

London Youth

NCS

Evaluation Report



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Executive Summary

London Youth received funding from NCS (National Citizen Scheme) to deliver the NCS - Local Experience over two years. The programme aimed to help young people as they approach the pivotal age transition between 16 and 18 and are deciding what they are going to do.

Organisations delivered two cycles of the NCS programme. Each NCS delivery took place over 9 months, with a minimum of one touch point per month and 48 hours of delivery. Youth organisations took different approaches to delivering the hours. Some provided regular sessions, others provided 'boot camp' activities in a more concentrated period with touch points throughout the year.

Youth organisations offered three experiences lasting between 12 and 20 hours each and covering: Life Skills, Social Action and Employability. NCS was open access, which means most youth organisations chose to deliver NCS alongside their existing programme of work. In addition, London Youth delivered a centrally organised events offer. This evolved over the two years. In year two the focus was on career days. These brought together expert speakers around three industries: digital, sport and arts.

Who took part?

The programme was delivered between June 2023 and March 2025. Over two years, 37 youth organisations and 5,298 young people took part in NCS. Two-thirds of this engagement happened in Year 2, following learning from the pilot year in year 1. Five of the youth organisations were responsible for two-thirds of the participants.

The young people recruited to NCS:

- Identified more as male, than as female with 35% of young people identifying as female and 65% identifying as male
- 45% of NCS participants were in the 30% most deprived communities (based on IMD data)
- 4% of young people identified they had a physical or mental health condition

What was delivered?

Young people took part in three experiences: Life Skills; Youth led social action; and Employability. Each young person could do one or all of the experiences. The youth organisations could deliver the experiences in any order and there was no curriculum dictating what should be delivered under each experience. This meant youth organisations had a free rein to deliver any activities they thought would help deliver the overall NCS outcomes. These were:

- Developing life skills and supporting independent living
- Building employability and work-readiness
- Providing opportunities for volunteering and social action
- Enabling social mixing of young people from all backgrounds

Across the NCS delivery, we found:

- 31% of young people didn't complete any of the experiences
- 68% completed at least one
- 57% completed at least two
- 31% completed all three

Delivery in NCS was roughly organised into two models. The first model involved youth organisations undertaking their regular delivery. This was not specifically targeted or ring fenced. For example, a youth organisation might run a team building workshop. It would be open to all young people at the session but would 'count' towards NCS hours for those on the programme.

The second model involved delivering the core hours during a holiday. One, two or three experiences were delivered in a condensed block during a holiday period. This was then supplemented by the offer of a touch point, at least monthly.

Events

In Year 2, NCS events focused on Career Insight Days. Three of these were organised across the year, covering:

- Digital and technology careers
- Sports careers
- Arts careers

138 young people attended the events, along with 22 youth workers. Levels of satisfaction with the events was huge with:

- 97% of young people enjoying the workshops
- 96% of young people felt included and comfortable taking part

What difference did it make?

NCS provided opportunities for youth organisations to develop the whole person, not just the technical skills they will need for the future. Young people felt their confidence had improved as a result of taking part in NCS. They also felt they had the opportunity to meet young people from different areas and to make new friends. Young people also:

- Developed life skills as part of NCS. They identified how they had developed leadership and social skills as a result of NCS. The sessions helped stretch their comfort zone and develop the skills they need for adult life
- Were supported through NCS to think and reflect on the skills they needed for the workplace and what a future career may look like. Young people highlighted how NCS had helped them develop communication skills and their ability to speak in public
- Took action in their local community and were supported to consider the changes they could make in their local area. These social action projects gave young people the opportunity to work on a project together and gain a sense of pride about what they had achieved

Events

The three career insight events were often used by youth organisations to count towards the hours the young people did around employability. The impact of these events was substantial with young people identifying how they had tried something new, been inspired and had met new people as a result of attending the events.

The events were a huge added value element that London Youth brought to NCS and exposed young people to a huge variety of different roles within an industry or sector. This gave young people insight into what opportunities may be available to them as well as direct contacts with people already working in the industry.

Introduction

Shephard & Moyes Ltd were commissioned in March 2024 to undertake an evaluation of the NCS (National Citizen Service) – Local Experience programme managed by London Youth.

In 2013, the NCS Trust formed to oversee the programme delivery, funded by the Department for Education. NCS started as a summer programme providing young people with a residential experience and an opportunity to become involved in community-based projects. Over time, the delivery evolved to include:

- Away from home experiences – an opportunity for young people to spend time away from home, stretch their comfort zone and learn new skills
- Online experiences – a variety of online resources and opportunities to help young people develop new skills
- Local community experiences – opportunities for young people to regularly engage with positive experiences. This had a targeted and open element

London Youth coordinated the NCS – Local Experience delivery in London on behalf of the NCS Trust. Year 1 ran from June 2023 to March 2024 and acted as a pilot year. Year 2 ran from June 2024 to March 2025.

The NCS Trust was formally closed in March 2025 and all NCS delivery came to an end. This final report shares the learning from the two years of London Youth delivery of the Local Experience strand. The report focuses on the key learning for London Youth to inform any similar programmes.

For the remainder of this report, we refer to NCS – Local Experience as NCS.

About NCS – Local Experience

The overall purpose of NCS is to help young people as they approach the pivotal coming of age transition between 16 and 18 and are deciding what they are going to do. NCS is trying to inspire young people to reach their potential. It had the following mission and vision:

- Mission: is to inspire generations of citizens through shared experiences that grow their skills and bridge social divides
- Vision: is a country of connected, confident and caring citizens where everyone is able to grow into the best version of themselves.

The aim of the Local Experience strand of NCS was to create a framework to engage young people over a longer period and to build the connection between the youth organisation, community and young person.

NCS had the following programme outcomes:

- Through engaging in NCS, young people will:
 - Become world-ready and work-ready
 - Have greater confidence, resilience and wellbeing
 - Feel able to have an impact on the world
 - Have respect and tolerance for difference and diversity
- This will be achieved through the following outcomes:
 - Developing life skills and supporting independent living
 - Building employability and work-readiness
 - Providing opportunities for volunteering and social action
 - Enabling social mixing of young people from all backgrounds

The delivery took place over 9 months, with a minimum of one touch point per month and 48 hours of delivery. Youth organisations took different approaches to delivering the hours. Some provided regular sessions, others provided ‘boot camp’ type activities in a more concentrated period and then touch points throughout the year.

Youth organisations offered three experiences lasting between 12 and 20 hours and covering: Life Skills, Social Action and Employability. NCS was open access, which means most youth organisations chose to deliver NCS along their existing programme of work.

NCS works with 16 and 17-year-olds and as soon as someone turns 18, they can no longer be part of this project. Youth organisations can work with young people up to the age of 24 if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There is a delay in EHCP being issued so youth organisations could work with a young person beyond 18 if they are likely to be in receipt of one.

Alongside supporting the delivery of the project, London Youth provided training to youth organisations, ran career insight days, and offered opportunities for youth organisations to network. London Youth also supported two kick-off events. Unfortunately, due to a volatile situation linked to summer riots, one of these events was cancelled.

Evaluating NCS

Our overall approach to the evaluation is shown in Figure 1. We co-designed the evaluation with the team from London Youth. This led us to developing the following aims of the evaluation:

- Understanding what difference the programme is making
- Help London Youth understand the delivery in detail and to advocate what should happen next with NCS

- Understand in more detail the added value that comes (if any) from the events
- Identify what is the most effective way of managing grants like NCS and how to make the relationship management more effective

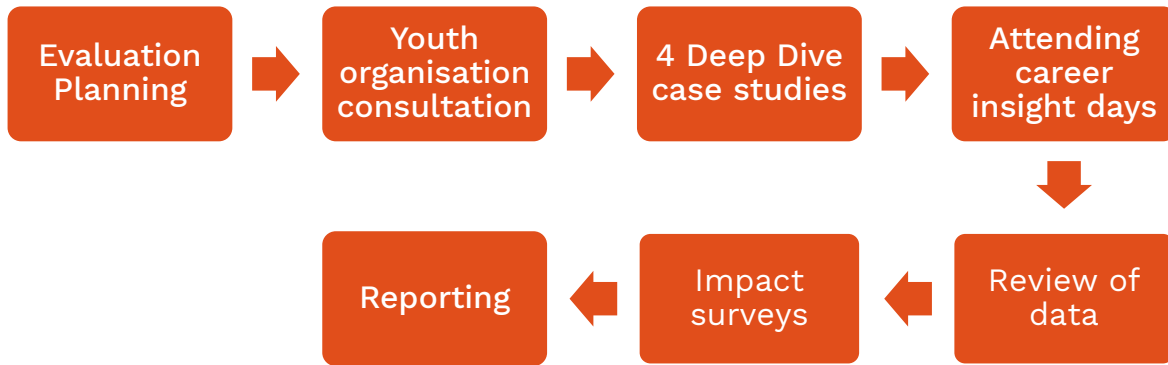


Figure 1 - Evaluation Approach

As part of the evaluation planning process, we developed a Theory of Change for NCS, shown in Figure 2. This was used to develop the research questions and methods for evaluating NCS.

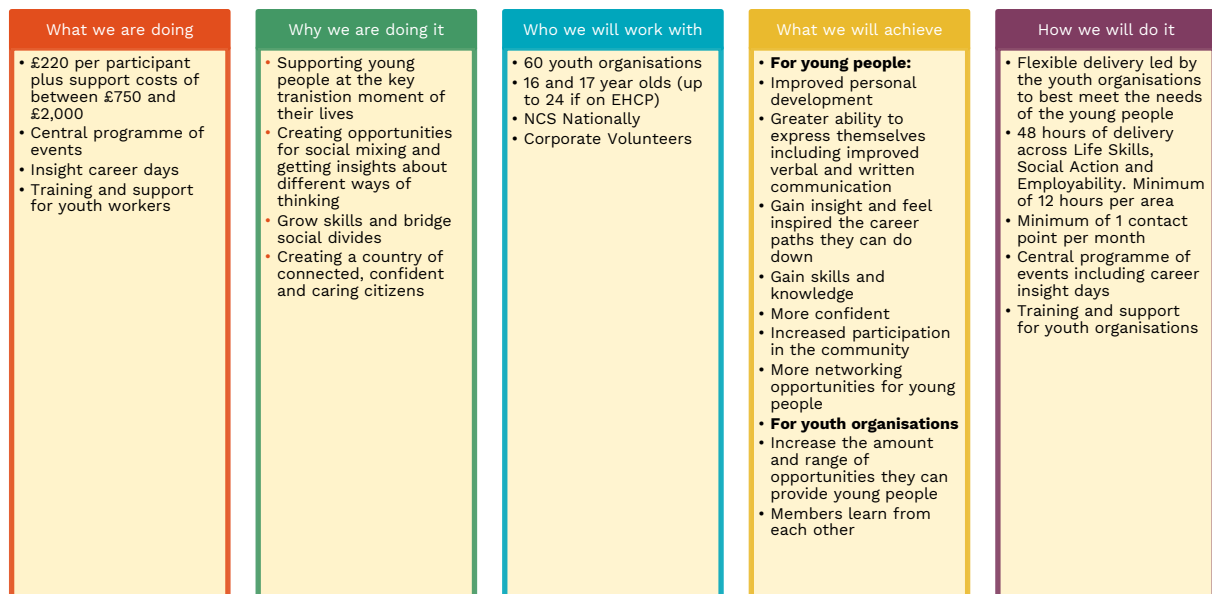


Figure 2 - Theory of Change

We used a variety of data sources to compile this evaluation. This report includes:

- Reach and participation/engagement data, taken from registration forms and registers collected by youth workers. All participating youth organisations completed this information
- Delivery data, taken from conversations with youth organisations, a focus group with youth workers four detailed case study visits, attendance at three career insight days and feedback from structured sessions held as part of the London Youth network events
- Impact data taken from young people's surveys collected at the skills taster days, end point surveys from 16 youth organisations (n=90), interviews carried out at visits and attending events by Shephard & Moyes and case study data provided by 7 youth organisations

Note: we were commissioned to undertake the evaluation at the start of year 2. We held a focus group with youth organisations involved in year 1 and were provided with demographic data about participants in year 1. London Youth's NCS delivery evolved between year 1 and year 2. London Youth found a way to introduce more flexibility into the delivery and to reduce the administrative burden faced by youth organisations. Our findings and learning mainly relate to the year 2 delivery.

Reach

In this section of the report, we set out how youth organisations and young people were engaged in NCS, who took part and their motivations for engaging with the programme.

Engaging youth organisations

London Youth did not recruit youth organisations in the usual way for NCS. NCS had large engagement numbers attached to the contract. London Youth recognised their network of youth organisations were unlikely to be able to deliver the numbers required by the contract. As a consequence, London Youth reached out to a range of larger youth organisations including London United.

London United is the umbrella organisation for the Club Community Organisations¹ (CCOs) in London. The CCOs had previous experience of delivering an NCS contract that had been managed by the EFL Trust. They were seen as a natural delivery partner for the contract. All became members of London Youth as part of the NCS delivery.

In addition, to build the bid, London Youth reached out to its membership to ask them to say how many young people they felt they could work with through NCS.

'We had to do it differently from most of our other programs, because we had to do an expression of interest with all of our members to build the numbers. Because you needed to give exact numbers of who they would work with in the bid' London Youth

This approach effectively required youth organisations to make a commitment to what they were doing without necessarily fully understanding what they were committing to.

'So it was completely different from how we normally do it, kind of tying them in beforehand, which was the interesting thing, of course, when the induction came round, many of them were like, hold on, for this money, versus the number of young people it is not feasible, or it wasn't for them' London Youth

¹ Club Community Organisations are the charitable organisations attached to Football Clubs

Over two years, 37 youth organisations took part in NCS. 20 youth organisations took part in both years of delivery. 11 took part in year 1 but decided not to progress to year 2 and 6 new youth organisations were recruited in year 2 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 also shows the overall participation numbers across the two years of NCS. In total, 5,298 young people took part in NCS. Two-thirds of this engagement happened in Year 2, following learning from the pilot year in year 1.

