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Guidance

# National Citizen Service: guidance for schools and colleges

Updated 9 October 2023

## Applies to England

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The National Citizen Service (NCS) is a Royal Charter body that offers young people in England a range of life-enhancing experiences.

It does this through:

- developing their confidence, independence and skills
- connecting them with people from all walks of life
- empowering them to make a difference in their communities and the wider society

The organisation is run by the NCS Trust, a body incorporated by Royal Charter in accordance with the National Citizen Service Act (2017) and governed by a diverse board of trustees.

NCS experiences are almost entirely funded by the government through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with the trust having responsibility for commissioning and overseeing the delivery of the variety of services on offer.

Under the National Citizen Service Act and Royal Charter, it is for young people aged 16 and 17, to coincide with their transition to adulthood.

However, the trust recognises that, for those aged 18 to 24 who need additional assistance – for example, through an education, health and care plan (EHCP) – statutory support is provided for that transition, so they are also eligible to participate. NCS providers offer free assistance to encourage and assist with young people's participation.

## NCS's 2023 to 2025 strategy

[NCS's strategy for 2023 to 2025](#) reflects young people's changing needs, NCS's own learning from the past 12 years, and the priorities of the youth sector and the government.

Through engaging in NCS, it is the trust's aim that young people will:

- become both world-ready and work-ready
- develop greater confidence, resilience and wellbeing
- feel better able to have an impact on the world
- have respect and tolerance for difference and diversity

NCS aims to achieve this through commissioning experiences that have the following objectives:

- developing life skills and supporting independent living
- building employability and work-readiness
- providing opportunities for volunteering and social action
- enabling the social mixing of young people from all backgrounds

## **NCS experiences and opportunities**

NCS delivers a range of experiences through a network of local and youth sector partners to ensure that services remain relevant and accessible. It also provides a variety of additional opportunities that are open to a wider range of young people.

Young people can choose from 3 types of experience:

- residential
- community-based
- online

### **Residential experiences: Away From Home**

[Away From Home](#) are 5-day residential experiences with activities focused on:

- employability

- independent living
- social action

## Community-based experiences: Local To You

[Local To You](#) are community-based experiences funded by NCS grants and delivered in 2 ways:

- open-to-all – regular programmes embedded in young people’s local communities
- targeted – innovations and projects to support under-served young people in those communities

## Online experiences

There are several ways young people can get involved with NCS online.

### NCS digital content

NCS’s [online experiences](#) are designed to develop digital skills. They are presented in a range of different formats, from content young people can consume at their own pace to interactive sessions.

### NCS blog

The [NCS blog](#) is content created for and contributed to by young people on the issues they most care about.

## Additional opportunities

NCS also provides 3 additional opportunities for young people.

### UK Year of Service

The [UK Year of Service](#) is a 9- to 12-month paid placement in a socially beneficial

role in public, health and social care, or the environmental sector, for young people aged 18 to 24. NCS provides the young person with support from the pre-recruitment to the exit-route stage.

## Skills Booster

NCS provides [Skills Booster](#) personal development resources for schools, colleges and other educational settings. Teachers can adapt these [high-quality materials](#) for use in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, form-time activities and after-school enrichment sessions.

## Youth Voice

[Youth Voice](#) offers engagement opportunities that allow young people to shape decision-making within the NCS Trust, and at national and regional events.

# Benefits of NCS participation

There are benefits for both the young people concerned, and their school or college, of taking part in NCS.

## Benefits for young people

NCS provides young people with practical skills for life and gives them a chance to develop the skills that are crucial in today's competitive job market, such as:

- leadership
- team-building
- problem-solving

NCS participation can form a valuable component of a personal statement for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) form and other application forms, providing evidence of enthusiasm for skill development and for taking on new challenges.

NCS residential experiences give young people a taste of living away from home and can support them with their transition into work or further education.

NCS benefits young people from all backgrounds. Its focus on social cohesion and social mobility ensures that experiences bring together those from every walk of life to learn from and understand each other better. Providers can offer support to young people:

- with special educational needs and disability (SEND)
- with financial limitations
- with caring responsibilities
- who are looked-after children
- who speak English as an additional language
- who have been excluded from school or college, have a history of offending, or require support to manage their behaviour

### **Evaluation of NCS experiences**

Evaluation of young people's experiences showed that participation had achieved a number of positive impacts, including:

- over 85% rated their experience as 'worthwhile' or 'enjoyable'
- 80% felt more positive towards people from different backgrounds
- young people felt more confident meeting new people
- young people with SEND reported an improved ability to build relationships with people from different backgrounds
- young women and young carers felt better able to recover from stress than their counterparts

Post-placement outcome data from partner organisations indicates that more than 80% of those who take part in the UK Year of Service go directly into education, employment or training.

