower than for one-off volunteering:<sup>67</sup> 41 per cent of people volunteered formally<sup>68</sup> at least once in the 12 months prior to the Citizenship Survey, and 26 per cent of people had volunteered formally at least once a month. The figures for 16–25-year-olds are slightly lower than for the general population (38 per cent and 24 per cent). Informal volunteering is higher: 62 per cent of people said they had volunteered informally once during the last year, and 35

per cent had volunteered at least once a month. However, volunteering opportunities tend to be quite disjunct and it can be argued that volunteering is not, on the whole, seen as integral to British citizenship – it is more of an added extra. This is different from an expectation that citizens ‘give something back’ to society through a culture of service. MORI research has suggested that only one in ten young people aged 16 to 25 have volunteered full time.<sup>69</sup>

There is therefore a good case for looking at whether civic service could have an impact on levels of civic participation at the local level, as well as itself constituting an idea of active citizenship as argued in chapter 2.

### The role of service in meeting broader policy challenges

Finally, civic service is often talked about in terms of its potential to help address broader policy challenges created by economic and social change, which will continue to characterise a ‘post-crash’ economy.

For example, an ageing population will mean that there will be increasing demands and strains on health and care services in future decades. There are huge challenges around environmental policy and climate change. In addition, there is a question about whether engaging more adults in volunteering and service to work with children and teenagers can help to address some of the issues outlined above.

Of course, it is a rather grand claim to state that a generation of service participants or volunteers can solve these challenges. However, high-quality, evidence-based programmes that deploy volunteers in a strategic way can improve local outcomes, and take the pressure off core public services like education and health. They can also support moves towards greater personalisation across public services. For example:

- The UK charity Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) places volunteer reading mentors in schools across the country. Volunteers support children who are struggling with their

reading in twice-weekly one-to-one sessions. The latest independent evaluation of VRH (based on surveys of heads and assistant heads) suggests that 92 per cent of children involved in the scheme improved their attitude towards reading; 91 per cent improved their reading confidence; and 90 per cent improved their reading ability. Eight out of ten children had improvements in other outcomes, such as their ability to concentrate, written communication, confidence and overall achievement.

- In the USA, an AmeriCorps scheme used corps member to give practical help to at-risk families, providing monitoring and mentoring support in California. This scheme reduced child abuse by 83 per cent over four years.<sup>70</sup>
- A review of mentoring in the criminal justice system suggests that mentoring of offenders by volunteers can reduce re-offending rates by 4 to 11 per cent.<sup>71</sup>
- City Year, an AmeriCorps service programme in the USA (see box 3 on page 102), places 18–24-year-olds in schools in deprived inner city areas for ten months full-time. Their corps members act as tutors, mentors and role models for children in the schools, and also run after-school programmes. City Year uses attendance, behaviour and academic performance indicators to identify children particularly at risk of dropping out, and in need of extra support. Teachers in City Year schools gave the statement ‘City Year helped to improve academic performance of my students’ a score of 4.07 out of 5, and the statement ‘City Year helped foster a positive learning environment’ a score of 4.17 out of 5. Individual school-level evaluations of behaviour, attendance and academic attainment show that students in City Year schools enjoyed better outcomes.
- A systematic review of the evidence on volunteer tutoring programmes in the USA found that these have a positive impact on reading outcomes for elementary students.<sup>72</sup>

Although some high-quality evaluations exist – and have been drawn upon here – they are the exception rather than the norm in the voluntary and community sector.<sup>73</sup> This is something that needs to be addressed if we are to ensure the impact of

service schemes is properly measured, and successes built upon. We discuss this further below.

So in this area, the challenge is obviously in making sure that service schemes are of high quality and do, in fact, contribute benefits to the community and society – how to do this is something we discuss later in the paper.



### 3 Service: the UK policy context

The idea of civic service is not new to the UK: it has resurfaced periodically since the abolition of national military service in 1960. However, it has attracted renewed attention in the last couple of years, particularly with reference to the policy challenges outlined above.

One of the highest profile interventions in the debate in 2009 was an article published by Frank Field MP and James Crabtree. This argued for the introduction of a compulsory one-year civic service scheme for all young people to take part in between the ages of 18 and 25, the idea being that this could have a positive impact on personal development, promote mixing between young people from different social backgrounds, and provide real benefits to society.<sup>74</sup> This controversial idea has not garnered much support. However, proposals for some kind of civic service are to be found from all parts of the political spectrum in Britain.

Gordon Brown proposed early in 2009 an ambition that all young people should contribute 50 hours of community service by the age of 19.<sup>75</sup> However, the ambition translates into a disparate offer. The government is piloting community service as part of the route to employment for young people aged 16–19, with £128 million of funding to be spent on full-time civic service as part of Entry to Employment courses (20,000 placements over two years starting in September 2009). £18 million is being spent over the next two years on the piloting of volunteering and service opportunities for 14–16-year-olds in schools and in the community. But this is a long way from a universal offer for young people.

The Conservative party's take on civic service has been broader, with a more explicit focus on personal development and mixing young people from different social backgrounds. Their

vision of service includes post-16 ‘outward bound’ residential courses to promote personal development and social mixing, which culminate in social action projects in the community. The original proposal put forward by David Cameron in 2007 was for a six-week scheme combining residential ‘character-building’ courses and social action projects. However, they are now watching carefully the results of a similar scheme, The Challenge, being piloted by the Shaftesbury Partnership. This involves a three-week residential element over the summer for 16-year-olds, consisting of one week’s residential outdoor team-building activities away from home, a second residential week in the young person’s own community developing a particular skill, and a third non-residential week in the community developing a social action project. The idea is that this social action project will then be put into action during at least 50 hours of community service over the following four or five months. This pilot is being independently evaluated for its impact on young people’s development and civic participation.

The Liberal Democrats have also weighed into the debate, expressing interest in the idea of a ‘universal gap-year-style experience’ – a compulsory service period of six weeks or more for all young people, although they are yet to reveal the details of this policy.

So the idea of some kind of civic service has won wide support from across the political spectrum. But, as argued in the introduction, these proposals do not translate into a national service strategy, and there is a disjunct between these proposals and the normative case for service grounded in active citizenship and a citizen’s duty.

Additionally, all these proposals skirt around the biggest issue in expanding service opportunities to a greater number of young people: the supply of those opportunities. This has been an issue that has been repeatedly highlighted in the debate about service and full-time volunteering opportunities for young people.

For example, the independent Russell Commission, set up to look at youth action and engagement, argued in its final report in 2005 that there is a distinct lack of full-time service-

style opportunities in the UK. There are a small number of organisations that do offer these, such as Community Service Volunteers, the Prince's Trust, Careforce and Raleigh – but these are certainly not widespread, and their capacity to absorb big increases in demand for placements is limited.<sup>76</sup> The body set up to implement the recommendations of the Russell Commission, V, has promoted full-time structured volunteering opportunities, but these have been limited. For example, in 2009 it launched the Talent Year scheme, a £10.5 million national full-time volunteering programme, which gives 1,000 volunteers aged 16–25 the opportunity to undertake 44-week full-time placements in children and young people's services in 33 local authorities (see box 4 on page 103). It has been very oversubscribed, indicating that the demand for these types of schemes is much greater than the supply.

The Russell Commission also argued that there is untapped potential for young people to contribute to the public sector through service or volunteering – for example in hospitals, schools, parks and sports, leisure and arts centres, to deliver tangible benefits to the community as well as contribute to a young person's development and experience. However, there has been little policy development in this area in recent years. Given that there are limitations in the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver service opportunities, engaging public services directly will be key for a British service strategy.

So although there has been increased political interest in the idea of civic service in the UK, and interesting proposals for individual schemes have emerged, we are a long way off a service strategy. To date, service opportunities have been a subset of a wider policy on volunteering rather than the object of a coherent and dedicated national strategy. This has been a lost opportunity.



## 4 Service: the international context

A service strategy for the UK cannot simply be transplanted from countries that already have more developed approaches to service – there are important cultural differences between the UK and countries such as the USA, Canada and the Netherlands. However, there are important lessons to be learned from looking at international comparators, which fall into roughly four categories.

### **Compulsory community service as an alternative to military service**

First, there are those countries that still have compulsory military service, and operate a form of community service as an alternative to this. For example, Germany and Finland still operate mandatory military service, but there are options for conscientious objectors to undertake a form of civilian service instead. In Germany, civilian service has become the option of choice for most men aged 18–23 – there are 100,000 cadets each year, who receive a stipend and most commonly provide services caring for the elderly and disabled.<sup>77</sup>

### **Schemes that promote full-time voluntary service opportunities post compulsory education**

Second, there are examples of schemes that promote full-time but voluntary service opportunities for young people post compulsory education. Perhaps the best known of these is AmeriCorps in the USA.