The key insight from the participation data is that five of the youth organisations were responsible for two-thirds of the participants. This helps illustrate one of the key features of the national NCS approach. It favoured large-scale organisations who could reach large numbers of young people over smaller grass-roots organisations.

‘The amount of money per participant was only £220. Often, youth organisations would use that money as a bolt on to pre-existing provision. So if a youth organisation isn't that big, then what can they really do with the NCS funding? You know, they can't create a program. So I think that the youth organisations that were selected were the kind of youth organisations that were financially quite healthy in order to deliver this without it being a stretch for them’ London Youth

Figure 3 - Youth organisations and participation numbers for NCS

Youth organisation	Number Reached Year 1	Number Reached Year 2	Total
Brentford FC	366	970	1336
Charlton Athletic Community Trust	349	499	848
Police Community Clubs	0	795	795
Leyton Orient	120	253	373
West Ham Foundation	100	100	200
Pro Touch SA CIC	67	105	172
Chelsea FC	86	45	131
Millwall Community Trust	0	126	126
Bromley Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum	39	84	123
Newark Youth	50	61	111
Crystal Palace	103	0	103
Start Easy	16	64	80
Watford FC	50	25	75
Dynamic Coaching CIC	35	40	75
Zest of Mind	33	42	75

Youth organisation	Number Reached Year 1	Number Reached Year 2	Total
Redbridge Youth	25	45	70
Project Zero	31	36	67
XLP Youth Charity	0	60	60
Trapped in Zone One	24	26	50
BE Inspired Youth and Community CIC	0	42	42
AlexZ Educational	17	24	41
Kinetika Bloco	16	24	40
SOUL	31	42	73
Magpie Dance	15	16	31
Oxygen	13	17	30
Purposely United	0	27	27
Tottenham Hotspur Foundation	0	25	25
The Thanet Youth and community centre	23	0	23
Angel Shed	13	10	23
Rathbone Society	22	0	22
Eat Club	17	0	17
HoYeston Hall	17	0	17
Sports Fun 4 all	15	0	15
Basic Sport and Fitness	15	0	15
Barking and Dagenham Youth Dance	13	0	13
Play Place	11	0	11
Riana Development	5	0	5

London Youth played a hugely important role helping smaller grassroots youth organisations be part of NCS. The reflection from the team involved in the NCS support was that smaller youth organisations seemed to benefit more from London Youths support, but the larger CCOs were needed in order to reach the numbers required by the NCS Trust.

'I did build a really good relationship [with the youth organisations]. I think I definitely got a better relationship with those that were smaller than bigger.... I feel like they benefited from like our events, more than the football clubs did' London Youth

Through the NSC team, London Youth provided the following direct support:

- They provided hands on support so that youth organisations could meet the demands of NCS and in particular to comply with the reporting

requirements. The NCS Trust required youth organisations to provide weekly reports on participation and, in some cases, London Youth would complete this weekly reporting on their behalf over the phone

- They provided regular networking opportunities. This provided a forum for youth organisations with little experience of social action and employability delivery to learn from each other
- They held career insight days. These provided crucial hours to the young people around the employment experience, but were also high quality, highly effective events in their own right

In addition, London Youth played a hugely important role helping youth organisations navigate the rules associated with NCS. The NCS contract had numerous restrictive rules. London Youth found ways of translating these rules so youth organisations could deliver effective sessions that worked for their young people. This support was well received by youth organisations.

‘They help keep us on track and they’re really good at showing us the things that are happening’ Youth organisation

Those youth organisations working with more vulnerable young people highlighted how they felt NCS nationally was not geared toward involving young people with additional needs.

‘Because I think it’s been, it’s been an interesting process, because we’ve very strongly got the sense that NCS is not really geared towards working with people with learning disabilities’ Youth organisation

As a result, London Youth did some work ensuring NCS was accessible for all participants. The materials produced nationally did not meet the needs of all young people and London Youth needed to work locally to make NCS accessible for all young people.

*‘We managed to siphon off some money for the youth organisations to put the materials into easy read... but... it was all done at a very local level’
London Youth*

Ultimately, NCS had some features that made it different to other London Youth delivery and so impacted who the programme reached and what it delivered. First, the bid had to be developed in a short period, with youth organisations committing in advance to the numbers of young people they would reach. This is particularly challenging for open access youth organisations given the voluntary nature of youth work. The bid required London Youth to provide large engagement numbers. This meant working with larger youth organisations.

Finally, the amount of resource available per participant for the delivery was small. Assuming 48 hours of delivery spread across three experiences, each youth organisation received just £4.58 per young person per hour of delivery.

Engaging young people

The profile of young people engaged in NCS differs from other programmes managed by London Youth. Overall, 35% of young people identified as female, as shown in Figure 4. It helps show how the influence of the type of youth organisation on the young people involved in NCS. For example, at Charlton Athletic Community Trust, there was a clear focus on using the delivery to engage young women. By contrast, Police Community Clubs had a mainly young male demographic. It helps show how the focus of the youth organisation influences who it reaches through programmes like NCS which have no specific targeting.

Figure 4 - Gender of NCS participants

Youth organisation	Male	Female	Female Percentage
Brentford FC	439	427	49%
Charlton Athletic Community Trust	161	328	67%
Police Community Clubs	698	95	12%
Leyton Orient	169	83	33%
West Ham Foundation	67	33	33%
Total (sub set)	1534	966	39%
Total (all NCS)	2211	1243	36%

Figure 5 shows that 45% of NCS participants were in the 30% most deprived communities.

Figure 5 - Deprivation levels of participants based on postcodes provided

Decile	Number	Percentage
1 – 10% most deprived	105	4%
2	627	21%
3	592	20%
4	488	17%
5	336	11%
6	275	9%
7	177	6%
8	142	5%

Decile	Number	Percentage
9	105	4%
10 – 10% least deprived	82	3%

NCS also had very strict criteria for the age of participants engaged in NCS. When young people reached 18, they were no longer eligible for the programme, even if they were still at school (unless they had an EHCP as set out in the introduction). This is clearly problematic for universal open access youth organisations who will continue to work with young people as needed, rather than at a particular birth day.

Figure 6 shows the ages of participants as of 1st April 2025. It helps show how successful NCS was at hitting the core demographic of 16 to 18 year olds.

Figure 6 - Age of participants in Year 2 of NCS on April 2025

Age	Number	Percentage
15	54	2%
16	248	7%
17	1469	41%
18	1412	39%
19	376	11%
20	16	0%

NCS hit relatively low numbers of young people with a physical or mental health condition. In year 2, 138 young people identified they had a physical or mental health condition, just 4% of all participants. This represented 138 young people. In addition:

- 57 are SEND
- 107 have an EHCP
- 65 care experienced
- 60 young carers

Recruitment and engagement

Young people were recruited to NCS by two key routes. In the first approach, young people were already engaged in the youth organisation. NCS was something the youth organisation could offer the young person with some structure and opportunities linked to it. The young person would take part because of the existing connection they have with the youth organisation.

'They get to that 15, 16 age... A lot of the time they'll come to you saying like, oh, I want to do this, I want to do that.... They're thinking about their future. So that's when you put them onto the NCS program' Youth organisation

'We use sport and football as the hook and they will come consistently and then we introduce other ideas' Youth organisation

'I knew the youth worker from a previous programme and was happy to get involved with her suggestion. I like to keep busy and get involved with different things' Young Person

The second approach involved open advertising of the NCS offer through assemblies, career fairs and other venues where young people were gathering and where the opportunity could be explained to them.

'We have some teachers who really love NCS and they plug it' Youth organisation

Young people themselves also spread the word about the opportunity. At Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, they also operated a 'refer a friend' scheme, where young people could be entered into a prize draw. As NCS has been operating since 2009, there are now a generation of youth workers who have participated in the NCS programme over the years.

'We've got some young people, now, youth workers that's done the whole NCS programme so they are advocates for it' Youth organisation

Young people decided to take part in NCS because it provided them with a structured opportunity to meet new people and gain new skills.

'I wanted to make new friends and have an impact on my community' Young Person

'I wanted to challenge myself and do something different this summer. My friend recommended NCS, and I thought it would be a great way to meet new people and gain some skills for my future' Young Person

As we set out in the following section, some youth organisations provided blocks of time during the holidays where young people could engage. This acted as a motivation for young people interested in developing their skills or CV during the holiday period.

'I wasn't really doing anything during the summer, also, because I thought it would be good for my CV and my personal statement going into Year 13'
Young Person

As with many of London Youth's programmes, participation in the programme and the accompanying centrally organised activities relies on the youth organisation and the relationship they have with the young people. A lot of the core delivery also takes place during the holidays. This gives time for young people to engage, but also means engaging larger numbers can be challenging as young people already have commitments.

'We get emails sent to us, and whichever opportunity makes sense to bring young people to, we will. I called a few young people, but it's half term, so a lot of them already have plans' *Youth organisation*

'It wasn't great because a lot of them were away and they weren't responding... young people kind of want some time free from doing anything'
Youth organisation

One of the interesting features of NCS is that it reached a different demographic to other London Youth programmes, as shown in Figure 7. It helps illustrate how NCS reaches fewer women and girls, fewer people with a long-term illness and fewer people living in deprived communities, compared to other London Youth programmes. As with all data, there are limitations to the way the data is collected. However, it is clear the youth organisations involved in NCS meant a different demographic of young people were involved.

Figure 7 - Comparison of NCS reach vs. other London Youth programmes

Area	London Youth programmes in 2023-24 without NCS	NCS – Year 2
Female participation	44%	34%
Limiting long-term illness ²	9%	4%
Percentage of young people located in deprived communities	63%	44%

² Note: this is not a direct comparison as London Youth asks if they consider themselves to have a disability rather than a limiting life long illness

Area	London Youth programmes in 2023-24 without NCS	NCS – Year 2
Percentage of young people who are Black, Asian and Minority ethnic	83%	80%

Case study – Project Zero

Project Zero worked with 36 young people who took part in the programme. 66% of participants were male and 33% of participants were female. 89% qualified for free school meals.

The NCS programme delivered by Project Zero has focused on helping young people connect with each other and to have the confidence to access the opportunities that are available to them.

The work is helping young people build confidence and come out of their shells. This then helps young people connect with the opportunities that are available to them. The team at Project Zero is able to do this because they are relatable and act as role models to the young people they work with.

The opportunities delivered through NCS and Project Zero have provided young people with the opportunity to make new friends and to develop their skills, in particular young people referenced how their communication skills had improved.

‘You kind of feel better when you do something. And also like the people around, like the people that I’m with every day when I come in, I like them, their friends, everyone’s friends’ Young person

Young people also told us how being involved in NCS had helped stretch their comfort zone and build patience.

‘Before the summer, I hadn’t pretty much spoken to many people that I didn’t know, but it kind of forced me to get out there. It forced me out of my comfort zone’ Young person

Delivery

In this section of the report, we set out what was delivered through NCS and what worked well. We also place a specific focus on the events organised by London Youth.

Experiences

Participation in NCS was organised into a set of experiences, as shown in Figure 8. Each young person could do one or all of the experiences, each lasting between 12 and 20 hours. The youth organisations could deliver the experiences in any order and there was no curriculum dictating what should be delivered under each experience. This meant youth organisations had a free rein to deliver any activities they thought would help deliver the overall NCS outcomes.

‘With life skills and employability, it’s quite fluid. So something can be life skills and something can be employability, which was quite useful for the youth organisations’ London Youth

If young people complete all three experiences, they received a certificate signed by the Prime Minister.

Figure 8 - Experiences in NCS

Phase	Outcomes	Examples of the types of activities delivered
Life Skills	Building skills Socialising	Cooking; budgeting; learning Makaton; public speaking; goal setting; Sports; Arts
Youth led social action	Greater awareness of the challenges faced by local communities Improved understanding of how to make a difference Increased ability to advocate for self and other young people	Young people running locally relevant projects aiming to: Reduce vaping in schools; bringing awareness to islamophobia; bringing together communities inter-generationally
Employability	Greater awareness of employment opportunities Greater awareness of career pathways	CV and cover letter writing LinkedIn masterclasses Time management skills How to effectively network Visits to employers

Experiences delivered

Figure 9 shows the numbers of starters and completers for each of the three experiences provided through NCS. A large difference between year 1 and year 2 was how rigid the delivery was. In year 1, there was a prescribed order and way the youth organisations needed to approach delivery. This changed in year 2, where youth organisations were given more freedom to deliver the experiences in a way that worked for them.

This was positive for the youth organisations as it gave them more flexibility to structure delivery in a way that worked for them. However, it means there is no specific comparison that can be made about the types of experience offered in experience 1, 2 or 3. For example, in the table below experience 2 includes youth organisations offering social action, employability and life skills blocks.

Figure 9 - Number of starters and completers by experience

Experience	Starters	Completers	Percentage
Experience 1	3,084	1,927	62%
Experience 2	3,209	1,559	49%
Experience 3	3,467	2,220	64%

London Youth set youth organisations a target of 60% of participants completing all three experiences. This was an internal target and reflected a desire for youth organisations to prioritise the engagement over a 9-month period. However, across the NCS delivery, we found:

- 31% didn't complete any of the experiences
- 68% completed at least one
- 57% completed at least two
- 31% completed all three

Approach to delivering experiences

One of the important features of NCS was its desire for a longer term engagement model that created more opportunities for positive connections between youth organisations and young people.

'What NCS was really into was they had this long, extended time where they were interacting with trusted adults... in the community' London Youth

However, the target age range for NCS was 16 to 18 years, and it was a universal offer. Young people were being invited to take part who had a wide range of different time pressures, including exams, coursework and university applications. As such, throughout the delivery there was a tension. Youth organisations needed

to give young people regular opportunities to engage, but for some young people, they only had available time to engage during holiday periods.

But equally youth organisations recognised how important it was to be offering young people longer term contact opportunities.

‘Covid did have a massive, massive effect and because of that I think having the longer program does support the kids for a longer period of time and that’s what they need, they need that consistency’ Youth organisation

Broadly speaking, two models of delivery evolved through NCS. The first model involved youth organisations undertaking their regular delivery. This was not specifically targeted or ring fenced. For example, a youth organisation might run a team building workshop. It would be open to all young people at the session but would ‘count’ towards NCS hours for those on the programme.

