

It's time to inspire Britain's teenagers



National Citizen Service for the 21st Century:
a six-week programme for every school leaver

Foreword by David Cameron

I've outlined a mission for the next Conservative Government which I believe is the central challenge of our times – healing Britain's broken society. Just as our economy needed radical treatment in the seventies and eighties, so our social fabric urgently needs repair today. Whether it is crime, substance abuse or addiction, young talent going to waste, human potential untapped or individual spirits crushed by lack of opportunity, there is a pressing need for change. I want to shift the balance in our country so we support those who strive for the best and inspire the next generation with a vision of hope.

My approach is rooted in my natural optimism. I believe that if you give people more opportunities and a greater chance to shape their own lives they will, overwhelmingly, do the right thing. And I feel a real sense of urgency about the need to mobilise the forces which unify us as a country. We need to overcome the boundaries, whether of prejudice or circumstance, which prevent us all feeling part of one nation. That's why I am determined to ensure that the next Conservative Government provides a radical and exciting new opportunity for all the nation's young people. And that's what this document is about.

Last year I called on the voluntary sector to work together and pool its expertise to identify the components of a new national programme for young people. I'm delighted with the progress that has been made through the Young Adult Trust over the past 20 months, and I now want us to put in place a universal scheme which gives every 16-year-old the chance of a life-changing experience. My vision would harness the talents, commitment and energy of our young people by making their seventeenth year, the bridge between their teenage life and young adulthood, a time for them to develop as individuals by putting something back into society.

Whether individuals are leaving school, moving on from their GCSEs to another qualification, or have dropped out of the system altogether, our national programme would take them out of their comfort zones, provide them with a chance to mix with others away from home, give them a challenging mission to fulfil and enable them to be stretched in an environment they would never, otherwise, have encountered. In the middle of the last century National Service helped prepare young people for adult life, as well as bringing Britain together in one shared, classless, patriotic mission. Britain has changed immeasurably since then. Our society is freer and more complex. But recapturing the virtues of that experience and delivering those values, of personal growth and service to others, through a new sort of National Citizen Service, designed for the 21st Century, is my ambition.

The next Conservative Government will work with all those superb voluntary organisations, who have done so much to improve and enrich the lives of young people, to deliver a programme which is universal, challenging and substantial.

There will be several components to the National Citizen Service programme. I envisage giving every young person who wants it the chance to work on a substantial project which will leave something enduring, whether it is improving their local environment, laying the foundations for a much-needed piece of local infrastructure or collaborating on a cultural event. I believe that every young person should have also the chance to spend at least two weeks away from home, mixing with others from radically different backgrounds. And the programme has to include a real challenge – whether it's a week of basic training with the military or preparing a presentation to the board of a new social enterprise. Put all those elements together – the act of substantial community service, the time away on a residential course and the really testing challenge – and you have six weeks which help prepare young people for the rest of their life.

At the end of the programme, every young person will have made giant steps in their personal transition to adulthood, having stretched themselves, found their prejudices and limitations challenged, and acquired new confidence. I hope we can construct a ceremony open to all to mark our young people's successful progress through this rite of passage, something which can affirm our shared citizenship and bring the next generation together.

I also believe that this programme should not be an end in itself but a route to further achievements for all young people – those who make a success of this rite of passage should be given a tangible reward which helps them reach their next ambition.

I have now established a new Policy Group to oversee the development of this National Citizen Service programme. This Policy Group will include seven working groups so that we can ensure a smooth implementation as soon as we achieve government.

We will be directly advised by young people themselves and I'm delighted that representatives of youth organisations as well as leading figures from commerce and the public sector have agreed to work with us to ensure this vision can become a reality. The precise details of how we can deliver this new opportunity have to be decided by the experts, who know what works. But it's the job of politicians to outline their vision, and make clear the values which should guide policy.