AmeriCorps functions as an umbrella programme for a number of different initiatives. It is run by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency set up by Bill

Clinton in 1993, which has a budget of around \$500 million a year.<sup>78</sup> It offers full-time service placements to around 75,000 people each year and engages other volunteers in other ways. AmeriCorps provides funding to local and national organisations and agencies, which use national service programmes to address community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. The national funding is used to set up the programmes, and to recruit, place and supervise AmeriCorps members. People taking part receive a living allowance and a credit toward university tuition. A national service strategy formed a plank of Barack Obama's presidential campaign, and once in office he proposed The Serve America Act to increase the number of full-time placements from 75,000 to 250,000 by 2017, a piece of legislation later passed by Congress.

Canada operates Katimavik, a similar service programme for 17–21-year-olds funded by the national Canadian government. It is a full-time service that runs for six to nine months. Participants work for non-profit community development organisations, and undertake three different placements in different communities during their service period. They receive accommodation and a basic living allowance. Activities include providing care and assistance to older people, building community facilities and working with children. Participants also get training in leadership, a second language (English or French), cultural diversity, healthy lifestyles and the environment. Demand far outstrips supply: each year, around 1,000 young people are accepted from a pool of 10,000 applicants.

In Australia, the government has sponsored a Green Corps programme for 17–20-year-olds, combining six months of full-time conservation work with skills training. This involves 2,000 participants each year.<sup>79</sup>

Several countries on the continent also offer optional civic service schemes. For example, France operates the *Volontariat Civil*, which has been in operation since 2000. This enables young people aged between 18 and 28 to volunteer full-time in civil defence and emergency services, international cooperation and human aid, or social cohesion and solidarity.<sup>80</sup>

## Compulsory service as part of school graduation requirements

A third category of service is compulsory service as part of school graduation requirements. For example, in the Canadian province of Ontario, students have to complete 40 hours of community service during grades 9 to 12 in order to graduate. In the Netherlands, young people are required to undertake ‘civic internships’ involving community service while at school.

## Service learning

A fourth category of service is service learning. This differs from other service programmes linked to education (such as community service in schools). It is defined as ‘a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities’.<sup>81</sup> In other words, service learning includes specific learning objectives, involves reflection back in a classroom setting and is integrated into the curriculum – and is specifically linked to academic goals.

The theory is that service learning can help to promote the development of social and emotional and metacognitive skills because it is experiential, requires students to solve complex problems in real-world settings, and promotes skills like teamwork and community involvement. The detailed evidence on the impact of service learning is examined in the next section, but this theory chimes with the evidence that experiential learning – of which service learning is a subset – is an important form of learning for young people, which improves both academic and non-academic outcomes.<sup>82</sup>

What does service learning look like in practice? Fredericks describes an example: a community service experience at school might involve a group of students cleaning up a river bank.<sup>83</sup> A service-learning experience, on the other hand, might build on this by young people collaborating with local scientists, measuring pollution levels, evaluating the clean-up effort on those pollution levels, and presenting findings to the local city council.

Service learning is most common in schools and universities in the USA. For example, a nationally representative US survey suggests that 26 per cent of young people aged 18–28 in the USA in 2006 had had a service-learning experience before the age of 18 at school, and 12 per cent in community-based organisations.<sup>84</sup> The most common types of service-learning experience at school were in education (18 per cent), healthcare (10 per cent), entertainment (10 per cent) and environmental projects (9 per cent). The Serve America Act, recently passed by Congress, includes provisions for funding for elementary and secondary schools to expand service learning even further. Some US universities have service-learning requirements – for example, California State University Monterey Bay requires all its undergraduates to complete two service-learning courses as part of their degree.





## 5 The potential of civic service: the evidence

This chapter looks at the evidence of the potential of civic service to tackle some of the policy challenges outlined above in chapter 3. There is an emerging international evidence base about the benefits of both service and service learning, although the evidence about service learning is stronger because these evaluations have tended to look at its impact on concrete development outcomes, rather than just relying on self-report data. Below, we set out the evidence of the impact of both service and service learning on young people's skills and development, on their civic participation and the relationship between the citizen and the state.<sup>85</sup> We then consider the broader benefits service could bring for the community and society.

### Personal development

#### Service learning

The evidence suggests that service learning has a positive impact on both a young person's academic development, and the broader set of social, emotional and behavioural skills that are so important to success.<sup>86</sup>

The following studies have suggested there is an association between service learning and academic outcomes:

- A study of service learning in Michigan examined the impact of service learning on students' levels of engagement with school and performance on state assessment tests. This was a large-scale survey involving students with experience and no experience of service learning. The study found there were positive engagement impacts for younger students (grades 2 to 5): service-learning students were more engaged in their education (for example, paying attention to schoolwork, concentrating hard on

learning, and trying as hard as they could in class). Service learning was associated with higher test scores in the fifth grade (although there were no statistically significant increases found at other levels).<sup>87</sup>

- Similarly, a study of a service-learning programme in Philadelphia (Need In Deed) found that students who participated achieved statistically higher arts and science test scores in the sixth grade than those in a control group of students.<sup>88</sup>

These findings echo similar findings in past studies, including a large-scale study of service learning in California, which found that students in more than half of schools with high-quality service-learning programmes showed moderate to strong gains on achievement tests in languages, the arts and/or reading.<sup>89</sup> Also in Indiana, a large-scale study found students who engaged in service learning scored more highly on state assessments in English and maths.<sup>90</sup>

Other studies have found that teachers positively rate the impact of service learning on student grades, although this relies on self-assessment and so is not as strong an evaluation method as the above two studies.<sup>91</sup>

This is reflected in the finding that young people in the USA who take part in service learning at school are more likely to have completed college (63 per cent compared with 52 per cent of those who did community service without service learning and 48 per cent of those who did neither) and were more likely to have higher educational goals.<sup>92</sup>

There is also some evidence that service-learning schemes improve students' learning experience – for example, in evaluations of the California State University Monterey Bay service-learning programme, the vast majority of participants said service learning enhanced their learning experience, and that they felt more comfortable participating in the community as a result of it.

In terms of young people's broader development, it is thought that service learning – by offering a different kind of learning experience than traditional classroom-based

learning – can help students to build on and further develop social and emotional competencies.<sup>93</sup> Social and emotional learning and service learning have been argued to be mutually supportive – research has shown that service learning is most effective when it involves reflection on that learning – which develops social and emotional skills like team-working, problem-solving and communication. Equally, evidence about effective social and emotional learning programmes suggest that they are most effective when they are put into practice in real-world settings and practical situations – service can be a good way of doing this.

For example, in 2001 Leming compared service learning that has explicit links to social and emotional development with service learning that does not, and found that students who had this component in their programme scored more highly on measures of agency, social relatedness and political–moral awareness than those who did not (although they did not score more highly on self-esteem).<sup>94</sup>

There have also been a number of studies that look at the impact of service learning on negative risky behaviours. In 2002 Laird and Black looked at the impact of participating in service learning on risky behaviours such as dropping out of school, poor behaviour, and alcohol and substance consumption.<sup>95</sup> They found that twelfth grade students participating in service learning had a lower risk of dropping out compared with their peers, including those who were initially identified as being at higher risk. Ninth grade students were less likely to drop out, less likely to behave poorly and less likely to smoke cigarettes. This reflects findings in review of the evidence on teen pregnancy reduction programmes, which suggests that two service-learning programmes in particular (the Teen Outreach Program and Reach for Health) have had an impact on reducing teen pregnancy rates for participants while in the programme.<sup>96</sup>

The nationally representative survey of service learning also found that young people who had taken part in service learning prior to age 18 were more likely to express satisfaction with all areas of their life including family life, friendships, school life and work life.<sup>97</sup>

Overall, the message from young people on service learning in the USA is very positive: over 90 per cent of service-learning participants in this survey said they thought their service projects were good, very good or excellent – and of these, 75 per cent said it was because they felt that they made a difference in their community, 51 per cent because they got to meet people whose lives were different from their own, 51 per cent because it helped them enjoy their learning, and 36 per cent because they developed better relationships with adults.

### Service schemes

There are similarly positive messages from evaluations of service schemes in the USA and Canada, although the evaluation is less rigorous and relies on young people's self-report data rather than harder outcomes data.

For example, 90 per cent of AmeriCorps alumni say they gained useful skills from their service, and 91 per cent that they have since used the skills they developed.<sup>98</sup>

City Year, a scheme that places young people in schools in deprived areas as part of the AmeriCorps scheme, also monitored the impact of the programme on young people's evaluation of their soft skills<sup>99</sup> (see also box 3, page 102). In an alumni survey, participants reported several positive outcomes of the scheme, saying that City Year helped them: work as part of a team (95 per cent), work with people from diverse backgrounds (92 per cent), lead others to complete a task (90 per cent), speak in front of a group (81 per cent) and critically analyse ideas and information (72 per cent). Two-thirds said City Year helped prepare them for their jobs.