‘Even though it [the workshop] might be open to 13 plus for that particular workshop, actually you’re getting a good core group of 15, 16, 17, year olds who are doing that and still getting relevant content. And then you can take those out to the side and do an individual session with them [making it NCS]’ Youth organisation

‘We can work a specific workshop, so it’s to do with NCS. So that makes our lives as delivery organisations easier. It’s still doing a kind of separate NCS, specific NCS delivery, but it’s already tied into something that may already have been coming up’ Youth organisation

‘We already had a base of 16 to 17-year-olds that we were passing onto Further Education, but then we were looking for different alternatives to actually support them and then NCS was perfect with... supporting them and their goals’ Youth organisation

‘It was an easy transition, because I think we were literally already doing it without necessarily a funding stream for it.... So it was just a matter of... rearranging it and organising it... for example, for the NCS we can do the boot camp and we can do this as part of our holiday programme’ Youth organisation

These regular contact points were then supplemented by holiday activities that helped build hours or helped them deliver a specific experience, for example, the social action.

‘We have lots of sessions running throughout the week and a lot of our participants will come to those kind of sessions... they are our main points of

contact.. we then bring them together over events and holiday programmes’ Youth organisation

‘The core of our NCS programme is martial arts. The students learn new skills and techniques and the history and culture of Muaythai (Thai martial arts). We add to that, volunteering in the community, health and nutrition and employment advice about careers in the fitness industry. The sport is based upon respect for everyone and doing the best you can. For volunteering we organised a multi school event which brought together young people in a fundraising activity day. We also included sessions on employment opportunities for young people in the fitness industry and additional activities to learn about nutrition and wellbeing’ Youth organisation

‘We focus on life skills through our generic work and then we’ll focus on the employability stuff in the half terms, in the holiday programmes’ Youth organisation

The second model involved delivering the core hours during a holiday. One, two or three experiences were delivered in a condensed block during a holiday period. This was then supplemented by the offer of a touch point, at least monthly.

‘We kind of said you can deliver it as a chunk if you want, but you need to have a touch point each month for nine months, and that could be ... we’re going to do loads of it in October half time, but then in November, there’s a, like, an intro to boxing coaching course. And they don’t all have to come, but you need to offer it for them and have it open for them to come’ London Youth

This approach was important to allow NCS to reach the numbers of young people it wanted to reach. As we have referenced, young people of this age group have a range of competing priorities. This second approach increased the likelihood of young people being able to complete the hours needed.

‘Our general challenge is the generic delivery between the holidays’ Youth organisation

‘It was hard for us to get them consistently coming on a weekly basis, so we did have to constantly change how we delivered the sessions’ Youth organisation

Regardless of the delivery model, the youth organisations found the events were a useful tool for encouraging young people to stay engaged.

‘Traditionally, we’ve always had these really exciting activities, maybe early on in the program. But then trying to get young people to then stay on the program is really difficult, so putting those at the end, but making known to young people so that they’re working towards those’ Youth organisation

With this age group, in particular, the key learning from NCS was the need to be flexible about when and how young people engaged. Delivery needed to be set up so young people could dip in and dip out, depending on other pressures or activities they had in their life.

‘In terms of the flexibility that young people engage in, there needs to be flexibility in terms of a young person so they can engage in week one, week seven, then week 10, but still get the complete benefit and the certificate that comes with being part of the program’ London Youth

‘Even though we did it as a boot camp, trying to get them all together was still quite a big challenge, because they were all doing different things... but what we did do to try and combat that was we did it three times, so we had one programme and we repeated it three times, so anybody that couldn’t come on one day, could come on the other day’ Youth organisation

Content of sessions

As we have already referenced, there was no curriculum for NCS and youth organisations could deliver what they felt was appropriate for their young people to achieve the NCS outcomes.

‘It is a very varied program in honesty.. lots of the youth clubs were already doing amazing delivery and then the NCS money kind of just topped that delivery up, or they maybe changed it ever so slightly... but I don’t think the grant is such that they could create whole new aspects of their delivery all of the time’ London Youth

London Youth ran networking events that helped youth organisations think about what was involved in a successful experience. Youth organisations identified the following key components to a successful experience:

- Relatable activities and leaders
- Plan many different activities through the programme
- Make the activities fun and interactive
- Young people's involvement in the design. Good food, music and performances

Figure 10 shows youth workers' perceptions of the usefulness of the different experiences. It helps illustrate that for youth workers, the most useful element is the life skills and the least useful element is the social action.

'I think I can resonate with youth workers and for why social action is a very difficult one to deliver, because it requires a lot more. You have to be a lot more present with your young people in their planning stages and making things happen. And you have to be a lot more involved. And if you're already at limited capacity, it's like, how do you make these things happen?' London Youth

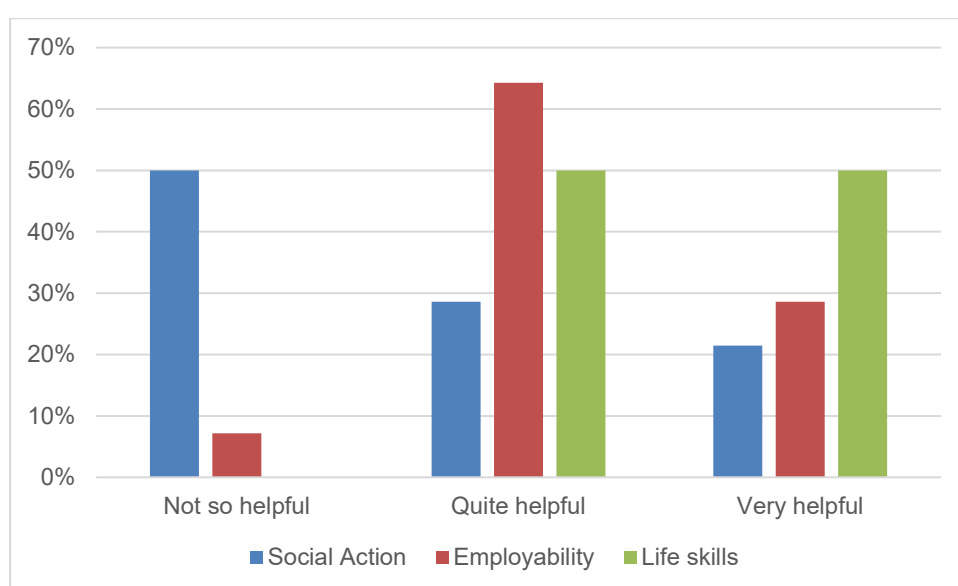


Figure 10 - Youth worker perception of the usefulness of the experiences (14 Youth organisations)

Across all three experiences, there was a balance between structured and unstructured delivery. Some youth organisations made use of existing tools, like the Skills Builder Framework. Others used the Playmaker course and Introduction to Level 1. Yet others supported young people to undertake social action by volunteering at the youth organisation.

'We ran a playmaker course last week as well for NCS' introduction to FA stuff. 17-year-olds who are interested in volunteering came and did that and joined in with that. So that counts as those hours as well' Youth organisation

There was considerable overlap between the three experiences. The overlap between life skills and employability is often clear. With communication, public speaking, money management and team working all acting as clear cross over topics. There was also cross over between the social action and employability

experiences, with youth organisations offering volunteering opportunities as part of both social action and employability.

‘We got a mental health certificate, went like, different places, just around, just to kind of, like, engage with other people’ Young Person

There were also more traditional employability type activities with young people supported with their CVs, industry visits and employer connections.

One area where there was considerable success but also where youth organisations found it challenging was around social action. There is more opportunity for sharing learning between youth organisations about how to effectively deliver and understand what is involved in social action.

‘[my area of change] would be to rebrand the definition of what social action is. It was what launched in 2012 and organisations still don’t quite know what it means. So, potentially, like a rebrand in kind of, even if it is, even if it has to say principles, just something fresh’ London Youth

There was huge variation in how youth organisations approached social action. Some included volunteering in activities their youth organisation was running. Others created opportunities for young people to plan a project, but not necessarily implement it. But there were also several examples where young people were supported to do something that resonated and was important to them. This led to several events happening that were organised and curated by young people but reached a much wider audience.

‘We work exclusively with people with learning difficulties... the NCS session currently takes place on a Saturday morning, we have around 12 young people who take part... The next one is social action, that is based around the history of learning disability... its learning a bit more about how people with learning disabilities have been treated over time and in the local community, how that’s changed a lot’ Youth organisation

Events

During Year 2, London Youth organised 5 events for young people involved in NCS. Two of these were ‘kick-off’ events and provided an opportunity for young people to connect and engage with others involved in the programme and to take part in a range of team-building and engaging activities. Unfortunately, one of these events was cancelled as it coincided with a period of civil unrest across the country.

As part of the internal learning from Year 1, the NCS team at London Youth chose to re-focus the events on Career Insight Days. Three of these were organised across the year, covering:

- Digital and technology careers
- Sports careers
- Arts careers

The events were a huge added value element that London Youth brought to NCS. The events provided young people with exposure to a wide range of professionals and helped open the eyes of young people to the huge range of careers that were on offer in any industry. The variety of industries helped showcase a wide range of different sectors, with the arts career day a particular strength, showcasing the opportunities in this area.

'It was exploring the creative side...we've always catered for STEM, but this was something different' London Youth

138 young people attended the events, along with 22 youth workers. Levels of satisfaction with the events was huge with:

- 97% of young people enjoying the workshops
- 96% of young people felt included and comfortable taking part

The speakers at the events also told us how well the events were run and put together.

'I've really enjoyed it. I've been looking forward to it for a while. It's really nice to work on these guys. They're all really engaging. They care, and it's really nice to see' Event speaker

The events were organised by London Youth based around each theme. The team at London Youth were able to reach out to their network of both long-standing friends, colleagues from previous roles and known networks of organisations, supporting young people in their fields.

This meant each of the career days had a variety of inspirational speakers who could showcase their profession and the journey they had been on to achieve their professional goal. Session deliverers were briefed by London Youth, so they knew to include an interactive element to help engage young people in the sessions. It also meant the speakers knew how to pitch and share with young people what businesses in the sector are looking for.

'If you have that innate curiosity and you're keen to learn and you've got a passion for just learning and growing, then I think that is probably a more beneficial thing to bring than, you know, a portfolio or a CV that isn't

necessarily full of paid jobs, you know, being able to demonstrate that curiosity and hunger' Event speaker

The speakers also recognised the benefit of engaging with young people brought to their sector and how it allowed them to showcase and communicate the different journeys young people will go on in their careers.

'I think it's both sides of it! [who benefit]. We benefit as an industry from people being passionate and coming in. So you need to get people excited, because then they start looking at that an interest, but at the same time, if someone wanted to come in and do the job, I try to tell people that when they get their foot into the door with an agency or a companyonce you're into a company, they are actually on your side. And if you're thinking that you might want to change job, once you're in the door, they will fully support you doing that and so you know for us, having good talent coming in, being passionate about working is fantastic. Maybe they don't necessarily know what they want to do, or they are choosing something adjacent to what they want to do, but they can get experience from their first job' Event speaker

'So that's why I'm passionate about doing this. Because I didn't know. There was nobody in my family that was in the same industry ...so I have a very convoluted route, and I guess that's something I want to pass on to the young people, that there is only one route into the creative sector' Event speaker

Although there is inevitably variation in the skills of the people delivering the sessions to engage young people, all the sessions we attended were well structured and engaging. Young people were given choice about which sessions they attended, which helped with engagement. This led to high levels of enjoyment among the young people about what was on offer.

'The workshops are really informative, and I like the experiences.... it actually gives you an insight of what you actually get into' Young person

'I like the table tennis workshop, like it showed us how, like there're different roles in sports, not just like being a sports person or a coach' Young person

'This careers events really nice because you get to inquire. So, like the stuff, because I'm young, so it helps me know I might want to do in the future' Young person

'The workshops were brilliant, very interactive and basically keep you interested in what's going on' Young person

'I really enjoyed the activities that we all did, ... really engaging and stuff. But the part that I really enjoyed, the second activity we did, which was the TV thing, because, like, I really want to be on TV' Young person

Youth workers told us how they would not be able to put on events like this and they were a unique aspect of the additional support provided by London Youth. The reach of London Youth meant more speakers and more opportunities for young people to mix.

'We can do that [type of event] with our individual group, but actually, then you lose the benefit of them being able to mix and for us, being able to liaise as coaches and officers as well' Youth organisation

'We love to give our young people these wider opportunities' Youth organisation

'You get to mix a lot of experiences, and it like enhances everyone. It helps everyone as a whole' Youth organisation

Supporting young people to attend

The events were a considerable strength of the work that London Youth have done with NCS. The events were well constructed, well run and well organised. They were informative and the range of speakers from different industries and different departments within those industries was incredibly high quality.

The challenge for London Youth was getting young people to attend. Sign up for the events was good. In the case of the Arts Careers Day there was a waiting list but between 30-50% of young people signed up did not attend.

There are several reasons for this. One of the strengths of the events is that they brought young people together from across London. However, it meant young people needed to travel and were often reliant on youth workers to support them to attend.

This reliance on youth workers meant the young people being able to attend meant they were vulnerable to staff being unavailable at the last minute. Similarly, youth workers may book young people onto multiple events and see on the day what they were most interested in doing.

'We phoned another youth worker who'd booked for 10 and they would say, Oh, we doubled booked. But again, it's free, so there's no skin in the game for these individuals. So they can go around booking everything, and then whatever sticks with the young people they then just go to or something better turns up' London Youth

We explored through the London Youth organised networking events and through discussions with London Youth what the barriers to young people attending the events were and how these might be overcome.

One of the key points identified is that London Youth has no direct relationship with the young people. They are reliant on youth organisations and the relationship they have with the young people to pitch the event and explain what will be involved.

This can mean young people are only vaguely aware of what they are attending or what the benefit of the event might be to them.