My vision is clear – a modern chance to serve the community which brings Britain together and unlocks the full potential of the next generation. My foundation stones are simple – it has to be universal, challenging and involve a residential element with young people mixing beyond their own communities. And my values are what drive me to deliver this programme – my belief in public service, my faith in our young people, my admiration for our voluntary sector, my commitment to the things which unify rather than divide.



The Offer

The opportunity and challenge of a six-week rites of passage programme for every school leaver. It will help young people make the transition to adulthood with a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging, instilling the values of self-respect and social responsibility.

The Opportunity

A call to adventure; the chance for young people to gain true confidence, recognition, friends and pride, to have fun and to earn funds to invest in their future.

The Challenge

Difficult on every level, participants will need to push themselves, put in long hours, practise self-discipline, work with others, take responsibilities and demonstrate the characteristics of adulthood.

An idea 2 years in the making...

David Cameron proposed a national school leaver programme in August 2005 in a speech to the Foreign Policy Centre. He said: “The most powerful way to bring people together is to do things together. Isn’t there more we can do to enable young people to come together and give service to their country? ... Look at the best examples of organisations that encourage community service, particularly amongst the young. Why not challenge them and many other organisations – from the Armed Forces to Community Groups – to come up with ideas for a school leaver programme? Something that prepares teenagers for their responsibilities as adult citizens, that enables them to meet people from different backgrounds and to learn about the realities of life in different communities, and which teaches them the lifelong lesson that we’re all in this together; that we have duties to our fellow citizens; and that self-respect and self-esteem come from respecting others and putting their needs first.”

David developed the idea further in a speech to the Political Studies Association in November 2005: “This idea, and this approach, goes to the heart of my political philosophy. There’s not a single challenge that’s not best tackled by asking what we can all do about it – government, individuals, families, businesses, voluntary organisations. I believe that creating a national school leaver programme is exactly the kind of positive, optimistic change we need to make a tangible reality of the important discussions on British values that you’re having today.”

David met with leading youth organisations in January 2006 to develop the proposal. Afterwards he said: “We had an incredibly positive and constructive meeting. Overall I was struck powerfully by the enthusiasm for this idea and by the wisdom and expertise of the leading organisations present at today’s meeting. I now look forward to the next stage of development in which we will be consulting with young people, parents, employers, practitioners, and communities on how to take the programme forward.”

Following this consultation and further development of the proposal, David launched the Young Adult Trust in October 2006. He said: “Our aim is to bring young people together, from all backgrounds, to engage constructively in our society, to give them the opportunities, and the encouragement, to fulfil the basic condition of human fellowship: social responsibility.”

Evaluation of The Young Adult Trust by Mersey Consortium, December 2006

“I myself have learnt to consider other people’s feelings more.”

“Although there were times when as a group we felt demoralised and angry [during the challenge], it is important to remember the way this was overcome.”

“I didn’t give in easily to overwhelming responsibilities.”

“The important experience was self-management.”

“I feel that I have refined my personal qualities further.”

“I am more aware of myself in social situations.”

“I very much enjoyed the community work as I met a man who is inspirational and who holds qualities anyone would be proud to have.”

“[The course] has stopped me from letting my first impressions become judgements but be open-minded.”

“At the start, I didn’t have a lot of faith in others and when I went along with other people’s ideas I was reluctant and only did so to be polite. But now I genuinely want to try out other people’s suggestions and now I don’t always think I’m right as I have a lot more faith in other people.”

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Reference documents and appendices are available through the Conservative Party website. www.conservatives.com

Context and purpose of this document

As young people approach adulthood they should be full of enthusiasm for their future. They should see opportunities calling to them from every direction in society. They should see obstacles as exciting challenges, and they should feel connected, valued and supported.

For many young people in Britain today, this optimism is far from their sense of reality. The anti-social behaviour and crimes committed by a minority blight the lives of far too many people and stigmatise young people as a whole. 71 per cent of articles in the media regarding young people are negative and concerned with crime and violence. Yet young people are the most likely to become victims of violent crime and experience social exclusion and alienation.