There are other AmeriCorps programmes that demonstrate positive evaluation evidence based on self-report data, such as the Washington State Corps.<sup>100</sup>

The Katimavik programme in Canada has also had positive impacts on participants:<sup>101</sup> 53 per cent of applicants said they had a career goal before taking part, compared with 82 per cent on completion; 77 per cent rated their leadership skills as good or above compared with 72 per cent in a control group of people

who applied to the programme but did not take part; and 92 per cent rated their work ethic as good or above compared with 87 per cent of the control group.<sup>102</sup>

Studies have also linked volunteering to positive health benefits. A systematic review of studies that have looked at the health benefits of volunteering found that there is some evidence to suggest that volunteering is associated with better physical and mental health.<sup>103</sup>

### The impact on civic participation and active citizenship

There is some evidence that taking part in service learning can boost students' civic engagement. For example, an evaluation of service learning in Colorado found that students who participated in service learning enjoyed higher rates of connection to the community, connection to school and civic responsibility compared with those who did not, and that these differences were statistically significant. However, the effects are more marked for programmes that have civic engagement as an objective – those that do not appear to have little impact.

This was echoed in the national representative survey of students on service learning in the USA.<sup>104</sup> This found that service-learning participants had been more likely to discuss politics or community issues compared with those who had no experience of service or service learning (42 per cent compared with 21 per cent) in the last 12 months, had been more likely to vote in the last 12 months (41 per cent compared with 19 per cent) and were more likely to express political issues online (22 per cent compared with 8 per cent). They were also more likely to say that working or socialising with others from different backgrounds was personally more important to them (39 per cent compared with 26 per cent). They were more likely to say that they would undertake full-time volunteering or service over the next five years (39 per cent compared with 19 per cent).

Participation in service schemes is also associated with higher levels of civic engagement and participation. An evalua-

tion of City Year found that City Year alumni had higher levels of political efficacy, and were more civically engaged than their counterparts.<sup>105</sup> 87 per cent of City Year alumni said that City Year helped them to exercise public responsibility and community service, 75 per cent that it helped them in working to solve problems in their community, and 77 per cent that it helped them in becoming involved in some types of service/volunteer activity.

AmeriCorps alumni also showed stronger connections to their communities, higher levels of political efficacy and higher levels of volunteering compared to a control group in the years following their participation in the scheme.<sup>106</sup>

### The benefits to society and the community

In general, the community organisations involved in schemes like AmeriCorps and Katimavik tend overwhelmingly to report that service participants have a positive impact on the work they do.<sup>107</sup>

However, there is evidence that these kinds of scheme can have a real '2 for 1' benefit – bringing positive benefits for the participant and also the community, which can help to offset some of the costs involved in rolling out a service scheme. For example, cost–benefit analysis of the Washington State Corps programme, which comes under AmeriCorps, suggests that every \$1 invested in the programme returned on average \$1.67 of benefit.<sup>108</sup> The costs in this cost–benefit analysis included the expenditure used to support the programme, and the local use of facilities, equipment and personnel. The benefits included estimates of the savings to society as a result of successful programmes (for example, reductions of crime), or the costs of providing similar services.

Similar cost–benefit analysis has been attempted for the Canadian Katimavik programme. This programme cost CA\$17,000 per participant in 2006, and generated CA\$10,000 of value in terms of volunteer time (40 per cent of these costs are travel-related because Canada is such a large country). However, taking into account its overall economic impact (for example,

improved services, improved economic prospects for participants), it has been estimated that it generates a return of CA\$2.20 for every dollar spent.<sup>109</sup>

These calculations show that – at least in principle – it may be possible for the state to recoup upfront investment in a service programme through the savings that accrue as a result of improved outcomes across a range of domains. However, this depends on state spending on service opportunities being predicated on the provision of high-quality, evidence-based schemes that deploy volunteers to improve outcomes effectively. We discuss the mechanisms through which this could be ensured below.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the international evidence base certainly suggests that if done well, civic service has the potential to tackle some of the policy challenges around young people's development, civic participation and improving outcomes in general. However, quality is key. For example, the evidence about service-learning programmes is that low-quality implemented programmes have virtually no impact on students, and are sometimes associated with marginally lower outcomes<sup>110</sup> – this may be because low-quality implemented programmes are to be found in schools that are generally poorer. The National Service Learning Cooperative in the USA has established a set of guidelines for what makes for effective service learning based on the experience of practitioners.<sup>111</sup> Effective service learning:

- uses regular assessments and evaluation
- ensures culturally appropriate and engaging instruction
- develops projects that have clear educational goals and meet genuine community needs
- involves students in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating service projects
- uses community partnerships that provide a real-world context for service, and that foster communication and interaction

- provides opportunities for students to reflect upon their services experiences
- provides opportunities to celebrate service work<sup>112</sup>

We consider the mechanisms through which quality can be promoted in chapter 8.





## 6 What do young people think?

When we embarked on this research, there was little in the way of in-depth qualitative data on young people's attitudes towards the idea on service. The most significant piece of work was a piece of national polling commissioned by V and undertaken by Ipsos MORI.<sup>113</sup> This was an online survey of almost 2,000 young people aged 16–25 in England. In this survey, 40 per cent of respondents said they supported the idea of a compulsory full-time community work in exchange for a payment to cover 'modest living costs, for example this might be in line with the minimum wage or up to £100 a week of expenses', and 31 per cent that they were against. However, 56 per cent of respondents said 'reasonable modest payment' would have to be the national minimum wage, and 30 per cent that expenses of up to £100 a week would suffice. 30 per cent of young people said they would never consider full-time volunteering, 31 per cent that they might consider it. There was greater support for a citizenship programme in schools of 50 hours of community service – which 54 per cent of respondents said they would support, although levels of support were higher among those who had already left school!

This survey research was accompanied by four focus groups, whose findings were at odds with the survey data – they found that when young people were probed more on the idea of compulsion, they were strongly opposed to it.

This research is a very helpful starting point. But we felt there was a pressing need to probe young people's opinions more deeply, not just on the concept of service, but on the different proposals on the table. As part of this project, we therefore held a deliberative democracy event with 54 young people aged 18–24 living in London, from a diverse range of social backgrounds, ethnicities and gender. We have produced a video of the event, which is available to view online at [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk).

The full details of the methodology and findings are included in appendix 2 to this report. However, the main findings are summarised below.

### Something for something

Most young people at the event took a ‘something for something’ approach to volunteering – they were clear that volunteering should be about giving something back, but felt they should also get some benefit out of it themselves, for example improving their own skills and experience for their CV, and enjoyment of the experience itself. This combination of self-interest and altruism chimes with previous findings from the V and Ipsos MORI research<sup>114</sup> and was reflected in the young people’s views about the objective of a civic service scheme were one to be introduced. The idea of duty or service was alien to most young people. Many thought you could not ask people to put time into something unless there were defined benefits for themselves. They saw civic service as potentially fulfilling a dual objective – both personal achievement and fulfilment, but also helping people less advantaged than themselves.

### Verdicts on existing proposals

The young people were presented with three schemes: scheme A, which was a year-long full-time service scheme; scheme B based on The Challenge; and scheme C based on 50 hours of compulsory community service while at school (see appendix 2 for full details).

A significant minority of participants (one in five) said they would consider doing scheme A. But many of the other participants said they thought a year was too long and £100 a week was not enough to get by on unless you could participate in the scheme while you lived at home. Scheme A was thought to be the best scheme in terms of improving employability and giving something back to the community; participants appreciated its value, but only a minority would actually do it.

Scheme B was the most popular in terms of what participants would like to do themselves. Overall, 58 per cent of participants said they would do scheme B. The feedback was that it was the scheme that sounded the most fun. The idea of a graduation ceremony at the end was popular in several groups.

Scheme C was less popular than scheme A, but more so than scheme B – 43 per cent of participants said they would do it. But there was positive feedback about the age range (16 and under) to whom it applied – many said they felt this was the right time to be thinking about service. Interestingly, later discussion suggested that the idea of making service at school compulsory was much more popular in abstract (see below).

### Allowances and wages

There was strong opposition to the idea of receiving a wage for doing service – most participants thought this undermined the concept of volunteering. However, many thought there would have to be a basic living allowance to enable young people from a range of social backgrounds to take part. This chimes with previous research with young people, which has found that financial concerns are a major barrier to full-time volunteering.<sup>115</sup>

### Compulsion

Participants were not in general keen on the concept of compulsion – they saw it as undermining the general ethic of volunteering. Age was crucial in this, though – only one in ten participants thought any kind of scheme should be compulsory for those aged over 18. In comparison, 74 per cent of participants thought young people should be required to do a certain amount of volunteering at school at the start of the convention, and 84 per cent thought this at the end.