'We only found out what was going on when we first game into the room when we were signing in... and there was like you've got the opportunity to do this, that sounds really interesting' Young person

'I don't know [why I came], just like I like going to my youth club... it's really fun. So I thought, because I like going on trips, they said that this was a trip. So I just got up' Young person

Other barriers identified by youth organisations included:

- The sessions start too early and with travel this can mean an early start for young people often during the holidays
- The events are taking place in a different area and young people may be nervous about travelling to different postcodes
- There is a peer pressure group mentality and they may only be interested in going if their friends are doing it?
- It is expensive to travel across London and the events are not always easy to get to
- The sessions may not be immediately of interest to the young people and they don't understand the reason for doing it
- The environment may be unfamiliar and they don't feel confident about attending

We also explored what could support young people to attend the events. Several youth organisations highlighted the importance of relationships with young people to encourage them to attend. This includes advocating for what they gain from the experience but also encouraging rather than forcing young people to take part.

'Everybody here is a young person, in one way, even the older ones that are more 20s, they have been the young people that their working with. In some way, they are our driving forces. They're the ones that push and promote these events. We have, I think, what we call a real Big Brother Big Sister vibe' Youth organisation

'I think it's just the relationship that you have with them. If you have a close relationship with them and let them, like, not push the fact that they have to, just let it be like an open option' Youth organisation

Youth organisations also shared a range of ways that engagement with the events could be improved. A key message was the importance of information for both young people and youth organisations. Youth organisations and young people highlighted how important it was for them to know what to expect from an event and what they were likely to get out of it.

Youth organisations identified the following ideas for how to engage more young people in events:

- Increase the marketing and create interactive and attractive ways for young people to engage. Provide information in a format that young people can easily share among their peer group
- Create a referral rewards scheme so young people are encouraged to refer their peer group to attend
- Promote the success of previous events and what has happened to some young people as a result of attending
- Link the event to a wider circle of provision so young people receive follow on support

The other key issue identified by youth organisations was overcoming postcode barriers and supporting young people to travel to the venue. A key point identified by the youth organisations was to provide funding for young people to travel, including private hire vehicles, and also funding for youth workers to attend the events alongside young people, so acting as chaperones.

Case study – Brentford FC Community Trust

Brentford FC Community Trust worked with 970 young people. 45% of participants were male and 44% of participants were female. 10% qualified for free school meals.

Brentford FC Community Trust runs one of the largest NCS – Local Delivery offers in London. Young people are able to access the NCS offer in a variety of different ways. The Trust is able to offer young people a hugely flexible offer. Delivery includes a Fast Track offer, where all three elements are available in a week and more spread out opportunities.

All young people who take part in NCS have the opportunity to join the fortnightly Changemakers sessions. These provide young people with the

opportunity to continue their personal development and have the opportunity to create change in their community.

The NCS programme delivered by Brentford FC Community Trust has provided young people with the opportunity to have new experiences and to try new things. Crucially, it is a programme that supports the development of the whole young person.

'Part of the role of the NCS programme is helping to broaden young people's horizons, and it is helping them understand they don't necessarily have to have a direct interest in something to gain a lot from the experience' Staff

Young people told us that being involved in NCS had helped them develop their skills, in particular connecting with others and having to speak in front of others.

'Like I'm better, in social situations, like how to talk to people, how to connect. And like finding my way around, like my navigation skills' Young person

Ultimately, though, NCS at the Trust has provided young people with a safe space where they can be themselves.

'I've become a lot more laid back I remember before I used to be, like, self conscious and stuff like that. I see new people every day here. I interact with people every day. So yeah, I really thought like in school, most people are like, they're not the most kindest people you meet. But then I realised here, it's like people a lot more kinder. It's like it changes your perspective' Young person

Impact

In this section we share the impact of NCS delivery including a specific focus on the impact of the events. We also look forward to share what young people will continue to need from programmes like NCS.

Overall

As we set out in an earlier section, NCS supported youth organisations to strengthen their existing offer and to add new elements to it. This means that many of the outcomes achieved by NCS reflect the outcomes of good quality youth work.

NCS provided opportunities for youth organisations to develop the whole person, not just the technical skills they will need for the future. Figure 11, helps show that overall, 86% of young people felt their confidence had improved as a result of taking part in NCS.

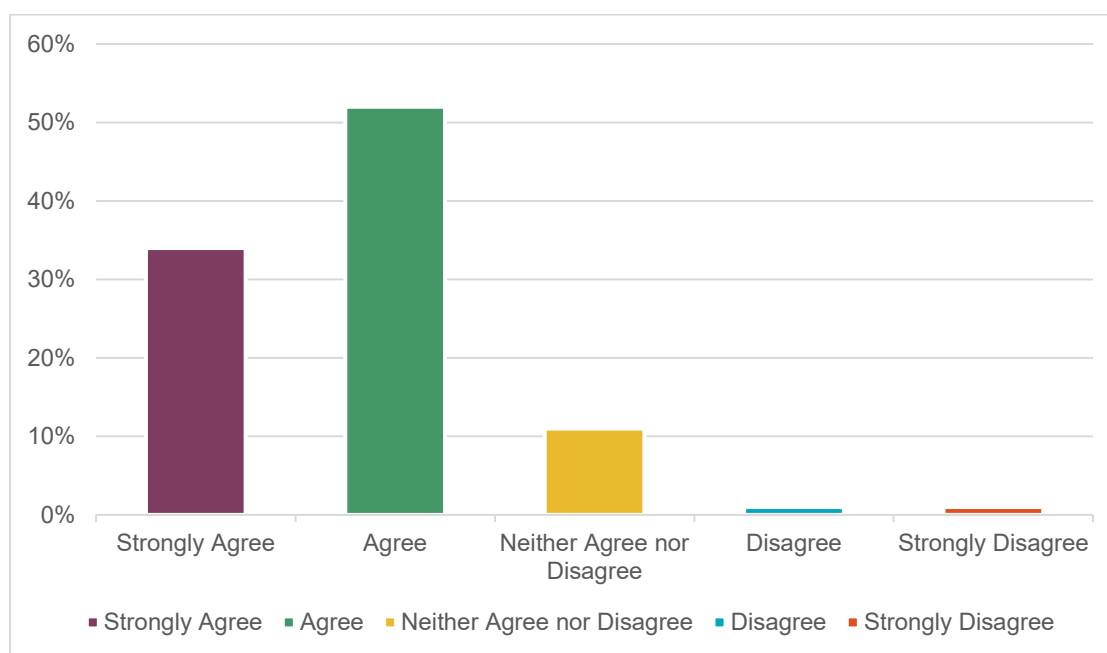


Figure 11 - Percentage of young people who feel more confident

This was reflected in feedback from young people. They felt the overall approach to NCS had given them the opportunity to try new things and to stretch their comfort zone.

'I got to meet new people and do things I wouldn't have otherwise' Young person

'You learn how to be outside your comfort zone and learn new things that you wouldn't think you capable of doing' Young person

'[It was] a chance to get away from your usual area and try things you would never try' Young person

'[The benefit of NCS] is it allows young people to engage helping them go out of their comfort zone' Young person

'I feel like I've become much more confident in myself. I've learned how to work in a team better and take on leadership roles. It's also made me realise that I can push myself to try new things and succeed' Young person

'[I've got] nice memories. It was really enjoyable, fun. You get to meet new people have new experiences' Young person

The way NCS was structured, it provided young people with the opportunity to meet different young people from different places and to learn from each other. This opportunity was created through central events, but also as NCS brought young people together from different schools and different areas to be part of their local NCS delivery. This meant young people had the opportunity to meet new people and to make new friends. 82% of young people who took part in NCS made new friends as a result of taking part, shown in Figure 12.

'You get to mix with lots of different people and it enhances everyone, it helps everyone as a whole' Young person

'For them it's a really good social opportunity its learning about different experiences' Youth organisation

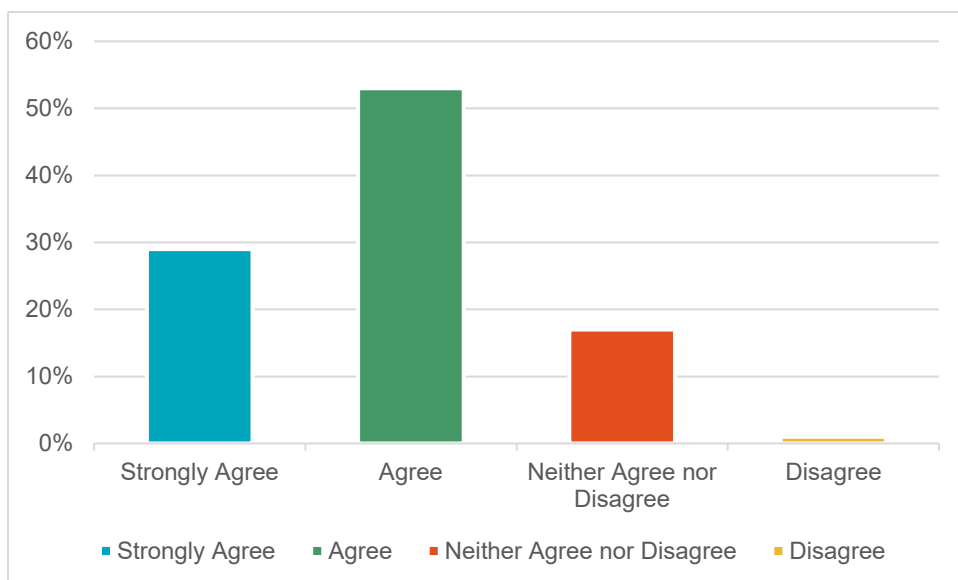


Figure 12 - Percentage of young people who agree they have made new friends

NCS also created opportunities for young people to know more about the support that was available to them in their community and to build relationships with trusted adults as well as giving them something positive to engage with.

*‘[The best thing was] speaking with Teacher and taking advice about life’
Young person*

‘I found out what’s going on in my area and different places I can go to for support’ Young person

‘All the staff were helpful, and it was really fun’ Young person

‘I think the biggest thing it just gives them, like, just something to do. I think what it was before, when I was the young person like. I feel like there was, there was stuff to do. But nowadays it’s not as much. There’s not as much for young people to, like, get involved in ... I think the biggest thing as well, it’s all about learning and building confidence. I feel like, especially after COVID, like, it’s so easy for young people to, like, lose that confidence, because they were all in the houses for, like, for so long’ Youth organisation

Life skills

Young people developed a range of skills as a result of taking part in NCS. 98% of young people agreed they had developed life skills as a result of taking part in NCS, shown in Figure 13.

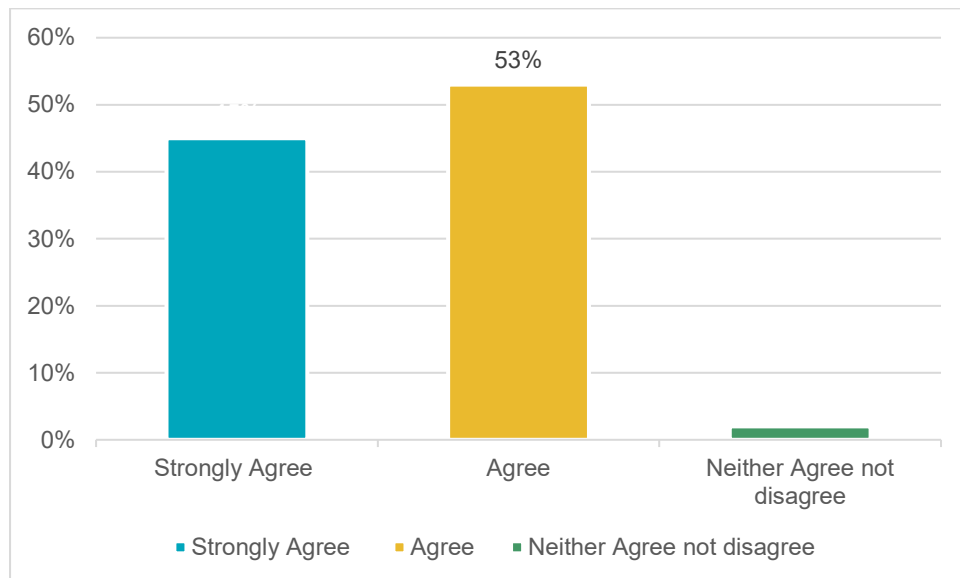


Figure 13 - Percentage of Young People who agree they have learned new life skills

The type of life skills developed varied by youth organisation. But young people highlighted how they had developed leadership and social skills.

'The program has made me more confident in my leadership skills and has helped me develop great relationships which I wish to maintain in the future'
Young person

'I've got confidence, social skills but I also like enjoy the activities they do'
Young person

'The thing I like the most about NCS was the group work. I felt like nobody was left behind and everyone had their roles to do' Young person

'[I've gained] independence, like you feel more connected with others, especially your social skills. I remember doing my English presentation that happened recently. I'd had to present, obviously, in front of class, I didn't feel as stressed out as like, over here [at NCS], you just talk with new people anyway, so you're used to it' Young person

The sessions provided opportunities for young people to be challenged. This in turn helped them develop the skills they needed for adult life.

‘The workshops were all very interesting and challenged our critical thinking and also our problem-solving skills. I developed great relationships with my colleagues and my mentors’ Young person

‘It really made me challenge myself on life skills and activities that I may face in my post 18 life allowing me to be fully equipped’ Young person

‘My communication skills have improved as well as my development as a person’ Young person

‘[I’ve learned] patience, money management, anger management and team work’ Young person

The flexibility on offer through NCS meant youth organisations could run a variety of different sessions that met the needs of the young people they worked with.

‘Something that really stuck out to me was ... from trapped in Zone One telling us ... about how he did a session about inclusion, including language and inclusion, and specifically about disabled people, and how a young person really benefited from that session and felt more confident to be able to talk about people with disabilities. And you know, the language around that.... And, I thought, you know, there were instances like that where we would hear stories like that. And it was really lovely that the money had facilitated those kind of conversations, and that learning to happen for those young people’ London Youth

Employability

NCS has supported young people to think and reflect on the skills they will need for the workplace and what a future career may look like. Figure 14 shows that 94% of young people who took part in NCS developed their workplace skills.