A UNICEF report this year found that children growing up in the UK suffer greater deprivation, worse relationships with their parents and are exposed to more risks from alcohol, drugs and unsafe sex than those in any other wealthy country in the world.

“A crisis at the heart of our society,” as Children’s Commissioner Sir Al Aynsley Green put it. *“A wake-up call to the fact that, despite being a rich country, the UK is failing children and young people in a number of crucial ways,”* said Children’s Society Chief Executive Bob Reitemeier.

And yet Britain has some of the finest youth organisations in the world. Organisations both large and small support thousands of young people, helping them to gain a sense of purpose and optimism.

This document will explain:

- How some of the knowledge and experience of these organisations has been captured over the last 20 months.
- An understanding of their approach and how it has been developed.
- How current thinking in other disciplines supports their approach.
- How the Conservative Party intends to explore and bring forward a new and substantial offer to the youth sector which will allow these organisations and others to enhance and amplify their work.

This document is the first call in a message to all the young people of Britain. The message is clear: this is your country, it values you and it would like to present you with this opportunity to join in, push yourself, feel proud of your efforts and experience an appreciation of the people around you.

We have in this document intentionally set out a highly specific vision of how the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme for school leavers could work. This is partly a reflection of the practical learnings and detailed consultation co-ordinated over the past 20 months by the Young Adult Trust, and partly a reflection of our belief that it is our responsibility to place before the nation a specific proposal that interested parties can react to.

It should be clear, however, that this document is very much in the form of a Green Paper. We hope that all individuals, voluntary organisations, and those in the public and private sectors who share our passion to create something of real value for Britain's teenagers will comment in detail on the proposals set out here. The next stage of detailed policy development work is described in section 9, and you can find information about how to tell us your views at the end of this document.

“Adolescence represents one of the most difficult stages in human development. The teenager needs desperately to leave his childhood behind and enter fully into the world of adults – but often feels the pull of childish impulses and desires, and the security of his old life keeping him from making the big move toward psychological independence. Older cultures than ours recognize these conflicts, and build into their structures specific rituals, or rites of passage, to help adolescents break free of their childhood past. Sometimes brutal, and often very difficult, these rites created challenges for young men and women to overcome, after which a celebration usually ensued, marking their entry as fully fledged members of the tribe. Unfortunately, our culture does not have clearly defined rites of passage. High school graduation, fraternity initiations, and induction into the army serve as some examples of rites that still exist as reminders of what once was. The challenge that confronts many teenagers today is to develop new rites of passage that enable them to enter fully into adulthood.”

**Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D. Educator,
Psychologist and Author**

Introduction

“In general, national policy makers have not placed sufficient weight on young people’s thinking and behaviour when they have designed policies aimed at them. This oversight means that policy interventions aimed at young people risk failing.”

Social Exclusion Unit, Interim Report on Young Adults, 2004

In January 2006 David Cameron called together representatives from many of the country’s leading youth organisations. At this gathering he applauded their efforts, acknowledged their experience and skills, and presented them with the challenge of helping to create a new national programme to support young people into adulthood with a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging.

He promised them that if they could present a coherent methodology, which could be used to design a national programme for all 16-year-olds, he would champion their efforts as Conservative Party policy.

The Young Adult Trust

This challenge was met with a positive response and an independent charity, run by people with experience of the voluntary sector and beyond, was set up to explore the concept and practicality of a new national programme. This charity was called The Young Adult Trust (YAT). During the last 20 months, voluntary youth organisations have worked through YAT to conduct:

- Action-based research programmes with young people in Warrington and Croydon.
- A literature review into the status and attributes of adulthood.
- New research focusing on young people's current views on adulthood, age-related legislation, and how other countries and cultures approach transition. This initial thinking was published in a booklet entitled '*Purpose, Optimism and Belonging, supporting the transition to adulthood,*' published in October 2006¹

We have gained much from the work of this charity and highlight below the key lessons we have learned from its work that will shape our plans for government.