### Branding

There was a strong dislike of the name ‘national civic service’ – several participants thought it was too military and thought the

word ‘civic’ sounded ‘boring’. Fewer than one in ten participants said they liked the name – and over eight in ten said they did not. Participants were asked to rate a series of words often used in relation to the idea of service: ‘duty’, ‘civic’ and ‘service’ were the least popular, and ‘volunteering’ the most popular. Importantly, some young people said that ‘community service’ sounded like a punishment, and associated it with alternatives to prison for low-level crime. Some alternative names that were suggested for a service scheme include iCare, Help the Nation, Kick Start and Expand.

This was obviously not an exhaustive consultation, and there remains a lot more work to be done with young people in getting them involved in helping to design a service scheme: this should be seen as the start of a proper consultation, rather than the end. However, the convention has provided some useful insights. Most important is that in the view of young people, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ scheme that would suit all of them. There are also real issues about branding – the idea of service is alien to young people, and they identify much more strongly with the concept of volunteering, which suggests that if we are serious about growing a service culture, this needs to be started when children are younger through service learning in schools.





## 7 A service strategy for the UK

The evidence and arguments presented thus far suggest that any British civic service strategy would need to be based on the following principles and approaches:

*Quality:* Service can potentially deliver a wide range of benefits: impacting on young people's development of social and behavioural skills; delivering benefits for the community; and promoting greater levels of civic participation, activism and political efficacy. However, it is important that a service scheme such as service learning at school and more intensive full-time opportunities for young adults are of high quality if they are to deliver these benefits to individuals and the community.

*A lifecycle approach:* Growing a culture of service will not happen through a one-off scheme. Service has been successful in countries like the USA because there is a life-cycle approach to it, beginning with service learning in school right through to AmeriCorps programmes that cater for older and retired volunteers. The same approach needs to be taken in Britain, otherwise the benefits will not be felt.

*Cultural context:* Any service scheme, however, needs to be sensitive to the British cultural context: we cannot simply transplant service models from other countries with different cultures.

*Ensuring equitable access:* Young people should get some kind of maintenance support for taking part in full-time service opportunities, otherwise the barriers to taking part will be too great, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

*Universality:* A case for a culture of service and 'giving something back' must not just be applied to young people who have been failed by the system – those young people who are disengaged from their education and other development opportunities. These are the young people who might benefit the most from service experience. However, the narrative about 'giving

something back' must also apply to young people who have benefitted the most, particularly university graduates who currently benefit from a high level of state subsidy towards their higher education (approximately £5,000 per year per student paid directly to the university, plus access to heavily subsidised loans and means-tested maintenance grants).

*Building on existing initiatives:* A service strategy should build on service and volunteering initiatives already in existence; it should not look to replace them or crowd them out.

*A partnership approach:* A successful service strategy will rely on a range of actors to take part – not just central government, but schools, the voluntary and community sector, public services, local government and business.

*Promoting local diversity:* Although there is a need for government to set up the structures within which a successful service culture can flourish, it should be up to local communities to decide on the priorities of a local service strategy.

*Privilege evidence-based practice:* Service schemes should seek to promote and build on evidence-based practice. Innovation is important as a means to building up and improving the evidence base on what works in improving outcomes, but innovation should not be pursued for innovation's sake.

In addition, a service strategy needs to be consistent with the current education framework, including increases in the participation age to 18 by 2015.

We propose the following lifecycle approach to service in the UK.

## Service learning at school

A lifecycle approach to service learning should begin with school. There should be compulsory service learning as part of the national curriculum. The foundation should be set during primary school in Key Stage 2, and all young people should have the entitlement to take part in an extended social action project during Key Stages 3 and 4 (between the ages of 11 and 16). As we discuss later in more detail, this would not simply be left to schools to deliver; as poor experience of the community involvement strand

of the citizenship curriculum has flagged up, schools would need to deliver this in conjunction with community organisations and with support from service ‘brokers’ in the local community.

### Options to take part in full-time service opportunities as part of 16–18 compulsory education, leading to a vocational qualification

The government has committed to increasing the compulsory participation age from age 16 to age 17 in 2013, and to age 18 in 2015, as part of its efforts to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education and training in England. As a result, from 2015, young people aged 16 to 18 will either have to be in full-time education and training, or in work-based learning apprenticeship schemes, or in part-time education or training if they are working or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.

We propose that taking part in a year-long full-time service scheme should be an option open to young people in 16–18 compulsory participation. This year should include service learning and training elements delivered in conjunction with further education colleges, and should result in an NVQ level qualification. Young people aged 16–18 taking part full-time in a service scheme would be entitled to receive the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA). The EMA is a means-tested weekly payment paid to 16–19-year-olds in full-time education and training. Currently, young people living in households with annual income of less than £20,817 are entitled to receive £30 a week, and this is tapered to a payment of £10 a week for young people living in households with annual income of less than £30,810.

Funding for these service opportunities should go direct to providers (likely to be a combination of VCS, private or public sector service in conjunction with a further education college) in the same way other 16–18 further education courses and apprenticeships are funded.

For young people for whom service opportunities are not available locally, we suggest that there should be a national fund to provide grants for 16–18-year-olds who need to move away

from home in order to be able to take up service opportunities as part of their compulsory education.

### Post-18 gap-year-style service opportunities

For young people who have finished their compulsory education, there should be a range of intensive full-time service opportunities that function as routes both to university and to employment (and could also be taken up post university).

Given the barriers to participation in this kind of scheme, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, we propose that young people taking part in these gap-year-style schemes should be entitled to one year of support in the form of means-tested loans and grants between the ages of 18 and 25 in the same way that higher education students are entitled to means-tested maintenance loans and grants (see box 1). The grant and loan arrangement would only be available to young people aged 18–25 on an approved full-time service scheme.

Box 1 **The system of maintenance support for higher education students in England**

*In 2009–10 all undergraduates living away from home are entitled to a minimum maintenance loan of £3,564 (£4,988 for those living away from home in London), rising to a maximum of £4,950 (£6,938 for those living away from home in London) for undergraduates from low-income families.<sup>116</sup> Repayment of these loans is income contingent: 9 per cent of income for those earning above £15,000. The loan is written off after 25 years.*

*Undergraduates from low-income backgrounds are also entitled to maintenance grants from the government. The maximum grant of £2,906 is available to undergraduates from families with a household income of £25,000 or lower. The amount of this grant is then tapered: students from families with household income of more than £50,020 are not entitled to a grant.<sup>117</sup>*

These service schemes could be provided through a range of organisations: the voluntary and community sector, the private sector and public services. Providers would be contracted to provide service opportunities, with funding attached. However, funding would be contingent on these organisations being able to demonstrate a ‘2 for 1’ benefit – benefit to participants in terms of their skills and development, and public benefit to ensure the quality of service experiences justifies public investment. There could also be a matching element to the provider funding to encourage them to lever in financial support from the private sector. The logistics of how this system would work are discussed in more detail below.

Like 16–18 service provision, these schemes would result in a qualification. The aim should be to work with employers and universities to get this qualification recognised and respected for the skills young people develop through a service year – although this will of course depend on the quality of the schemes.

### **Structured service opportunities as a route to the labour market for young people aged 18–24 who are disengaged**

In addition to the above, there should be an option for structured service opportunities to be made available to young people who are job seeking, but are a long way from the labour market. This would only happen if a young person’s Jobcentre Plus personal adviser agrees that a structured service opportunity will function as long-term training and skills development to move that young person closer to the labour market. Young people on this scheme would receive Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) while undertaking this training. There have been suggestions from the Conservative party that they may consider adopting similar proposals to liberalise JSA, so that young people far from the labour market can undertake training opportunities as part of preparation for work.<sup>118</sup> This would require the development of specific and shorter programmes by service opportunity providers for JSA claimants that met the criteria of training as specific preparation for work.

## Service for university undergraduates

A university education brings a wide range of benefits to the young people who benefit from it. On average, university graduates earn around £600,000 more over their lifetime than non-graduates.<sup>119</sup> The private financial gain from completing a degree has been estimated to be 15–25 per cent over a graduate's lifetime – and has not decreased as the number of students has steadily risen.<sup>120</sup> This outweighs the financial return to the state (through higher taxes and National Insurance payments) made by graduates, estimated to be 6–15 per cent over a graduate's lifetime.

There are also wider benefits to both the individual and society that are difficult to monetarise, such as better mental and physical health.

Even taking into account recent changes to the student financing framework, there is still a huge per-student subsidy of higher education by the state: a grant of around £5,000 per student paid directly to universities by the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE), and student support through maintenance grants and loans that cost on average £3,000 per student per year (see calculations in chapter 9).