Further insights about the [positive impact of experiences](#) on young people is available.

### **Benefits for schools and colleges**

Encouraging participation in NCS experiences provides evidence of the broader support a school or college is offering young people in terms of their personal development.

## **NCS and Ofsted**

The Ofsted [school inspection handbook](#) lists personal development as a separate category, as it offers schools and colleges the opportunity to develop provision that extends beyond the academic, technical and vocational.

Ofsted inspections examine how a school or college supports young people to be “confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character”. It views these life skills as vital, both inside and outside the classroom. NCS can support schools and colleges to ensure they give every young person the tools and experiences that will enable them to discover and develop their interests, their talents and those skills.

The Department for Education’s [character education framework](#) features NCS as an example of working with local, national or international organisations in building impactful co-curricular programmes for young people. It can aid leaders, teachers, careers leads and those with responsibility for enrichment provision in providing opportunities that:

- are robust
- are challenging
- help develop the attributes and skills against which schools and colleges are measured

Ofsted measures participation rates in personal development programmes to ensure schools and colleges encourage every young person to broaden their academic and personal horizons. NCS can provide schools and colleges with previous engagement statistics, enabling leaders to measure and align their percentages and numbers of attendees.

## **NCS and other types of inspection**

For the purposes of the Independent Schools Inspectorate, NCS participation provides evidence of young people’s development in these areas:

- spiritual
- moral
- social
- cultural

For the purposes of a statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools, it provides evidence of:

- character development
- hope
- aspiration
- courageous advocacy
- community
- living well together

## **NCS and the Gatsby benchmarks**

Supporting young people to take part in NCS experiences offers evidence that a school's or college's careers provision is impactful.

NCS experiences can provide opportunities for young people to participate in activities that link explicitly to several benchmarks of the [Gatsby framework](#) for good careers guidance.

NCS experiences – especially the Away from Home residential experiences and some of the online opportunities – focus on skills development. They include content from and interaction with representatives from both education and employment settings. They therefore support schools and colleges to evidence:

- benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees)
- benchmark 6 (experiences of workplaces)
- benchmark 7 (encounters with further and higher education).

## **Ways in which schools and colleges can engage with NCS**

There are 2 ways in which schools and colleges can engage with NCS. They can:

- support young people in accessing NCS experiences
- incorporate NCS teaching materials into their lessons

## **Supporting young people to access NCS experiences**



All [community-based and online experiences](#) are available to young people through the NCS website. Teachers can support students to research and access the opportunities on offer in their local area.

The NCS partner organisation Ingeus delivers Away from Home experiences. Ingeus can visit a school or college to deliver an assembly or to share information about its residential opportunities through a lunchtime stand, or can provide materials for a school or college to promote an experience itself. Schools and colleges can email Ingeus to arrange this at [NCSEET@ingeus.co.uk](mailto:NCSEET@ingeus.co.uk).

Providers of community-based experiences may contact schools and colleges to make them aware of opportunities taking place in their area. A list of [NCS partners and providers](#) is available. Emails about most NCS experiences will come from Ingeus or a local provider, rather than from a central NCS address. If you're unsure whether an NCS-related email is genuine, contact the NCS Trust at [education@ncstrust.org.uk](mailto:education@ncstrust.org.uk) to confirm this.

Schools and colleges should identify a single contact who will liaise with the various NCS partners. This might be the head of Year 11 or 12, or the member of staff responsible for PSHE or citizenship. A representative of the partner organisation will lead on the promotion of NCS and the recruitment of young people, having met with the school or college contact to discuss the needs of their setting.

## **Incorporating NCS teaching materials into lessons**

The NCS [Skills Booster](#) lesson resources can be used as part of the personal development curriculum.

The resources, which are tailored for Year 11 and 12, are on 3 themes:

- life skills and independent living
- citizenship and social action
- employability and next steps

They consist of editable PowerPoint slides with accompanying teaching guidance documents providing advice, links and extension activities. Each lesson is planned to last an hour, but teachers can also split them into 4 activities of 15 minutes each.

# Case studies

The [NCS blog](#) showcases experiences and skills gained by NCS participants as well as the positive, impactful work carried out by young people as part of NCS social action projects. These include projects that:

- raised awareness about period poverty
- supported families and people in need through donating school uniforms and warm clothing
- raised money and awareness about homelessness

## Contact

For more information, visit the [schools and colleges page](#) of the NCS website or email NCS at [education@ncstrust.co.uk](mailto:education@ncstrust.co.uk).

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