Understanding young adulthood

Adult characteristics

YAT's published work outlines the eight characteristics reflected in the process of transitioning to adulthood:

- Developing own personal beliefs and values
- Developing equal and supportive relationships with adults
- Developing effective peer support networks
- Avoiding harmful behaviour to self and others
- Accepting and being responsible for own actions
- Independent decision making
- Developing significant, intimate relationships
- Developing emotional learning and self-awareness

Best practices

The five best practices thought to be effective and important in supporting this transition are:

- A **social mix** where young people of all classes, races, dis/abilities, both genders and from a range of geographical locations within the UK come together.
- A **residential element** where young people live away from home for an agreed period.
- A **personal development** focus where the growth of the young person is paramount and not distorted by the current target regime, and where young people have the opportunity to explore their thoughts, feelings and actions.

- A **challenge** whereby young people recognise that they have been stretched and succeeded, generating confidence and the recognition of others.
- A **community involvement** element which reflects young people's interests and enables them to put their values into practice in a wider context.

The Young Adult Trust's recommendations

YAT recommended that a national programme aiming to support the transition to adulthood should include all five of these elements. Furthermore, YAT recommended that in the development of a new national programme, the pre- and post-programme support of young people must be considered.

YAT's work led it to call for the creation of a national rites of passage programme with all the above components in place. To achieve this YAT recommended:

- The establishment of a national **network of accredited bodies** which will collaborate to deliver this kind of UK-wide programme.
- An **easy access registration system**.
- **Secure funding** for the youth sector as a whole to enable the pre- and post-programme support to be achieved.
- The need for further **research into age-related legislation** and its impact on young people's development.
- The need to recognise young people for the voluntary effort they will have made in completing this programme by creating an **investment scheme** to reward them and support their future development.

YAT concluded that the benefits of such a programme to the individual, families and the wider community would far outweigh its cost.

In calling for the creation of a programme of this size, YAT recognises that the mantle now falls to a government or potential government to take up the cause and implement the initiative.

¹ *Purpose, Optimism and Belonging, supporting the transition to adulthood*, October 2006, <http://www.youngadulttrust.co.uk/downloads/pob.pdf>

Mission complete

YAT intended to be a single issue and short-life organisation. In placing its work in the public domain, it has paid testimony to those individuals and organisations involved.

“YAT explored how youth-based and other organisations could develop and deliver together a nationally scaled intervention which supports young people’s transition into young adulthood. In pulling together a coherent methodology, which we believe could make this approach a national level programme, the time has come for those with resources to pick up the baton. As such we now put our findings out into the sector and the wider political arena. In this way political parties, and organisations with an interest in this field, can take these ideas forward and resource them appropriately. It was always our intention not to become a competitor for funding to the very organisations which founded the Trust. The Board is grateful to the courage, tenacity and efforts shown by so many to achieve so much in this short timeframe.”

Liz Cross, Chair of Board of Trustees of the Young Adult Trust

The Conservative Party is keen to take up these ideas. We welcome the work of the independent Trust and we are keen to learn from the recommendations which have now been brought forward in the Young Adult Trust document ‘*Context, Concept and Considerations*’.

We congratulate the board of trustees, supporters, staff and the many partner organisations for the work which has been conducted over the last 20 months and the many achievements which have been secured.

As the work of the Trust developed, David Cameron commented in February 2007:

“Britain faces a real challenge with young people today: inspiring them to be responsible adult citizens. That’s not something the state can do alone: it’s a social responsibility.

That’s why we want every 16-year-old in Britain to take part in a programme that helps them become responsible young adults. This should not be delivered by the state, but I do believe that the state has a duty to fund such a programme.

If you want to see how it would work look at the Young Adult Trust and the model they and the youth sector are creating – I think it represents a perfect example of one approach we could take.”