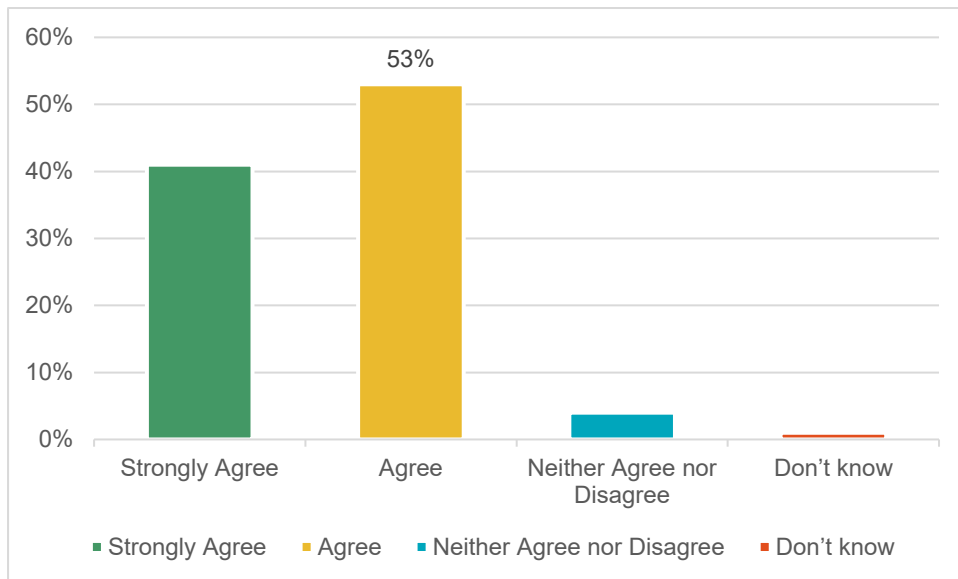


Figure 14 - Percentage of young people who agree their skills for the workplace have improved

This was reflected in feedback from young people who highlighted being part of NCS had helped with a variety of work-related skills. In particular they highlighted improved communication skills.

'[I've developed my] communication, leadership, communication skills' Young person

'It's been an amazing experience from which I have learned and developed a variety of skills, for example my planning abilities and following a set timeline, it was also a great opportunity to challenge my communication skills' Young person

The NCS work has also helped young people develop their wider office skills and how to engage with the workplace.

'You also need to be able to give a good account of yourself, both in person and via video call, and you know, over the phone, you can't just be the guy that knows how to code anything, but can't speak to somebody face to face' Youth organisation

'It's not just the technical skill, its office etiquette, its all those kind of office basics' Young person

Several young people also referenced how being part of NCS had helped with their public speaking. Youth organisations often structured the sessions so all young people had to speak in front of each other.

'Taking part in NCS with Tottenham Hotspur Foundation has changed me massively. I've gained confidence not just in my sporting ability but in myself as a person. Before, I would've avoided speaking up in a group, but now I feel comfortable leading a warm-up session or helping to organise an event' Young person

'[my] big thing has been building confidence with public speaking' Young person

'I feel like my presenting skills have improved and how to prepare before a presentation in a group. I also feel like I have a stronger understanding on how to work together and how to lead a group' Young person

Young people on NCS were also exposed to a wide range of career related opportunities. 72% of young people felt NCS had supported them to develop a better idea of what they would like to do as a career.

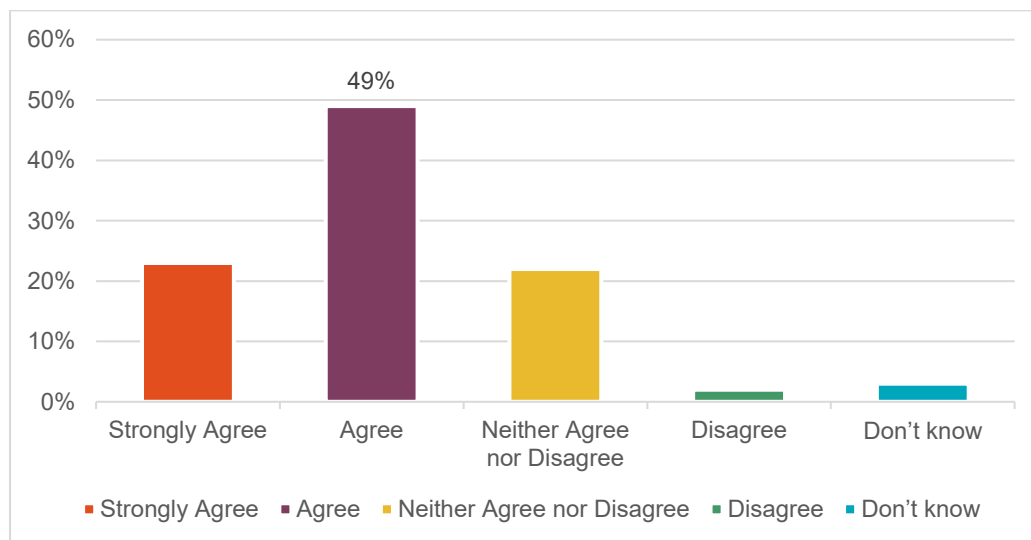


Figure 15 - Percentage of young people who agree they have a better idea of what they would like to do as a career

Young people referenced how the sessions had helped them build networks with other employers and had given them experience of different workplaces.

'I've made more friends, also like networking with like, other employers' Young person

'Its helped us young people gain more experience of work and meet new people and make friends' Young person

'The Insight Days were really good as we met business people and networked with employees. It open my mind to different industries' Young person

'It helps you to get experience for your future. It's good for building skills and developing yourself' Young person

'It can help you to focus more on the future because of the people that you meet' Young person

'I have seen different businesses and worked on our own projects' Young person

'It's them experiencing working in different dynamics, different offices, different situations, different tasks... getting them really comfortable in different situations that they would never normally go into' Youth organisation

It has also helped some young people to confirm what they would like to do in the future and progress with their employment journey.

'Although NCS is now complete, she remains a valued member of the club and is now helping new young people who join. Her confidence has grown massively, and she is now looking at how she can progress in the sport and gain a career in the fitness industry' Youth organisation

'I've been able to add new skills to my CV which has helped me to get a part-time job with Bromley Mencap as a support buddy' Young person

Social Action

The third area where NCS hopes to make a difference is around social action. 87% of young people who took part in NCS agree it helped them think about making changes to their community, shown in Figure 16.

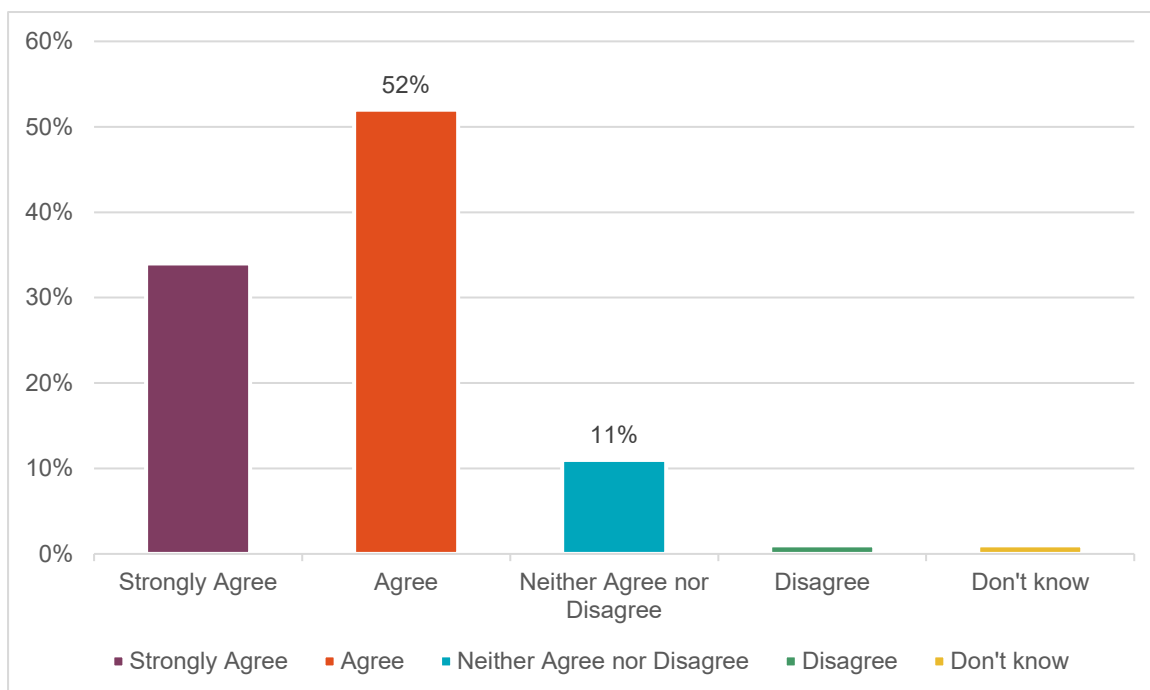


Figure 16 - Percentage of young people who agree NCS has helped them think about making changes in their community

The social action element gave young people the opportunity to deliver a project in their local community and to feel like they were making a difference. Young people actively identified this as the area that stood out most from their involvement in NCS.

'I really enjoyed the outdoor activities because they pushed me physically and mentally. I also liked working on the community project, as it made me feel like I was making a difference. The only thing I found difficult was the public speaking at first, but in the end, I was glad I did it because it helped me gain confidence' Young person

The social action projects gave young people a joint project to work on together bringing them a sense of pride about what they had achieved.

'[My favourite parts were] having fun. Meeting different people. Challenging activities like the campaigns, competitions and having to make sales' Young person

'[I enjoyed] Seeing how our efforts brought people together was a proud moment for me—it made me realise the impact sport can have beyond just playing the game' Young person

'[I enjoyed] Meeting other young people with similar mindset and working on projects with them' Young person

'[I gained] confidence and was empowered to deliver a social action project' Young person

Youth organisations also identified how this opportunity gave young people the confidence to take more action in their community.

'The confidence and skills she developed throughout the programme gave her the courage to continue making a difference in her community. She now volunteers for the girls-only sessions at Newark, where she continues to use the leadership and customer service skills she gained' Youth organisations

Events

The three career insight events were often used by youth organisations to count towards the hours the young people did around employability. The impact of these events was substantial to the young people and organisations involved and so we have put a specific spotlight on the impact of these events.

Overall from the young people who attended we found:

- 92% agreed they had tried something new
- 90% felt inspired by the sessions they had been to
- 92% agreed they had met new people as a result of attending the events

The key feature of the events is they exposed young people to a huge variety of different roles within an industry or sector. This gave young people insight into what opportunities may be available to them.

'I feel like it's like stuff that's gonna happen for us very soon..... you're at that point where you've got to make a decision about what happens next... And to hear other people who've maybe been in the same situation that's also, yeah, very inspiring' Young person

'I have found that the people are very accommodating, very nice. I've also been able to ask a lot of questions, been able to get some very nice, very good answers. And just like, understand that, okay, I need to take a step back and, like, understand where I actually really want to go, because if I want to get into that data analytics and data engineering for real. There's a very good chance of needing to go to uni for that. That's something I find very daunting because of like, maybe I would have to get into debt or stuff like that, and that definitely would need to find a job before I get into

anything. So just had to, like, take a step back. Do I really want to do this? I just need to, like, question myself' Young person

'It just gives you ideas of what you might want to do' Young person

As the events were located in central London, it created opportunities for young people to move out of their local area and to stretch their comfort zone.

'The events give us a reason to go outside the Borough, this is something that a lot of these young people need, just to know there is more outside... it's also networking for me as well' Youth organisation

The events also helped young people see the variety of different routes people had into their chosen career and the diversity of those routes.

'You learn more about other people and the diversity of their backgrounds, it's a good opportunity' Young person

'When we showed, like, a timeline of when we left school, we got into this career now, and we've done so many other things along the way. And I hope it just shows it doesn't matter what you study at uni or if you change your career at age 30, it doesn't matter just do whatever you're passionate about' Event presenter

'It was really like insightful because she was telling us about, even if your nervous or scared about going into the creative sector.. she was very passionate about just go and do what you have to do' Young person

The events also helped show the variety of opportunities within the sectors and space to consider different opportunities.

'It gives them [young people] a space to speak about things that are like dismissed, because a lot of the time creative, creative things in school and in certain households are not always the first career path that they're promoting' Youth organisation

'I feel like a lot of people do need to step out of their comfort zone, because if we just stuck in one place, you're not gonna get anywhere. So you need to, need to see other perspectives, other forms of creativity...for some people they don't know how to take the first step.. my goal is just not to stop' Young person

The events worked for two different groups of young people. As set out above, it raised awareness of possible careers. But for some young people they already wanted a career in the sector. These events put them directly in touch with potential employers, helping to build networks and connections with people already in the industry.

'I'd say it brought up a couple opportunities, like the second session that we did, the guy that did it for us, he like, left the like links to like his websites and stuff. So I'm gonna be like, even, like, emailing' Young person

'It gives you a chance to talk to people, to get tips, because they are already a professional' Young person

'You might not want to be a particular role, but you need to make links with people that have the links to other people' Event presenter

'I think, as well, the music industry is very it can seem very closed off and very like hard to get your foot in the door. So even just like meeting us now, they've got our contact details' Event presenter

The events also create a safe space for young people to build their networking skills and connect with other people

'So the value is just learning to network with people, building my own self confidence, building my like sales skills myself, because almost everything in life is sales and just like meeting new people, new experiences, just very good' Young person

'Events like these bring together different sectors, different people ...Events like these give me the opportunity to really delve and even ask questions and have a quick time response to a human interaction is really important, and especially speaking to humans who are doing what you're doing' Young person

'Actually knowing that it's okay to ask your friends and your family things like that. He was giving me advice on, basically, it's difficult if you're not in the job, but once you do find a job where you have a connection, it becomes easier and that you don't have to have a perfect, real perfect job.... But yeah, his insight was really good' Young person

For the event presenters, the sessions provided an opportunity to share the realities of working in the sector. It helped them highlight to young people the

challenges they are likely to face, but also how they can overcome these challenges.