Of course there are good reasons for there being a level of subsidy to higher education, including the contribution that having a good proportion of young people with degrees adds to economic growth. However, given the private benefits undergraduate students gain over a lifetime by doing a degree, there is a strong case that there should be an expectation that they give something back while they are at university.

We therefore propose that we move to a system in which all undergraduates are expected to undertake 100 hours of community service over a three-year undergraduate degree. This requirement is not so onerous that it would prevent students who need to support themselves through their degree from working. However, it would ensure students make a real contribution to the local communities in which they live during their degree.

Again, we discuss the logistics in more detail below. There would need to be a small level of funding provided directly to universities in order to work with local service brokers and community organisations and public services in order to make

this happen. The aim should be to use undergraduate students undertaking community service as part of this requirement in the broader service schemes set out here.

### Postgraduate ‘service’ opportunities through schemes like TeachFirst

TeachFirst is an example of an innovative programme that encourages top graduates to teach in inner-city schools in deprived areas. It is a two-year scheme. In the summer after graduation, trainees undergo intensive training. In their first year of teaching, they work as trainee teachers towards getting qualified teacher status (QTS) – and also receive leadership training, skills workshops and coaching. In the summer after their first year, they have the opportunity to take part in internships in business, government, NGOs and the media, before returning to their school to teach for a second year. After this, around half of TeachFirst graduates remain in teaching, and a high proportion of these move quickly into school leadership positions. Part of the idea is that TeachFirst teachers act as role models for the children they teach – one of the objectives of the scheme is to get high-quality graduates into schools that might not normally attract them.

TeachFirst is not a service scheme in the strictest sense: just like new teaching graduates, its graduates are paid public service professionals. However, it is certainly characterised by a service narrative and culture. As part of a lifecycle service strategy, there is a good case to examine the potential to expand the ethos of TeachFirst into other areas of public services – for example, social work, youth work, personal advisers and local government.

### Ongoing service opportunities at work and beyond

The above service opportunities should also tie in to ongoing part-time service opportunities at work. Many private sector organisations already provide a certain amount of volunteering leave each year, and encourage their employees to volunteer

either privately or through corporate schemes. The government could, however, provide more of a lead by giving public sector employees the entitlement to a week's service leave each year in which they would be expected to contribute through service schemes.

Part-time service and voluntary programmes could be used to support service programmes for earlier cohorts.

There will obviously be some overlap between a service strategy and previous volunteering strategies, the most high profile of which has been V, the body set up to implement the recommendations about youth volunteering set up by the Russell Commission. However, we have argued above that a service strategy is needed that is distinct from a broader volunteering strategy, and is explicitly about the expansion of service opportunities that add up to a coherent lifecycle vision. Indeed, some of the stakeholders whom we spoke to in the course of the expert interviews for this project suggested that a strong focus on volunteering, while a good thing, is not equivalent to a strategy for service.





## 8 Making a service strategy a reality

The above lifecycle vision of service will require a proper implementation strategy. Here we discuss different aspects of how to make the service reality a strategy:

- a national body for civic service; the role of a national body in developing an overall service strategy, commissioning service opportunities and working with schools, universities, the VCS, public services and the corporate sector to coordinate service opportunities in local communities
- the role of schools in delivering service learning in conjunction with community organisations
- the role of the VCS, private sector and public services as providers of service opportunities
- the role of business
- anomalies in the current policy framework around the definition of NEETs and JSA claimants
- costings
- funding

### A national body for civic service

A national civic service strategy will require a new government remit for the coordination and support of structured service opportunities from primary school onwards. We suggest this should be embedded in a national body for civic service, based on the Corporation for National Service (CNS) in the USA, which brought a range of disparate programmes together into one coordinating body that provides a gateway to different service opportunities for Americans of all ages. The CNS acts as an umbrella body, providing funding and strategic direction for a number of different programmes:

- SeniorCorps: a network of programmes for older and more experienced citizens to contribute to public service
- AmeriCorps
- Learn and Serve America, a section of the CNS that provides grants to schools, universities and community organisations specifically for service learning

The CNS thus ties together public agencies and third sector organisations in the delivery of a service strategy, and offers linked programmes for schools, young adults and older people.

A UK body for civic service should be charged with working with the range of actors needed to deliver a national service strategy: schools, colleges, universities, the VCS, the public sector and the corporate sector. It would be responsible for directly funding service learning and service opportunities. In each local area, there would be service brokers that would work with local government, local strategic partnerships and the range of partners above in delivering a service strategy. This is a similar model to the one that V operates in relation to youth volunteering, and V's remit could be expanded to include these functions.

The national body for civic service would also have a specific role in commissioning gap-year-style service opportunities to ensure the '2 for 1' benefit element discussed above in conjunction with local communities. Commissioning would be outcomes-based in terms of the impact on participants and the wider community benefits. The national body would be responsible for working with centres of excellence in evidence-based practice (for example, the Dartington Social Research Centre) for developing common evaluation metrics and methodologies to ensure rigorous evaluation. The aim should be that upfront investment in service opportunities by the state delivers tangible benefits to both the young people taking part and the communities in which they serve over time.

This will be challenging – good evaluation practice is not common either in the VCS, the public sector or the private sector working with children and young people.<sup>121</sup> It might mean that

expansion of service opportunities is slower than might otherwise be the case. But the 2 for 1 element is crucial: upfront investment is justified in terms of the benefit for young people and the community. Government should therefore use this as a lever to improve evaluation practices in organisations working with children and young people. There should also be an innovation fund to provide funding for innovative approaches – but on the condition that these seek to build on and improve the evidence base of what works.

The national body for civic service would also have overall responsibility for branding a service strategy, and engaging young people in its design and branding.

### Schools and service learning

The service strategy we have outlined above obviously envisages a key role for schools as deliverers of service learning.

There is first a normative question of whether this is an area that schools should be involved in. We believe that the case for this is strong. Despite the flaws of the citizenship curriculum introduced in 2002, the principles behind it are right: that in their role preparing children and young people for adult life, it is right that schools play some role in introducing them to civic participation and active citizenship. The evidence about the positive benefits high-quality service learning can bring in terms of children and young people's social and behavioural development adds further to this case.

If we start from the point that all children should have some entitlement to service learning, it is also difficult to see how from a practical point of view this could be implemented without the involvement of schools.

But the delivery of service learning cannot be left to schools alone. Community involvement is already one of three core strands of the citizenship curriculum (alongside political literacy and social and moral responsibility). However, the evidence suggests that because this has simply been left to schools to deliver with little support, this strand has been poorly implemented, with provision being very patchy and uneven.<sup>122</sup>

Although there are some excellent individual examples of schools working with the local community to provide community involvement and active citizenship opportunities, this is the exception rather than the norm. Most schools have difficulty in finding the capacity and resource to do so, and are also struggling to find staff with sufficient confidence and expertise to promote active citizenship in conjunction with the community.<sup>123</sup> In fact, 65 per cent of 13–15-year-olds and 45 per cent of 14–15-year-olds involved in Ofsted research were not aware they had received citizenship education at all.<sup>124</sup> This is a shame given that young people themselves say they want practical experience of citizenship to be a major part of their citizenship education, involving practical experience both in school and the community.<sup>125</sup>

Service learning therefore requires the involvement of schools. But it has to be delivered through partnerships at the local level between schools, local voluntary and community organisations, local government and local businesses. Local service brokers should be available to help create these partnerships. The advantages could be immense: schools are often criticised for not being integrated into their local communities, involving adults only as parents.

There are good case studies for how this can be done. For example, Open Futures is an organisation funded by the Helen Hamlyn Foundation that works in partnership with schools to build local partnerships within the community to deliver experiential and practical learning within the curriculum.<sup>126</sup>

City Year, the US-based service scheme that places City Year corps members in schools in deprived areas to provide academic, mentoring and pastoral support to children in these schools (and is about to be piloted in the UK), also uses its corps members to promote service learning in the schools it supports. These social action projects take place outside school hours, on Saturdays. School students are placed in teams of 8 to 12 in diverse groups with students from other schools. The students spend Saturday morning in team activities, and receive training on the social issue they are focusing on that day. In the afternoon, the teams work across their city to deliver a social

action project that addresses the issue they learned about. The service projects are structured around leadership skills such as critical analysis, problem-solving, managing diversity and project management. In this way, there is scope to use people engaged in post-18 service schemes to contribute to service learning in schools. There are intentions to roll out service learning as part of City Year UK from next year onwards.

There are also a number of organisations in the UK that work with schools in promoting service opportunities for school pupils, for example Time Bank, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) (see box 2) and the Citizenship Foundation.