Conservative Party response

Having instigated a diverse range of practitioners to work together to help shape thinking around the potential form of a new national programme for school leavers, the Conservative Party has now established a Policy Group under Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families Michael Gove and co-chaired by entrepreneur and philanthropist Martyn Rose.

This Policy Group will:

- Design a national programme for all school leavers which supports their transition from young people into young adults with a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging.
- Ensure the programme can be delivered, against an assured standard, by a variety of delivery agencies and organisations from across the voluntary, public and private sectors.
- Develop the above in light of field and academic research to ensure it delivers the outcomes sought and is credible and valid in its intents and impacts.

Building on the work of the Young Adult Trust, our detailed policy development work will retain the following key elements:

- Marking the transition from childhood to adulthood – a rite of passage.
- Supporting the goal of social mix and social cohesion.
- Releasing the potential of young people rather than operating in a correctional manner.
- Providing the opportunity for personal development and growth.
- Redefining and improving the relationship between young people and society as a whole.
- Creating more opportunities for young people to make a positive impact on community and society.

2. The need for innovation and action

The youth sector, through the Young Adult Trust, has presented a cogent case for the development of a new national programme to support the transition to adulthood. This call to action is even more convincing when other evidence is considered.

Studies into childhood in Britain today

- *The Cost of Exclusion* published by the Prince's Trust and RBS in April 2007. The report highlights that educational underachievement costs the nation an astounding £18 billion in foregone earnings. The UK has up to 25 per cent lower productivity compared with France and Germany, which can be largely attributed to the shortfall in young people's key skills.
- *Make Space Youth Review* published by 4Children and Nestle in March 2007. This longitudinal study examines all aspects of youth policy. Its interim report covers a wide range of issues affecting young people and youth services. One of its findings is the overwhelming feeling that adults need to do more for, and offer more to, young people. This should include: safe places to go, with transport to get them home safely if necessary; better facilities that have decent buildings and furnishings; and a place to meet that can act as base for a wide range of activities – classes, clubs, specialist sports and arts. Importantly, young people called for skilled and enthusiastic adults who could inspire and motivate, as well as help make things happen.
- *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries* published by UNICEF in February 2007. The report compares childhood experiences in the 21 richest countries with the UK faring particularly badly, coming bottom in the measure of childhood well-being.

- *Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World* published by the IPPR think tank in November 2006. The report argues that Britain is in danger of becoming a nation fearful of its young people, with British adults the least likely in Europe to stop teenagers behaving anti-socially. Just 34% of Britons said they would intervene if they saw a group of teenagers vandalising a bus stop, compared with 65% of Germans and 50% of Italians. It also recommends that every child between the ages of 11 and 16 should participate in at least two hours a week of structured extracurricular activities such as martial arts, drama or sport.
- *The Voice Behind the Hood* published by YouthNet UK and the British Youth Council in July 2006. The study finds that 90% of young people denounce anti-social activities and the majority accept that swearing, arguing and loud music can be anti-social, but 98% feel that the media always, often or sometimes represents them as anti-social.

Childhood in Britain today: the facts

Pregnancy – in 2006, the rate of conception was 7.0 per 1000 girls aged 13-15 and 39.7 per 1000 girls aged 15-17.²

Sexual health – sexually transmitted infection rates have risen rapidly over the past 12 years, with chlamydia and HIV both increasing by 300%, gonorrhoea by 200%, and syphilis by 2,000%.³

Truancy – in 2006, out of 23,940 schools, 7,777 had more than 20% of their pupils take an unauthorised absence.⁴ In 1996-97, 965,400 pupils truanted. Last year, 1,399,167 did so, despite government spending of nearly £1bn on initiatives to tackle the problem.⁵

Looked-after children's education – the educational achievement gap between looked-after children and all children has widened by 7% since 2001 (based on the number who obtained 5 GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C).⁶

Low self-image – 71% of press stories about young people are negative.⁷ 80% of young people believe that the way they are portrayed by the media leads older people to respect them less.⁸