'You have to be quite entrepreneurial to find a way through the creative sector' Event presenter

'If you love what you do, you will find it much easier... you have to have a thin skin to take in different influences but also a thick skin [because of the rejections]' Event presenter

'It's exposing young people to different ways and routes but also providing them with a bit of the reality... there are certain things I like to pass on' Event presenter

The events also helped highlight the value of the soft skills they will need in the workplace. In particular, the events helped highlight how valuable mindset and attitude was to being successful. The events also emphasised the importance of being able to have face-to-face interactions with young people.

'So we have a set of like values and things, but actually what they drill down into is attitudes and behaviours. And I think, an entry point level in your career. You don't need to come in with any particular level of experience, necessarily, but being able to demonstrate that you, you know, have that evolutionary mindset' Event presenter

'Really, there's the hard skills, the actual technical skills. ...But I think the soft skills are super important as well. And actually, you know, I went to school, ... I think that because of the advancement in technology, just from the period when I left school until the present day, people were so much more absorbed into their technology on a day to day basis, which to the point where I think it's negatively affected people's kind of self confidence and people's willingness to do things face to face in person' Event presenter

'I think grit and determination is the number one thing. Just keep trying. Keep knocking on the door' Event presenter

The final key strength of the events is they helped build a bridge between young people and industry opportunities. The events created a space where young people and industry could come together.

'I think organisations struggle with engaging young people and people. So there needs to be a bridge being built between both of those two entities' Event presenter

This in turn, helps raise awareness among young people of what is possible beyond what is taught in the schools.

'I think it's, I think it's a lack of awareness. Primarily, tech is, by its very nature, a technical industry. There's lots of words and lots of information that's quite difficult to understand to a lay person. So even if somebody's expressed some interest in getting into tech until very, very recently, these things are not being taught to children in schools' Event presenter

'The main thing is just understanding the experience they've got and how we can show them, like, how they could get into a role that includes the elements that they've done' Event presenter

Looking forward

Although NCS is coming to an end, the youth organisations involved in the evaluation were clear there is an ongoing need for programmes like NCS that provide young people with a range of opportunities to stretch their comfort zone.

Youth organisations identified how important it was to have opportunities for young people to build their social skills and have time that takes them away from the virtual world.

'Without programs like NCS, you're going to see in a few years time, when they're going to be wondering why people are still angry and completely disconnected' Youth organisation

'Big issues is concentration, the number of times they are on their phones.... It is hard for them to focus for the whole hour' Youth organisations

'You can quite easily stay home or a week and just live in a virtual space... not developing those social skills, learning how to be a team player' Youth organisations

Youth organisations and young people also expressed a desire for more industry exposure and more support in building a sustainable career.

'[It could be improved by having] more workshops from different industries would help and maybe work experience' Youth organisation

'They want to be a jack of all trades, master of none.... They want fast money, social media. Now there's so much opportunities in social media do a TikTok, a dance, whatever it is.... You have a large following on social media, and you can get paid for that. So yeah, there's that challenge as well. So

giving young people the chance to actually build a sustainable career is a challenge' Youth organisation

Case study – Start Easy

Start Easy supported 64 young people who took part in the programme. 48% of participants were male and 42% of participants were female. 8% qualified for free school meals.

The young people also identified how being involved in NCS had given them confidence to organise and run events. It had also given them confidence to take on more prominent roles in the community.

'After doing this event, I'm very much interested in continuing in like this political aspect. So I'm very interested in, like, hopefully picking up, like, projects like this, kind of being a part of this, and, you know, seeing where it really takes me and exploring like, I love working with things like this. Like I love doing events' Young person

The young people identified how important these opportunities were to them following Covid-19. These opportunities gave them a chance to meet new people and to extend and develop their social life.

'I think before COVID, I was a lot more social. And then after COVID, like, I just like, I don't know what it was, but I just, I started distancing myself. I started not enjoying where there's lots of people. I'm slowly getting back into it, but I've definitely not adjusted like I was before' Young person

Young people also identified how being part of the project had helped them develop their skills. This included prioritising, communication, presenting, and time management.

'I feel like my presenting skills have improved and how to prepare before a presentation in a group. I also feel like I have a stronger understanding on how to work together and how to lead a group' Young person

'It really made challenge myself on like skills and activities that I may face in my post 18 life allowing me to be fully equipped' Young person

Conclusions

Overall, NCS was an interesting programme for London Youth to deliver. It was a national programme that had a number of constraints making it difficult to deliver. The time frames for planning the delivery were short, the amount of funding per participant was small and the reporting requirements were substantial. This meant London Youth needed to think creatively in order to successfully deliver the programme.

As a result of the hard work and creativity of London Youth and the member youth organisations, NCS was delivered successfully. Young people developed life skills, had exposure to a wide range of employability experiences and they had the opportunity to create change in their local community.

Key successes

The key successes of NCS included the following areas.

Navigating the national programme

The NCS team at London Youth acted as the interface between the national structure and the youth organisations. This meant the team were able to understand and navigate the complex and bureaucratic rules the national NCS programme had in place.

The work of the LY NCS team meant it was possible for smaller grassroots organisations to be part of the delivery. The team worked hard to navigate their way through the reporting and to support smaller organisations to do this level of reporting.

NCS nationally was set up with strict criteria that made it accessible to a narrow group of organisations who could cope with weekly reporting and had existing infrastructure so they could hit large numbers from a small amount of funding. Having a dedicated team at London Youth meant a much more diverse range of organisations could be part of the portfolio of projects and young people could access NCS. Without the support of London Youth this would not have been possible.

Delivering effective youth work

One of the weaknesses of NCS was the small amount of funding per participant. But what this meant was that youth organisations could build on the structures they already had in place and enhance and add value to them. NCS meant young people had more opportunities available to them including more one-to-one time with youth workers, more employment opportunities and more opportunities to connect with their community.

NCS was also a programme with a flexible structure. There was no curriculum, or standard that young people needed to reach, other than participation. This meant youth organisations could be creative and flexible with what they delivered.

Achieving a range of outcomes

NCS led to young people developing a range of different outcomes. Young people developed life skills, in particular social skills. This was identified as particularly important post Covid-19 and an important area where young people continue to need support.

NCS also helped young people develop confidence and there have been several examples of young people being empowered to take action in their local community.

Events

The events were a considerable success of NCS. They reflect the important role London Youth play, convening young people and youth organisations. But also the reach London Youth has to a diverse network of wider organisations and speakers.

The events brought together numerous speakers and a large number of young people meaning there was considerable opportunity for young people to connect with each other and potential employers.

Summary of challenges

Awareness of the programme

It was clear during the evaluation that not every young person was aware they were part of an NCS session. Youth organisations did their best to raise awareness and to communicate the role NCS was playing but often young people were turning up to workshops and sessions where half the young people were ‘on NCS’ and half were taking part in the youth organisations existing programme. As NCS was often delivered as holiday events so young people could reach the hours they needed and then regular contact points in between, young people were not always aware of what was NCS and what wasn’t. Although for the young people this makes little difference to their day to day experience, for funders this lack of awareness can be problematic.

Bureaucratic machine

As we have already mentioned NCS had a number of rules that were designed for very large organisations with existing data infrastructure. For example, youth organisations had to commit to weekly reporting. This was hugely time intensive in relation to the size of the grant. The focus of the rules often seemed arbitrary and not linked to achieving programme outcomes. For example, a young person in Year

13 could be 'kicked off' NCS for turning 18 but their friend in the same year could stay as part of it.

Variation in some aspects of the delivery

NCS was an interesting combination of structure, rules and flexibility. The structure and rules linked to participation and reporting. But there was full flexibility on what the content of that delivery looked like in each organisation.

There are clearly lots of strengths in giving youth organisations the flexibility to deliver sessions that work for their young people. But it did mean there was variation in what 'counted' in the different streams. For example, for some youth organisations they considered social action when activities were delivered on the ground and in a community but others focused on the planning aspects of a theoretical social action project.

Attending events

One of the biggest challenges was encouraging young people to attend events. The challenge was created as London Youth had no direct relationship with the young people coming to the events and they required youth organisations to understand the content of the event and then advocate for it. Youth organisations also pulled out at the last minute because of illness or deciding to attend different activities instead. This again was a challenge for events.

Looking forward

The key learning for London Youth for future large-scale programmes:

- NCS shows the direct correlation between youth organisations worked with and the reach of those youth organisations. Those with existing connections reached a different diversity of young people compared to those doing large-scale recruitment programmes through schools or at career fairs. But smaller organisations need more support, necessitating a larger central team at London Youth
- The reporting requirements for NCS were substantial and did not add to the overall effectiveness of the delivery. London Youth should continue to work with large funders to help them recognise the need to balance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning requirements in a way that supports rather than hinders the project delivery
- The funding per participant for NCS was hugely modest. There were some strengths in that youth organisations used it for existing delivery rather than thinking they needed to create something new, but future programmes should look at ways of supporting youth organisations with adequate resource, whilst also ensuring there is enough resource for the central team to support grassroots organisations

- The full cost of events should be considered when looking at future delivery. The events were a huge success and should be continued but London Youth should consider ways they can cover the costs of youth workers to attend alongside young people and/or cover the cost of travel for the young people to attend. Explore ways for young people to act as champions for the events and to spread the word about why other young people should attend

Appendix 1 – Case studies

NCS Case Study: Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

About Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

Brentford FC Community Sports Trust is the Club Community Organisation (CCO) attached to Brentford Football Club. They have operated for over 35 years and operate a variety of programmes that use the power of football to help and support people of all ages. The work of the Trust is organised around four areas:

- Community Football Development;
- Youth and Community;
- Schools Provision; and
- Education, Employability and Training

NCS is one of several programmes delivered by the Youth and Community team.

About NCS

Brentford FC Community Trust runs one of the largest NCS – Local Delivery offers in London. Young people are able to access the NCS offer in a variety of different ways. The Trust is able to offer young people a hugely flexible offer. Delivery includes a Fast Track offer, where all three elements are available in a week and more spread out opportunities.

‘Our Fast Track is the most popular one, most young people tend to book onto it, I think because they’re looking for that qualification element, but also it is less time than if they did all three programmes separately’ Staff

Young people are recruited via career fairs, school assemblies but also refer a friend schemes, where young people are rewarded for encouraging their friends to attend. The Trust is successful in encouraging young people to take part, as it is able to be flexible depending on the cohort and the needs of the group.

‘What we offer is different, it depends on the cohort and where we are running location wise’ Staff

This flexibility helps young people to engage with NCS in a way that suits them. Young people have the opportunity to stay connected to the Trust through a fortnightly Changemakers session.

The three elements of NCS: Life Skills, Employability and Social Action are known as Enable, Elevate and Empower.

The delivery has evolved and developed over time. There is no set curriculum for NCS, so youth workers are empowered to deliver creative sessions that support young people to develop.

‘I tried to think.. well if I was freshly 18... what would I need’ Staff

The Enable sessions are designed to give young people a challenge and to have the opportunity to speak in public and ultimately to develop the skills they need for independent living.

‘We did sessions on self-care... we spoke about what it means, what it's like to be you.. also more theoretical stuff like money management, cooking, budgeting’ Staff

‘Sometimes life skills might have like a challenge like kayaking or rope climbing or creative story telling’ Staff

‘The main focus mostly is like how to live independently’ Young person

Elevate aligns with the employability element of NCS and is the most popular course the Trust offers through NCS. This section of delivery includes CV writing and mock interviews. The delivery has also evolved to include how to settle into a workplace.

‘They’ll do workshops on team work and problem solving, then we move into stuff like skills, what skill do I have... what skills do I need [to be a good communicator]’ Staff

The NCS team is able to tap into the opportunities available because of the wider employability work that takes place at the trust. This includes visits to local companies.

‘We run cross departmentally, so across the youth and employability department. Our employability lead will lead on all the employability stuff. We do a lot of insight days and visits. So we will go to an employer, or an employer will come to us. So in half term, the young people went to Sky Studios, which was amazing. They also went to Ford, got to go around the factory, see all the brand new cars. Got driven around in brand new cars. And some of them came away from Ford with work experience, having gone into it with no interest in cars, but then realising, Oh, actually, what I want to do is in the car world. This is a really cool company’ Staff

The final element is the social action, or Empower element. The Trust had a variety of approaches to this section of the delivery.

'We do a two-day program where we spent a day talking about politics, public speaking importance of youth input in sessions and like the wide community and exploring the community. Then we'll do a day either volunteering or creating a theoretical social action project' Staff

The NCS team also organised opportunities for young people to take part in larger social action projects. This included hosting a stand about knife crime as part of a music festival and running a Five Ways to Wellbeing event at the stadium.

The Trust offer incentives throughout the NCS delivery to support engagement. This is seen as a key strength by young people.

'We're big on certificates because it's like a good incentive. And a lot of young people around here, we've got a lot of deprived areas, so certificates of participation are, like a big part of our NCS' Staff

'My friends told me about it ...unfortunately, they had some stuff to do, but I still wanted to check it out, because they ... said we're going to get a certificate from the Prime Minister, which obviously is a very nice certificate' Young person

All young people who take part in NCS have the opportunity to join the fortnightly Changemakers sessions. These provide young people with the opportunity to continue their personal development and have the opportunity to create change in their community.

'Changemakers is at its heart, it's a social action group. But it is always changing and adapting.... it was like hardcore social action to begin with, and then young people dropped off. And also some young people said, this is a lot for me. So actually, we've stripped it right back' Staff

Who took part?

Overall, 970 young people took part in the programme. 45% of participants were male and 44% of participants were female. 10% qualified for free school meals

What was delivered?

141 young people completed experience 1, 88 young people completed experience 2 and 103 young people completed experience 3. 106 young people completed at least one experience and 70 completed all three.

What was achieved?

The NCS programme delivered by Brentford FC Community Trust has provided young people with the opportunity to have new experiences and to try new things. Crucially, it is a programme that supports the development of the whole young person.

'Part of the role of the NCS programme is helping to broaden young people's horizons, and it is helping them understand they don't necessarily have to have a direct interest in something to gain a lot from the experience' Staff

'I think it's [strength is] being able to take young people on that complete journey... I was just talking to my youth workers earlier about the journey. And for NCS ...they are maybe high achievers, but because they've gone through kind of that personal development, they've gone through the social development ...and then they're focusing on community, and how are we going to support the community, and what can we do and that like active citizenship, so I think the journey piece is really important' Staff

Young people told us that being involved in NCS had helped them develop their skills, in particular connecting with others and having to speak in front of others.