**Box 2      Community Service Volunteers' New Futures programme**

*The New Futures scheme offers a working example of a service-learning scheme in the UK. The scheme, a partnership between Barclays and CSV, ran for ten years from 1995 to 2005. By the summer of 2005, 120,000+ students and 350,000 members of the wider community had been involved. Pupil-led teams took part in implementing projects in their local communities. In addition, these activities involved parents, school governors, local councils, voluntary organisations, businesses, teachers and the general public.*

*Schools applied for one- or two-year awards (of £5,000 or £10,000) or the National Challenge award (£20,000 – one award per year). Community action teams were formed consisting of pupils and teachers and at least one community partner. CSV regional advisers approved the action plans and supported and monitored project developments. The Business Excellence Model of self-evaluation was used by project teams to establish benchmarks and set targets for their work.*

*The project evaluation reported positive impacts on the students who took part (motivation, attendance and behaviour), on schools and their links with the community, and, importantly, on the perception of young people in the local community.*

*On the basis of the Community Futures programme, CSV has called on the government to offer £35,000 grants to schools over five years in order to develop community service partnerships.*

## The role of the VCS, private and public sectors in providing service opportunities

The starting assumption in debates about civic service is often that service opportunities will be provided by the voluntary and community sector. However, as discussed above, the VCS has limited capacity and it is very unlikely that it alone would be able to meet an expansion in demand for service opportunities that might come as a result of the proposals presented here. This was a theme that repeatedly occurred in the stakeholder interviews conducted as part of this project.

We envisage that current VCS organisations, new charitable organisations (see the City Year case study in box 3), social enterprises, the private sector and public services could be contracted to provide service opportunities in conjunction with schools, colleges and universities. It should build on V's Talent Year programme (box 4).

Box 3

### City Year

*City Year is an AmeriCorps programme that provided some of the original inspiration for Bill Clinton's national service legislation of 1993, which established AmeriCorps in its current form. It recruits 17–24-year-olds to participate in ten months of full-time community service, leadership development and civic engagement, serving in schools in deprived and inner city areas across the USA. Young people are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds.*

*City Year's participants are primarily focused on education and youth development, serving as mentors for children in partnership with public schools and organising and running after-school programmes and curricula on*

*social issues including domestic violence prevention, AIDS awareness and diversity. They serve full-time tutors and mentors in schools, run after-school programmes, and lead and develop youth leadership programmes and vacation camps. Although this mostly involves working with young people, members also undertake community regeneration activities.*

*City Year is being piloted in London from 2010 onwards. For further information, see [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org) and [www.cityyear.org.uk](http://www.cityyear.org.uk).*

This will require a big culture shift in public services. In March 2009, Baroness Neuberger, the government's 'volunteer champion', published the first report in a series examining the role of volunteers in public services, focused on health and social care. The report argued that volunteering is underutilised in public service delivery, and there is much potential to expand volunteering in health and social care to create more people-centred services, and a better understanding of service users. Its recommendations included that in-house 'volunteering hubs' should be set up in government agencies, that government agencies need to consider the social benefits and costs of volunteering when commissioning services, and that employee volunteering schemes should be linked to health and social care services.

**Box 4 Talent Year**

*V, the body set up to implement the recommendations of the Russell Commission ([www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)), has set up Talent Year, a programme offering full-time structured volunteering opportunities. This programme receives funding of £10.4 million a year. It is giving 1,000 volunteers aged 16–25 the opportunity to participate in a 44-week full-time programme, volunteering in children and young people's services across 33 local authorities. Placements include nursery provision, play and youth work.*

## The role of business and the private sector

There is huge scope to involve the private sector in a service strategy as part of meaningful CSR strategies:

- There should be an element of matched funding of service opportunities to encourage providers to leverage funding from the private sector.
- Service providers should work in partnership with business to develop training opportunities for service participants. For example, City Year in the USA has a number of private sector partnerships.
- Business partnerships can result in mentoring internships for service participants. For example, TeachFirst works with businesses to provide internship opportunities and coaching for its graduates.
- Businesses can encourage their employees to get involved in service schemes for school students and young people involved in post-18 service programmes.

## Anomalies in the current policy framework: the NEET definition and JSA

There is an issue around the definition of young people who are counted as being NEET, which in theory should only exist until the participation age is increased to 18. At the moment, young people classed as NEET include those undertaking voluntary work or personal development opportunities. This means that local authorities and local strategic partnerships have no incentive to direct NEETs towards voluntary and service opportunities. It also sends out mixed messages about the value of volunteering and service. Essex County Council is currently leading a group of local authorities in lobbying for this to be changed. This anomaly should be changed as soon as possible.

People out of work who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance are currently allowed to volunteer under current JSA conditions, so long as they are looking for work, and are able to take up an offer of paid employment within seven days' notice or attend an interview within 48 hours. We believe this approach is broadly right: long-term, structured service opportunities should not

routinely be associated with JSA payments as these opportunities are not suited to those who are actively jobseeking. However, longer-term structured service opportunities could count as training for work for 18–24-year-olds who are a long way from the labour market, as the government is just beginning to pilot as part of Entry 2 Employment courses, in line with our recommendations above.

## Costings

This section sets out rough costings for a national civic service scheme. Our figures here relate to England, because several elements of the proposed service strategy apply to policy areas like education, which are the responsibility of the devolved nations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. They could, however, be expanded for a UK-wide scheme.

### Secondary schools

If each secondary school were given additional funding of £7,000 a year to help them deliver service learning, as suggested by CSV, this would cost *£24 million* each year. (There are 3,399 state-funded secondary schools in England according to latest DCSF published figures.) However, it should be stressed that the emphasis will be on community organisations to deliver service learning in conjunction with schools, so it would not be expected that schools should bear the bulk of these costs.

### Universities

We suggest each university be given a grant of £40,000 to help them deliver service by university undergraduates, a total cost of *£3.6 million*. (There are 91 universities in the UK.)

### Gap-year-style service schemes

There are two main elements to costing these schemes – the cost of extending student support to those undertaking them, and the cost of the direct payment to service scheme providers.

It is difficult to cost exactly the extension of student maintenance grant and loan arrangements, because the state subsidy on student loans will depend on how much an individual is also taking out for higher education (if at all), and costs will also depend on the socio-economic backgrounds of students taking part because of the means-tested elements of maintenance grants and loans. However, a rough estimate is possible. The government spent £2.48 billion on student support in the form of grants and loans in 2008–9 in England.<sup>127</sup> There were 826,600 students eligible for student support in the same year.<sup>128</sup> This represents an average per-student subsidy each year of £3,000. If we assume the socio-economic spread of people taking up gap-year service opportunities is similar to those going to higher education, we can estimate an average per-year subsidy of around £3,000 per participant taking part. (It should be noted, though, that it is the intention that the scheme attract a more diverse socio-economic spread than that of the young people who currently go to university.)

CSV has estimated that apart from participant support arrangements, the indirect cost of each participant taking part would be in the region of £2,500.<sup>129</sup>

This gives a total cost per participant of £5,500 each year. There were 675,000 people aged 18 in England in 2008.<sup>130</sup> Assuming 10 per cent of each cohort take up the opportunity, this gives a total annual cost to the state of approximately *£371 million* a year.

It should be noted, however, that like higher education student maintenance, this will be demand-led expenditure (Annual Managed Expenditure, AME) and so it is impossible to forecast expenditure exactly.

**A national body for civic service, including grants to organisations providing service opportunities to school and university students in conjunction with local communities**

We suggest that a national body for civic service should receive annual funding of *£50 million* in order to fulfil the functions above.

This gives a rough estimate of total annual costs of *£449 million each year*. However, given the stipulations in our proposals about the 2 for 1 benefit, particularly for the gap-year-style schemes, some of these costs will be recouped through benefits to society, improvements in outcomes, and better public services.

### Funding options

The argument here has been that service is worth upfront investment only if it delivers tangible benefits to individuals taking part and to the community, by improving outcomes and taking the pressure off public services. This is a long-term, invest-to-save approach.

However, the timescale for return on original investment is likely to be long and it is difficult to get away from the fact that these proposals do require some level of upfront investment. While the proposals here are for a long-term strategy that cannot be rolled out overnight – and although in the time window required to implement these proposals, the current tight fiscal climate may have eased somewhat – it is difficult to put forward proposals for new public investment without considering where the funding might come from.

An obvious place to look is higher education student support. Student loans are currently heavily subsidised by the taxpayer – students repay these loans at a 0 per cent real interest rate. This is very costly to the government – the interest rate together with the 25-year debt write-off means that the state ends up subsidising anything from 80 per cent of the face of the student loan for low-earning women, to 20 per cent for high-earning men.<sup>131</sup> This is quite apart from the state subsidy of higher education paid directly to universities, which is around £5,000 per student per year.<sup>132</sup>

The arguments often put forward in favour of this level of subsidy are about promoting equality of opportunity by widening access to higher education to young people from a broad range of social backgrounds. These arguments are flawed, however: once prior attainment is controlled for, the social class

bias in entry to higher education falls away.<sup>133</sup> The way to improve access to higher education is to improve young people's skills and development before they get there, not to universally subsidise student maintenance. New Zealand, for example, introduced a 2.5 per cent real rate of interest on its student loans, and did not see access to higher education suffer as a result.