'Like I'm better, in social situations, like how to talk to people, how to connect. And like finding my way around, like my navigation skills' Young person

'It's helped me develop my social skills, and it's just fun' Young person

'I got, like, new friends, definitely some experiences I wouldn't like normally have' Young person

'My highlight is getting to know like other people and stuff, because, like, every other week you meet someone new, and you engage with other people as well, and that's basically it. And I learned how to basically speak out loud, not to get, like, embarrassed and stuff like that, how to speak to someone else' Young person

Young people and the NCS staff team also told us how being involved in NCS helped develop their confidence.

'I definitely see a lot develop confidence. A lot of our young people are quite studious, not all of them, and they're the very typical studious young people. ...one of them was a young person who came in for our kick-off event and would not speak to a single person, sat in the corner, did not speak. By the

end of the summer, we do so much public speaking in our program, like every day, they're expected to public speak. By the end of the program, we could not make them be quiet, which was a good thing. And now he's part of our youth voice upstairs talking to our safeguarding auditors' Staff

'I'm definitely more confident' Young person

Young people have also gained practical outputs, including a CV, and had the opportunity to link into wider opportunities that are available through the Trust.

'I think that I'm privileged to be here as well, because when I asked them [friends] about if they have a CV ...most of them were like, no, we didn't do it, but I'm here already done, checked over, and then also they went through driving lessons and stuff like that, which is also very important for me, especially because after A-levels, I want to be able to drive' Young person

'I think a few things [I've gained], obviously, the first thing is the opportunities I've been given from all sides of the Trust. Again, I've done my Level One Youth Work I think with me, confidence and like talking to people is a big one ... that's a really big one' Young person

The sessions have also helped connect young people to their local community.

'Just listening to and engaging with the community was really cool' Young person

'I would say it made me more aware of the outside world... And they actually enjoyed it very much, because we bought stuff and we gave it to them for free, which also opened their eyes about knife crimes.' Young person

Ultimately, though, NCS at the Trust has provided young people with a safe space where they can be themselves.

'I've become a lot more laid back. I remember before I used to be, like, self conscious and stuff like that. I see new people every day here. I interact with people every day. So yeah, I really thought like in school, most people are like, they're not the most kindest people you meet. But then I realised here, it's like people a lot more kinder. It's like it changes your perspective' Young person

Learning for others

The key learning from the NCS project includes:

- Flexibility – the Trust developed an NCS model that suited young people and delivered the requirements of the programme. The delivery was flexible depending on how the young people wanted to engage and the experiences they wanted to engage with
- Developing the whole person – the focus on life skills and social action alongside employability, gave the Trust the opportunity to support the young person in all aspects of their life
- Creativity – the team at the Trust could work creatively to develop content for NCS. This included working with internal and external partners to enhance the offer available for the young people who were involved

NCS Case Study: Project Zero

About Project Zero

Project Zero is a Community Interest Company that aims to: *see a year when there has been ZERO deaths of a young person through knife or violent crime*. It aims to do this by engaging young people in a variety of positive activities that help reduce anti-social behaviour and build community cohesion. Project Zero offers a wide range of opportunities for young people, including holiday programmes, engagement programmes and alternative provision. They also offer a Youth Champions programme which was used as the platform for Project Zero's NCS delivery.

About NCS

NCS was delivered alongside the wider work that Project Zero undertake. It provided a focus, which complemented the Young Champions programme, so Project Zero could offer young people more opportunities.

'We use it as an engagement tool for our young people.... NCS acted as two different things, one it was being able to give them lots of different activities.... its giving them a purpose' Staff

The first step for Project Zero is to work with young people in their own space. This allows them to build a relationship, so when the opportunity comes to broaden their horizons, young people are willing to take the opportunities on.

'A lot of these guys don't travel outside of their area post-Covid... so every time we use it as an opportunity to take those guys away' Staff

'The...young people that we work with are at risk of being involved in gangs, they are considered as vulnerable from low-income families... these are the kind of young people that we're working with. They don't know how to fit in

society. They don't know how to present and talk to people. They're very shy and all that kind of stuff' Staff

Project Zero offered young people a wide variety of opportunities as a result of NCS. A highlight was a Careers Fair that took place in February 2025. This event brought together a wide range of employers and young people from Project Zero and beyond. The fair resulted in concrete offers of work placements being made to young people connected to the project.

Social action was weaved throughout the work Project Zero undertook.

'Under the social action.. we did lots of different events and programmes where they're meeting different people going to different places' Staff

The variety of social action was substantial. One group grew sunflowers so the whole street was full of boxes of sunflowers. Project Zero also did a Christmas Appeal with a focus on local community projects. This helped connect young people to what was happening in their local community.

Project Zero maximises the opportunities for young people by working in partnership.

'We don't try to sit here and do all ourselves. As you can see, there's so many different people around the place that's got so much more to offer that can share different things. A lot of organisations are very scared to bring their own people in, but I think collaboration and working together is really important for us. That's the driving force before behind anything I do' Staff

Who took part?

Overall, 36 young people took part in the programme. 66% of participants were male and 33% of participants were female. 89% qualified for free school meals

What was delivered?

29 young people completed experience 1, 26 young people completed experience 3. 29 young people completed at least one experience.

What was achieved?

The NCS programme delivered by Project Zero has focused on helping young people connect with each other and to have the confidence to access the opportunities that are available to them.

'That 15 to 18-year-old group, the opportunities are quite limited, and without organisations, or without concerted effort, by doing something where, regardless of what it is, ...I think a lot of the issues that we have now,

young people are getting very desensitised with being on their phones .. and things not being real. So even just talking to another person that is hard for them, you know, that's not the world that I grew up in, you know, but for this generation, it is really hard for them' Staff

The work is helping young people build confidence and come out of their shells. This then helps young people connect with the opportunities that are available to them. The team at Project Zero is able to do this because they are relatable and act as role models to the young people they work with.

'I think it's also like knowing Steve, like, gives you a lot of opportunities, because he knows a lot of people as well, so you get, like, connections and stuff that you wouldn't get otherwise' Young person

'Trust in your employer is a very important skill to have, especially since he knows so many people. So we know that even if we didn't want to continue here, he could probably lead us onto someone else who is more like suited for us' Young person

The opportunities provided through NCS and Project Zero have provided young people with the opportunity to make new friends and to develop their skills, in particular young people referenced how their communication skills had improved.

'You kind of feel better when you do something. And also like the people around, like the people that I'm with every day when I come in, I like them, their friends, everyone's friends' Young person

'[the highlight has been] I think just seeing the kids actually wanting to engage with the activities... it's just that experience of learning to make new friends and communicate' Young person

'I've learned communication, where I want to work you probably need a lot of communication' Young person

The way Project Zero works is it helps build responsibility and organisation, helping young people develop their skills but also to give back and see the benefit of that.

'I think [I've learned] organisation as well, and responsibility, because, although you have people who are above you that, like, you can go to if there's a real problem, a lot of the time, like someone is always going to be doing something. So sometimes there's situations where you just have to do it yourself, and you have to take the initiative, which I think it's like, probably something I wouldn't have done before' Young person

'I think [I've enjoyed] just seeing like the kids, like actually benefiting from us being there and also just how much they enjoyed the trips and all the directions they get as well' Young person

Young people also told us how being involved in NCS had helped stretch their comfort zone and build patience.

'Before the summer, I hadn't pretty much spoken to many people that I didn't know, but it kind of forced me to get out there. It forced me out of my comfort zone' Young person

'I am definitely more patient' Young person

Learning for others

The key learning from the NCS project includes:

- Reach – working with Project Zero allowed NCS to reach young people who had the opportunity to benefit most from the experiences
- Building on existing structures and partnerships – the approach was successful because it added value to existing work that was taking place and allowed the team to offer more opportunities to the young people they were working with
- Creating opportunities for young people to take on responsibility – the Young Champions element of Project Zero delivery helps young people connect with their community and give something back

NCS Case Study: Start Easy

About Start Easy

Start Easy is an exciting and innovative company that aims to facilitate change in local communities through mainstreaming human rights, gender equality and sustainable development, through training, education and the creation of partnerships. Start Easy work with the youth sector to co-design youth development programmes. They also work with youth organisations to engage young people. This case study focuses on the NCS work they delivered in partnership with a Saturday morning Arabic School at Ark Academy, Wembley.

About NCS

The NCS delivery built on an existing partnership, who were working with young people of NCS age. The ethos of the Arabic school aligns with NCS. Young people develop their language skills by developing community projects that are important and relevant to them.

'Through the activities where they work together, they respect each other, they boost each other, and there is no right or wrong' Staff

'We do art base, we do cross curricular base, ... I start with a guiding them, then they finish ... designing their own final project' Staff

'I'll be honest, I didn't actually want to come. Like, to me, these little social clubs were just not for me. Like, I just never found people that I, like, enjoyed or whatever. But then I came in and I felt like, whoa. Like, everyone's actually, like everyone's so accepting of each other. Everyone actually wants to do something. Everyone has an opinion, kind of vibe' Young person

The approach of the school helps them to develop and to be connected to the community, whilst embracing and engaging their heritage language.

'I always had this idea my students had to be productive outside, in the community' Staff

'It's and when you say life skills, for me, ... I want them to have this life, and I want them to have a voice .. And I wanted them to get these life skills into real life' Staff

As part of the NCS, they pitched a social action project to London Youth to secure funding. The young people wanted to host an event that highlighted conflict and islamophobia. The group were successful in securing funding and this led to them working on the event. The group worked together to design the event.

'Every week we worked on something different... we watched videos and got inspiration from that' Young person

The original plan was to have films playing, activities for people to engage with, food available to buy and a panel of speakers.

'We worked on making videos. Because our idea was, like, having an event that had, like, videos playing around, but also selling food at the same time, and that money goes to charity' Young person

The group found creating the films was the most challenging element, as all involved had an opinion of what should be included. The young people learned important skills around collaboration and leadership.

'It took the longest because there was a lot of discussion on how we wanted to go about the videos' Young person

‘So a lot of different opinions. A lot of people want to give their idea, so things like that. So it was just kind of like sifting through the ideas that we need and just actually just finalising it. I think that was the most difficult thing, because it was like, How do I tell this person to stop giving me ideas?’
Young person

‘And we were like, Okay, let's stop thinking about the videos. Let's just finish it. And I think that's when we worked on the paintings as well, because we actually also did a canvas.... each one said, war, conflict and justice, and then we translated it in Arabic as well. So we worked on the background, then we did the calligraphy, then we filled it in, and then it was there for the people to, kind of literally, like, just decorate it, write what they wanted to write. So it was an interactive activity, and we still have it today’ Young person

The group worked hard to make sure they were well organised for the event and that everyone involved had a role. They took on full responsibility for all aspects of the day, including budgeting.

‘Some of the other things that we kind of worked on doing, was to do lists, making sure everyone has a role. ... buying stuff.. I think we underestimated how many things we had to buy, and I was struggling with the budget. I think, ... I basically was the one like that kind of got the stuff for, like, the budget, because I was, like, in charge of that aspect’ Young person

The young people also reflected on what they had learned from running the event and what they would change, but they also celebrated the success of what they delivered.

‘I think if I were to change anything about that event, I would focus more on the panel versus the video.... That was our favourite part. Also, I felt as though the people actually enjoyed it, because we were having, like, some very interesting topics and conversations, and I definitely could have spoken a lot more, versus just keeping it to 45 minutes’ Young person

‘Because there's so many things going on when you're running events so much. And I think it's because we had so many ideas for this event. ... And I feel like with the time that we had and it being our first time ever hosting an event, I think we did really well’ Young person

Who took part?

Overall, 64 young people took part in the programme. 48% of participants were male and 42% of participants were female. 8% qualified for free school meals

What was delivered?

21 young people completed experience 1, 28 young people completed experience 2, and 30 young people completed experience 3. 26 young people completed experience 3. 7 young people completed all three events

What was achieved?

Start Easy worked with 64 young people and a sample completed a survey to share what the impact of their involvement in NCS had been. This identified:

- 55% strongly agreed, with the remaining agreeing they had learnt life skills as a result of taking part in NCS
- 72% agreed or strongly agreed they had made new friends
- 45% strongly agreed, with the remaining agreeing, they improved their skills for the work place as a result of taking part in NCS
- 45% agreed or strongly agreed they had a better idea of what they would like to do as a career as a result of NCS
- 36% strongly agreed, with the remaining agreeing that taking part in NCS had helped them think about making positive changes to their community
- 45% strongly agreed and 45% agreed they felt more confident as a result of the activities they had done through NCS

The young people also identified how being involved in NCS had given them confidence to organise and run events. It had also given them confidence to take on more prominent roles in the community.

'It's great to, like, have these opportunities so you can grow from it. So I would definitely do it again. But I've learned a lot of things. I've learned a lot about preparations. I think I would actually be a lot stricter on some people as well. I don't think I'd be as afraid to tell someone to, like, be quiet' Young person

'After doing this event, I'm very much interested in continuing in like this political aspect. So I'm very interested in, like, hopefully picking up, like, projects like this, kind of being a part of this, and, you know, seeing where it really takes me and exploring like, I love working with things like this. Like I love doing events' Young person

Young people highlighted how important it was to have these opportunities that stretched their comfort zone and allowed them to connect with people outside of their usual network.

'I think people are very different from when they're in high school and when they're in sixth form or college. Very different. And what I've come to like, realise is that people in high school, they don't really know what they're like doing, and they're sort of, I don't know how to explain it, but they don't want to go out there and do things. They just want to stay in their little bubble' Young person

'But I feel like maybe in high school, people are just more enclosed and they don't want to show who they really are. They don't, want to show that like they're interested in things sometimes, because I feel like, because they're gonna feel like they're being judged' Young person

'I really liked how open I was to other people's opinions. I liked I was hearing other people's views, because I feel like I was so enclosed in my little bubble, I only knew my view and people around me had similar views. So it was really nice to just have that and get out of my comfort zone' Young person

The young people identified how important these opportunities were to them following Covid-19. These opportunities gave them a chance to meet new people and to extend and develop their social life.