Introducing a 2.5 per cent real rate of interest on student loans in the UK has the potential to generate significant savings. It has been estimated that doing this, while keeping loan repayments income-contingent and the 25-year debt write-off, would be the equivalent of the state removing an upfront grant for students of around £2,465 for each female graduate and £2,880 for each male graduate.<sup>134</sup> The savings to the state would be highest for men in the second to the fourth deciles of the male graduate lifetime earnings distribution and for women in the fifth to seventh deciles of the female distribution. The very lowest female earners would lose relatively little from the removal of the interest subsidy because of the 25-year debt write-off.<sup>135</sup>

This gives an average saving per undergraduate of £2,672.50, assuming male and female undergraduate numbers are roughly equivalent. In 2009–10, there were 477,277 new higher education students accepted onto a place for September/October 2009.<sup>136</sup> This reform would therefore generate an annual saving of *£1.23 billion* – assuming undergraduate numbers remain constant. We suggest the annual costs outlined above should be met from these savings.





## Appendix 1 Summary of themes that emerged from the stakeholder interviews

This appendix summarises the themes that emerged from the expert stakeholder interviews undertaken as part of this project. It is important to note that the majority of interviewees tended to answer questions from the perspective of their particular organisation. Given the small sample of interviewees it is not possible to weight positions in terms of popularity – the findings reported here are better seen as expressions of the range of opinions that overlap and occasionally conflict.

The full list of interviewees was as follows:

Mary Abdo, Programme Leader on youth leadership, Young Foundation

Benedict Arora, Nesta

Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, Executive Director, CSV

Carol Jackson, Youth of Today Leadership Fund, Young Foundation

Steve Moore, 2Moro

Terry Ryall, Chief Executive, V

Shirley Sagawa, Fellow, Centre for American Progress

Debbie Scott, Chief Executive, Tomorrow's People

Daniel Snell, Founder, Arrival Education

Alan Strickland, Senior Policy Officer, Volunteering England

Andy Thornton, Citizenship Foundation

Nat Wei, Lead Partner, The Shaftesbury Partnership

Peter Westgarth, Chief Executive, Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Nick Wilkie, Chief Executive, London Youth

### Objectives

*National civic service should focus on self-development and transition to adulthood*

- To provide a transformative experience as young people transition into adulthood – some argued a residential component is important.
- To provide troubled young people with a sense of discipline and future direction that is lacking in the school system – this prepares people for exams rather than life.

*National civic service risks duplicating existing effort and crowding out existing provision*

- Filling gaps in existing provision which supports/enables young people to be involved in society – does civic service meet gaps that young people themselves have identified? Danger of Victorian paternalism backfiring in an era where young people value choice flexibility and tangible individual benefits.
- While social mixing is a worthy aim, do middle class young people really need a civic service scheme? The key question is whom this is really for: NEETs, the middle classes, politicians?
- Is civic service self-defeating?
  - If it is voluntary, then it adds little, as it would not engage those who are hard to reach and would be little different from existing provision.
  - If it is compulsory, then it risks having volunteering associated with something coerced, state-run and/or unpleasant, which may undermine civic participation in the long term. This puts off the hard to reach and annoys those already involved in informal or formal volunteering.
  - If it is compulsory and full-time, young people have said that they would want to receive the national minimum wage in order to make it viable. In this case the young people would be employed, so it probably wouldn't be 'civic service' but instead a type of public service apprenticeship scheme.

*National civic service should be inspiring 'public' or 'civic' service*

- 'Be bold, go for the aim of creating a new civic culture: use words like duty, character, discipline.'

- It needs to become a national institution like the NHS. We need to develop a community service institution with the reputation and trust that the NHS inspires. The historical focus has been on extremes of the affluent and excluded – need to target the middle to develop social capital in a transformative way.
- Public service has to be a larger element of the transition to adulthood.
- NCS should have a political frame – it should be about developing political efficacy rather than philanthropy and social giving.

### *Social mixing*

- Social mixing is key across demographics and generations.

## Compulsion

All interviewees except one were opposed to the idea of compulsion. The one in favour acknowledged that this may not be enforceable but insisted ‘there is a symbolic value to it, which shapes attitudes towards such a scheme. This shouldn’t just be seen as a gap year for the lower middle class. This should be seen as entitlement for everyone to mitigate the colonisation of public services by the middle classes.’

There was a consensus that regardless of the scheme there should be an entitlement to service schemes, with the majority suggesting this should be subject to some sort of means testing.

Two concrete suggestions were given:

- There should be means tested allowances for young people who would otherwise have paid jobs in the summer.
- We should consider funding via tax credits, tax breaks and/or the Child Trust Fund, with resources weighted to the least advantaged.

## Tone and branding

- *Cross party appeal*: Make sure any scheme has cross party appeal – if a programme appears to be a politician’s or party’s ‘pet project’ its life cycle will be limited.

- *Cause vs service*: Young people are not attracted to an abstract idea of ‘service’, they are drawn to a ‘cause’. Hence the themes in the AmeriCorps programme on housing and ‘greening’, education, community organising, youth leadership etc.
- *Negative perceptions*: ‘Community service’ will sound like a form of punishment for young people from certain demographics.

## Age group and demographic

- It should be targeted at those who don’t have opportunities rather than everyone, ie NEETs.
- It should be a universal non-compulsory scheme that people can do after GCSE. It should be targeted at those in the middle rather than top or bottom – this has the greatest potential for transformation and social mixing. Residential component is key; anything less than two weeks will not be transformative.
- Having a single scheme at age 16 is too little too late, this needs to be built into a range of opportunities across the life course of an individual – from school to further education, higher education and employment. Need to account for the fact that transitions to adulthood differ according to background experience – there is no universal or uniform point that will suit everyone whether at age 16 or age 18.
- There needs to be a structured connection between the initial service period and what comes next. Mentoring opportunities and networks should be available once the scheme is over.

## Policy architecture

- *Policy barriers*: Criminal Records Bureau checks can be a severe limitation on the process of recruiting volunteers. JSA is problematic because full-time volunteering is not counted as job seeking – a huge disincentive to those who might benefit from volunteering but are on JSA.
- *Public sector volunteering opportunities*: There needs to be a culture shift across the public sector with regard to volunteering

opportunities – need to consider the unique value added rather than viewing volunteers as a way of obtaining cheap labour for existing public service roles.

- *Civic service must be tied to school:* It makes obvious sense to add service-learning component to citizenship curriculum – service learning needs a curriculum value or it won't be taken seriously.
- *Civic service should happen outside the curriculum, can't teach citizenship academically:* There is a need to bring the classroom to society rather than the other way round. The burden of teaching citizenship should be relieved from teachers, who can then focus on other important non-core curriculum subjects such as music and art.

## Delivery

- *National framework, local delivery and innovation:* Use a national brand as a platform for accredited programmes at different phases. Consider a phased approach rather than single experience for school leavers.
- *Harness existing provision:* Need to harness the power of existing provision rather than avoiding or trying to duplicate effort. This requires better quality signposting and joint working across the voluntary sector. Do not parachute in a new scheme without making use of existing networks and bodies – this will alienate people. Identify existing infrastructures.
- *Use alternative providers:* It should be delivered by a range of alternative providers with a specific focus and understanding in this area. There might be regional providers or coalitions of boroughs acting as commissioners. Need to avoid both Capita-style bottom-line culture and NHS levels of bureaucracy and performance management. Each local authority or group of local authorities should contract providers annually. Innovation should be driven by competition from different providers. Provision and partnerships should be rooted in civic aspects of community not conventional private sector firms involved in big public-private partnerships.

- *Role of private sector:* There need to be links to the private sector from the beginning. Recognise that it is a very time-consuming process to maintain these links and recognise sponsors in the best ways. It would be a good idea to get companies to second employees' involvement as not just about marketing, but also about corporate social responsibility. Funding could be split between local authorities and local philanthropists.
- *Partnership models:* Could be based on the education–business partnership model, which acts as a broker between schools and business (Business in the Community). There is a massively uneven distribution of community action groups and volunteering opportunities in different areas. This cannot work if you base it on a volunteering model – it needs to be based on a service-learning model.

## Capacity

- There was a strong consensus that the voluntary sector alone could not cope with massive rises in demand for placements. There is a need to explore both public and private sector opportunities.
- Young people (in their late teens, early 20s) make the best youth workers but you cannot create a whole new cadre overnight.





## Appendix 2 The young people's convention on civic service

### Methodology

The young people's convention brought together 54 young people aged 18–24 from across London. Participants were recruited to ensure a diverse mix of socio-economic background, ethnicity, age and volunteering experience. The convention was held in Central Hall, Westminster, on 5 September 2009.

The convention took the form of a deliberative forum.

Participants were:

- presented with information about the concept of a national civic service and the proposals that have been put forward by politicians
- presented with alternative models for how it might work
- given the opportunity to discuss what they thought of a national civic service scheme, how they thought it should work and what they thought it should be called
- given the opportunity to vote on these issues

It was structured as followed:

- There was a short presentation by Demos researchers on the idea of a national civic service.
- There was a discussion about attitudes to volunteering and the idea of making volunteering compulsory while at school.
- After a number of small group discussions there were votes on:
  - what a civic service scheme should be trying to achieve
  - three alternative models of scheme
  - what young people should get for taking part
  - whether a civic service scheme should be compulsory
  - what a civic service scheme should be called and how politicians should talk about it.

- The closing session included a return to the original questions about attitudes to volunteering and the idea of making volunteering compulsory while at school.

A short video featuring clips from the convention is available to view at [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk).

## Summary of findings

### *The point of volunteering and the general idea of civic service*

Most young people took a 'something for something' approach to volunteering – they were clear that volunteering should be about giving something back, but that they should also get some benefit out of it. Later discussions revealed this did not mean monetary benefit (they were in general opposed to the idea of having a wage for volunteering, and saw this as undermining the very concept of volunteering), but wider benefits like improving their own skills and experience for their CV, and enjoyment.

*What should a civic service scheme be designed to achieve were it to be introduced?*

This discussion reflected the above – how participants viewed volunteering. The idea of duty or service was alien to most young people. Many expressed the view you can't ask people to put time in without getting something back. The participants were presented with six possible objectives at the start and to vote on at the end:

- 'Personal achievement and fulfilment' was the most popular, scoring on average 7.7 out of 10.
- 'Helping people less advantaged' scored 7.6 – reflecting that participants thought in the discussion that a scheme should be beneficial to both those taking part and those whom it is designed to support.
- 'Improving participants' skills and employability' scored 7.4.
- 'Giving something back to the community/environment' scored 6.8. Interestingly, in the discussions, some participants found it difficult to identify with the idea of community –

many said they did not feel they had a community they identified with other than their job/friends. This might reflect the London-based discussion though.

- ‘Enabling young people from different backgrounds to mix’ scored 6.5.
- ‘Fulfilling a duty of citizenship’ scored lowest with 4.7.

### What was their preferred model?

The participants were presented with three schemes: A, B and C (see below for details of the models).

#### Feedback on scheme A (the year-long experience)

Many participants felt that it was too long (a year), that there would be significant cost or lost opportunities in taking part and that £100 a week was not enough to live on except for those who could live at home. There was also feedback that the scheme for those aged 18–24 was too late – at this age people might be more interested in getting a job.

However, there was a minority of participants who expressed support for the idea of this scheme, and 19 per cent said they would do it.

Scheme A was thought to be the best scheme in terms of improving young people’s employability and giving something back to the community. So participants appreciated its value, but only a significant minority would actually want to do it.

#### Feedback on scheme B (the summer challenge)

Scheme B was the most popular among participants in terms of what they would like to do. They thought it sounded fun. There was some enthusiastic support for the idea of a graduation ceremony (much more than for the citizenship certificate of scheme C). There was feedback from some groups though that the ‘fun’ or ‘reward’ element was too frontloaded – that some of the residential component should be at the end as a reward for completing the social action project.

Overall 58 per cent of participants said they would do scheme B. And when rating all three schemes together in terms of what they would most like to do, 51 per cent said they would most like to do scheme B out of the three.

### Feedback on scheme C (school civic service)

This was less popular than scheme A, but more popular than scheme B: 43 per cent of participants said they would do it. However, they commented that it sounded quite boring in comparison with scheme B. But there was positive feedback about the age range (16 and under) to which it applied. Some participants specifically commented that they disliked the idea of a citizenship certificate – they thought it should result in a more meaningful qualification.

Interestingly, later discussion showed that the idea of making some form of volunteering at school compulsory was much more popular in the abstract – it proved less popular here when participants were talking about it as something for them to do.

### What should young people get for taking part?

(We used the example of people volunteering for three to four months full-time.)

There was strong opposition to the idea of volunteers being given a wage for taking part – participants thought this undermined the concept of volunteering. However, many thought there needed to be a basic living allowance to make it possible for young people from all backgrounds to volunteer. The idea of participation leading to credits towards further study was also popular. In the vote, when asked if they would take part in a scheme:

- 6 per cent said they would for free
- 33 per cent said they would if they received a basic living allowance
- 10 per cent said they would if they received the minimum wage

- 39 per cent said they would if it contributed towards further study
- 8 per cent said that they would never take part in a scheme

Participants were also asked to consider whether any government funding via a living allowance should be means tested for those from poor social backgrounds. This was an unpopular idea – only 12 per cent of participants supported the idea of means testing.

### Should it be compulsory?

Participants were not keen on the general concept of compulsion – they saw it as undermining the ethic of volunteering, and a particular problem for young people with caring responsibilities or who had to contribute to family earnings.

Age was a crucial issue. Few participants thought any kind of scheme should be compulsory for those aged over 18, but they were much more comfortable with the idea of compulsion for the under 18s while at school. This is probably related to the fact that participants were talking about an age group younger than theirs. In a vote about compulsion:

- 10 per cent of participants thought a scheme should be compulsory for those aged 18–25
- 63 per cent thought a certain amount of volunteering or civic service should be compulsory for young people to do while they are at secondary school aged 11–18
- 27 per cent thought any kind of scheme should be optional

In a vote asking participants whether young people should be required to do a certain amount of volunteering while at school, 74 per cent said yes at the start of the convention, and 84 per cent said yes at the end.

### What should it be called?

There was a strong dislike of the name ‘national civic service’. Several participants thought it was too military and identified

the word civic with 'boring'. Only 8 per cent of participants said they liked the name national civic service – 82 per cent said they did not.

We asked participants to rate a series of words often used in relation to a civic service scheme. 'Duty', 'service' and 'civic' were the least popular. 'Volunteering' was the most popular.

Participants also brainstormed names in the discussion. Some of the ones they came up with were:

- iCare
- Help the Nation
- Kick Start
- Expand

### The three schemes

Participants were presented with the following schemes.

#### **Scheme A: The year-long experience**

- Young people would have the opportunity to take part in this scheme for a year between the ages of 18 and 24.
- Participants would take part in a civic service project – for example, working in a school in a disadvantaged area providing in-class support, extra-curricular activities and mentoring.
- Participants would work on the project for four days a week, and undertake training for the remaining day.
- Participants would receive a modest living allowance to cover their rent and expenses (around £100 a week).

#### **Scheme B: The summer challenge**

- Young people would have the option to do this scheme in the summer after they turn 16.
- The scheme would first involve a three-week team-based activity:
  - Week 1: personal challenge – a residential week of outdoor team-building activities away from home, for example in the Lake District

- Week 2: team challenge – a residential week in the participant's community, staying in student halls, developing a particular skill they select like music, drama, sport, art and film/media; performance to the community at the end of the week
- Week 3: community challenge – a non-residential week in participant's own community, planning a social action project

The teams would bring together people from different backgrounds in the same community.

- Over the following four months, participants would put their social action project into action within their team, giving at least 50 hours' service (around three hours a week) in their spare time to graduate from the scheme.
- There would be a graduation ceremony in December.

### **Scheme C: School civic service**

- Participants would have to do 50 hours of civic service in their spare time before leaving school at age 16 – for example, providing companionship to older people, mentoring primary school children, working on an environmental project, restoring community buildings.
- This would be part of the citizenship curriculum.
- Young people would get a Citizenship Certificate when they completed their service, which they could put on their CV.



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Empowering young people to reach their full potential

The idea of civic service starts from the ideals of citizenship: the belief that we are a nation of independent but interdependent citizens who have a duty to each other and the communities in which we live, not just to ourselves.

The idea has become increasingly popular amongst political parties in recent years and proposals from across the political spectrum have been put forward as the solution to a number of British social ills, ranging from a ‘crisis in youth’ and our unattractive celebrity and ‘get rich quick’ culture to increasing social fragmentation and ‘broken Britain’.

This report seeks to address some fundamental questions: why do we want a national civic service? Can a civic service meet all the expectations that exist for it, or are politicians being overly ambitious in their proposals? What would an effective national civic service scheme look like and to whom should it apply – and should it be compulsory?

This report draws on a review of the existing evidence, a deliberative democracy event with 54 young people held in September 2009 and a series of expert interviews to set out a series of proposals for a lifecycle national civic service strategy. Setting out a clear policy strategy, it argues that the fixation on mending social problems must now yield to a richer, more diverse approach which spans a citizen’s life.

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