'I think before COVID, I was a lot more social. And then after COVID, like, I just like, I don't know what it was, but I just, I started distancing myself. I started not enjoying where there's lots of people. I'm slowly getting back into it, but I've definitely not adjusted like I was before' Young person

'I would like sit on my little computer and I wouldn't want to talk to anyone. I wouldn't want to go to break and talk to my friends. I just want to sit there and go home. Whereas now I want to go out on a social life, because I'm in college now as well... I feel like I'm more open now, and I want to do more stuff' Young person

'I just love the fact that in that space, it creates a space where your kind of open to other people's opinions. You're accepting and I think this is something that is very lacked in today's society' Young person

'[I enjoyed] being with friends and meeting new people and working as a group' Young person

Young people also identified how being part of the project had helped them develop their skills. This included prioritising, communication, presenting, and time management.

'I think I became a bit more patient....at the beginning, I was probably the most impatient person ever. I was like leading it, probably because of the stress, but it also taught me to not be stressed about so many things, and I took that with me into my day-to-day life. So it taught me a lot of things. It taught me like, you know, how to prioritise work, how to balance my work life with my projects and my thing. It really taught me, like, a lot about time management' Young person

'I feel like my presenting skills have improved and how to prepare before a presentation in a group. I also feel like I have a stronger understanding on how to work together and how to lead a group' Young person

'It really made me challenge myself on like skills and activities that I may face in my post 18 life, allowing me to be fully equipped' Young person

'My communication skills have improved as well as my development as a person' Young person

'I am more confident and willing to speak in front of an audience'

Young people also shared their advice for others about why they should get involved with projects like NCS.

'Getting out of your comfort zone. Just explore new things. Keep your options open. You don't have to stick to the same thing you're doing. If you don't like it, it's fine, get out of it, but you will, you will come to understand that you like a lot of things that you thought you wouldn't like. So just keep your options open' Young person

'I would say, like, explore different options. Like, you'll get the opportunity to kind of just self-discovery, like, I'll literally just look at them and like, you're probably so confused about life right now, and honestly, I'm the same, but this has really helped me through self-discovery' Young person

Learning for others

The key learning from the NCS project includes:

- Partnerships – the range of partnerships Start Easy have in place allowed them to reach a diverse range of young people and provided them with access to opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have had
- Social action – the young people had the opportunity to deliver sessions on topics they were passionate about and linked to their heritage

- Comfort zone – giving young people responsibility for the whole event provided opportunities for them to develop and stretch their comfort zone

NCS Case Study: Trapped in Zone One

About Trapped in Zone One

Trapped in Zone One is an award-winning youth and community organisation. They work creatively to engage young people, offering opportunities for art and culture alongside opportunities to be active. If young people enjoy sport, it is used as a gateway to the arts and if young people enjoy arts, it is used as a gateway to sport. Part of Trapped in Zone One's work is the creation of public murals which they use to engage the community.

For the NCS work, they offered a combination of one-to-one opportunities and a school-based project.

About NCS

Trapped in Zone One offered NCS as both a school linked opportunity and a community opportunity. The aim of their work was to create opportunities for young people to connect with each other and have opportunities for social interaction.

'Especially this age group. They are so on the phone or tablets. Talking is just not their thing. It's not their fault. It's just, the anxiety just took them in that way, and our attention span is just getting shorter and shorter' Staff

Helping young people connect means providing them with opportunities young people want to engage with.

'You have to provide them with enrichment that's really engaging so they can connect, otherwise they don't talk to you and you get a blank stone face ...so that's why the NCS, if it works, it's amazing, because we see a beautiful change in them, and they grow within that' Staff

Trapped in Zone One knows that high-quality youth engagement takes time and a trusting relationship needs to be built. But that it is also a difficult age range to engage with.

'[Engaging them] takes a lot of provision and extracurricular activities, going to, like trips and all that kind of stuff to show that there's a lot more than just a room' Staff

'I've spoken to London Youth, as well about this. This age group is really hard to stay connected. They commit to doing something, and then last minute say, I can't come because I have to go somewhere, or my mood is gone and all that' Staff

Trapped in Zone one delivered some of their NCS work in partnership with a local school. But at times this partnership was challenging as sessions would be cancelled at short notice or staff involved in the organising would be enthusiastic to start with, but then difficult to get hold of to finalise arrangements.

'For us, it's been a bit of a stop start. Certain young people have attended, some people I've been speaking to online, trying to get them to come together So it's been kind of getting trying to get them involved in social action, create their own stuff' Staff

But Trapped in Zone Ones' regular community presence means they have been able to provide a wider range of opportunities for young people. This has involved supporting young people with employability support but then also championing young people who have an idea or a passion.

'I'm happy when people come to me, [with an idea and say] I want to do this, because then I will do it. I didn't have someone like me [growing up]. So when someone approaches me saying, they have an idea, it can happen. Anything. Just have some faith' Staff

Who took part?

Overall, 26 young people took part in the programme. 19% of participants were male and 81% of participants were female.

What was delivered?

12 young people completed experience 1, 2 young people completed experience 2, and 30 young people completed experience 3. 13 young people completed experience 3. 2 young people completed all three experiences

What was achieved?

The key element that NCS is supporting is helping young people who missed out on experiences because of Covid-19. Working with Trapped in Zone One allows them to catch up on their experiences and build connections with other young people.

'You see, the same faces each year, and it's their development, their personal development..... they shine next time you see them. The more used to you they are then they build that rapport. And I think that connection

between a young person and a youth worker is really valuable, and it's, it's a very strong relationship that you should hold' Staff

But the real strength of Trapped in Zone One's delivery is supporting young people who have a passion to undertake a social action project. One young person connected with Trapped in Zone One as a result of the mural workshop they ran at Brick Lane. The workshop connected them with the team and they found out about the opportunity to be supported to do their own social action project.

'I really wanted to focus on my artistic side. Just to get out there within the community artistically. So I found that opportunity, and I just took it ...I'm doing one [a social action project] about raising awareness of South Asian heritage within London and how the culture has shaped London social and cultural spaces' Young person

Trapped in Zone One is supporting them to put on an event that will raise awareness of the cultural heritage of South Asians in London.

'It is about, you know, the cultural heritage of South Asians within London, their struggles coming here, the racism they had to face, and then also now going on to like the future. Now, what are the new generations? What's their legacy? ... So the whole reason I want to do this exhibition is to get together the different generations of South Asians within London, so we can all learn from each other, learn by each other's difficulties becoming an artist, but also like developing yourself' Young person

The vision is the event will bring together artists and the community.

'[There will be] loads of young artists, and artists from generation coming together, displaying the work, photographers. There's gonna be a workshop of someone going down teaching kids how to paint' Young person

For the young person involved, they have been given the opportunity to develop their ideas and develop the project. This has helped them develop a wide range of practical skills and connections.

'I think time management has been a very, very big part, you know, balancing A-levels home life, you know, other stuff I do as well, as well as organising this.... So it's been balancing those different parts... and then also my writing skills as well, reaching out to different people, you know, structuring properly what I want them to do, how I want them to do it, stuff like that. So just communication, organisation skills and time management [is what I've learned]' Young person

'I felt like, over the past year, from July to onwards, until now, I've made so many connections. So it's allowed me to connect with other people and see their experiences' Young person

NCS has given Trapped in Zone One the flexibility to give young peoples ideas energy and commitment.

'So to me, it's a lot of work. I get that, but when I see the potential in someone, it's just worth it. ... I just allow people to approach and talk and go back home and have a think and then come back with the most outrageous idea, anything can work ... So I'm going, let's just try it' Staff

Learning for others

The key learning from the NCS project includes:

- Value of bespoke support – although it can be challenging to manage, the bespoke support on offer through Trapped in Zone One has allowed big ideas to be implemented
- Challenge of school-based partnerships – it is often a challenge to work in schools as timetables and enthusiasm can vary
- Balance of support – there is considerable value in having experienced people who have worked in HR or similar disciplines and who bring life experience, alongside people of a similar age who are relatable

NCS Case Study: Career Insight Days

About the Career Insight Days

As part of the internal learning from Year 1, the NCS team at London Youth chose to re-focus the events to focus on Career Insight Days. Three of these were organised across the year covering:

- Digital and technology careers
- Sports careers
- Arts careers

What was delivered

The events were a huge added value element that London Youth brought to NCS. The events provided young people with exposure to a wide range of professionals and helped open the eyes of young people to the huge range of careers that were on offer in any industry. The variety of industries helped showcase a wide range of different sectors.

The career days had a variety of inspirational speakers who could showcase their profession and the journey they had been on to achieve their professional goal.

‘So that’s why I’m passionate about doing this. Because I didn’t know. There was nobody in my family that was in the same industry ...so I have a very convoluted route, and I guess that’s something I want to pass on to the young people, that there is only one route into the creative sector’ Event speaker

Youth workers told us how they would not be able to put on events like this and they were a unique aspect of the additional support provided by London Youth. The reach of London Youth meant more speakers and more opportunities for young people to mix.

‘We love to give our young people these wider opportunities’ Youth organisation

‘You get to mix a lot of experiences, and it like enhances everyone. It helps everyone as a whole’ Youth organisation

The biggest challenge for London Youth was getting young people to attend. Sign up to the events was good. In the case of the Arts Careers Day there was a waiting list. But between 30-50% of young people signed up did not attend.

There are several reasons for this. One of the strengths of the events is that they brought young people together from across London. However, it meant young people needed to travel and were often reliant on youth workers to support them to attend.

This reliance on youth workers meant the young people being able to attend meant they were vulnerable to staff being unavailable at the last minute. Similarly youth workers may book young people onto multiple events and see on the day what they were most interested in doing.

One of the key points identified is that London Youth has no direct relationship with the young people. They are reliant on youth organisations and the relationship they have with the young people to pitch the event and explain what will be involved.

This can mean young people are only vaguely aware of what they are attending or what the benefit of the event might be to them.

‘We only found out what was going on when we first came into the room when we were signing in... and there was like you’ve got the opportunity to do this, that sounds really interesting’ Young person

Other barriers identified by youth organisations included:

- The sessions start too early and with travel this can mean an early start for young people often during the holidays
- The events are taking place in a different area and young people may be nervous about travelling to different postcodes
- There is a peer pressure group mentality and they may only be interested in going if their friends are doing it
- It is expensive to travel across London and the events are not always easy to get to
- The sessions may not be immediately of interest to the young people and they don't understand the reason for doing it
- The environment may be unfamiliar and they don't feel confident about attending

Youth organisations identified the following ideas for how to engage more young people in events:

- Increase the marketing and create interactive and attractive ways for young people to engage. Provide information in a format that young people can easily share among their peer group
- Create a referral rewards scheme so young people are encouraged to refer their peer group to attend
- Promote the success of previous events and what has happened to some young people as a result of attending
- Link the event to a wider circle of provision so young people receive follow on support

The other key issue identified by youth organisations was overcoming postcode barriers and supporting young people to travel to the venue. A key point identified by the youth organisations was to provide funding for young people to travel, including private hire vehicles, and also funding for youth workers to attend the events alongside young people, so acting as chaperones.

What was achieved?

138 young people attended the events along with 22 youth workers. Levels of satisfaction with the events was huge with:

- 97% of young people enjoying the workshops
- 96% of young people felt included and comfortable taking part

Overall from the young people who attended we found:

- 92% agreed they had tried something new
- 90% felt inspired by the sessions they had been to
- 92% agreed they had met new people as a result of attending the events

The key feature of the events is they exposed young people to a huge variety of different roles within an industry or sector. This gave young people insight into what opportunities may be available to them.

'I have found that the people are very accommodating, very nice. I've also been able to ask a lot of questions, been able to get some very nice, very good answers. And just like, understand that, okay, I need to take a step back and, like, understand where I actually really want to do. Because if I want to get into that data analytics and data engineering for real. There's a very good chance of needing to go to uni for that. That's something I find very daunting because of like, maybe I would have to get into debt or stuff like that, and that definitely would need to find a job before I get into anything. So I just had to, like, take a step back. Do I really want to do this? I just need to, like, question myself' Young person

The events helped young people see the variety of different routes people had into their chosen career and the diversity of those routes.

'You learn more about other people and the diversity of their backgrounds, it's a good opportunity' Young person

The events also helped show the variety of opportunities within the sectors and space to consider different opportunities.

'I feel like a lot of people do need to step out of their comfort zone, because if we just stuck in one place, you're not gonna get anywhere. So you need to, need to see other perspectives, other forms of creativity...for some people they don't know how to take the first step.. my goal is just not to stop' Young person

The events worked for two different groups of young people. It raised awareness of possible careers. But for some young people they already wanted a career in the sector. These events put them directly in touch with potential employers, helping to build networks and connections with people already in the industry.

'I'd say it brought up a couple opportunities, like the second session that we did, the guy that did it for us, he like, left the like links to like his websites and stuff. So I'm gonna be like, emailing' Young person

The events also create a safe space for young people to build their networking skills and connect with other people

'So the value is just learning to network with people, building my own self confidence, building my like sales skills of myself, because almost everything

in life sales and just like meeting new people, new experiences, just very good' Young person

The events also helped highlight the value of the soft skills they will need in the workplace. In particular, the events helped highlight how valuable mindset and attitude was to being successful. The events also emphasised the importance of being able to have face-to-face interactions with young people.

'I think grit and determination is the number one thing. Just keep trying. Keep knocking on the door' Event presenter

The final key strength of the events is they helped build a bridge between young people and industry opportunities. The events created a space where young people and industry could come together.

Learning for others

The key learning from the NCS project includes:

- No such thing as too much information – when communicating about events there is no such thing as too much information. Information gets lost during communication but young people are more likely to attend if they have a clear idea of what sessions will be attending on the day
- Easy to attend but hard to cancel – although it is challenging to do, there is an argument for introducing a cancellation fee if youth organisations are unable to attend on the day of the event without a strong reason. This could include a financial penalty
- Use young people as advocates – young people can encourage other young people to attend, by using young people to raise awareness of the events and why they are worth attending, this could increase engagement and attendance