Mental health – one in ten children experiences a mental illness.⁹ Under-16s were given drugs for mental health problems more than 631,000 times last year, compared to just 146,000 times in the mid-nineties.¹⁰

² DCSF figures www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0092

³ Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV <http://news.independent.co.uk/health/article2659722.ece>

⁴ Parliamentary Answer www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070625/text/70625w0139.htm#07062830004787

⁵ Conservative research on Department for Education and Skills figures reported in the Guardian, education.guardian.co.uk/pupilbehaviour/story/0,,1878649,00.html

⁶ Analysis of DfES Outcome Indicators for Looked after Children by Tim Loughton.

⁷ Young People and the Media, Mori Poll

Alcohol – 8,582 alcohol-related hospital admissions of under 18's – a 15% increase on the previous year.¹¹

Drugs – in 2006, 17% of pupils reported taking drugs in the last year.¹²

Workless households – the UK has a higher proportion of its children living in workless households than any other EU country.¹³

Benefits cycle – nearly 50 per cent of young job seekers who have left the New Deal for Young People end up back on benefits within a year.¹⁴

NEETs – the number of 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs) rose by a third between 1997 and 2005, from 160,000 to 220,000.¹⁵

These problems affect all of us but the lives of those young people who live on the fringes of society can be over before they started. There are nearly 3,000 under 18 year olds in prison in England and Wales today, nearly 40% of whom have been in the care system. At some time before imprisonment, 20% of these young men and 40% of these young women will have tried to kill themselves.

We can do better

The picture that emerges from these studies is a depressing one and suggests that young people are an embattled group within our society, derided by the media, demonised by the government and lacking support for their educational and wider personal development.

The belief that society is failing to understand the needs of teenagers is also identified and expressed by John Abbott of the The 21st Century Learning Initiative. In his paper “*Adolescence; a Critical Evolutionary Adaptation*” he argues that:

“Adolescence, it is now becoming recognised, is that deep-seated biological adaptation that makes it essential for the young to go off, either to war, to hunt, to explore, to colonise, or to make love – in other words to prove themselves – so as to start a life of their own. As such it is adolescence that drives human development – it is adolescence which forces individuals in every generation to think beyond their own self-imposed limitations, and to exceed their parents’ aspirations.”

Abbott goes on to conclude:

“Youngsters who are empowered as adolescents to take charge of their own futures will make better citizens for the future than did so many of their parents and their grandparents who suffered from being over-schooled but undereducated in their own generations.”

“We have not passed that subtle line between childhood and adulthood until we move from the passive voice to the active voice..... It may be true that the weak will always be driven to the wall; but it is the task of a just society to see that the wall is climbable.”

Sydney J. Harris (1917 – 1986)

8 The voice behind the hood: young people's views on anti-social behaviour, the media and older people – the British Youth Council and YouthNet.
9 British Medical Association <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Childadolescentmentalhealth>
10 Parliamentary Answer <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070719/text/70719w0013.htm#070719115002254>

11 Parliamentary Answer <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070309/text/70309w0007.htm>
12 National Office of Statistics <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/drugmisuse07/Drugs%20misuse-England%202007.pdf>
13 Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, December 2006.

3. Programme outline

A Conservative government will create a six-week national programme for all school leavers. The programme, known as National Citizen Service, will have the following features.

Registration

Young people will enter the programme voluntarily. To make access as simple as possible registration will be possible through schools, youth organisations, the internet, shops and civic buildings.

Registration forms will be easy to complete and will be posted free of charge to a national registration centre. Young people become eligible for a place on the programme on reaching 16 years of age but they can register after their 15th birthday. Young people must register before their 17th birthday and start the programme before their 18th birthday.

This timeframe is to allow maximum take-up by all young people including young carers, those with health issues, those who are career-focused and those who are in the penal system.

Social mixing is one of the key aspects of the programme and the national registration centre will allocate places on the available programmes. This is to ensure that young people of both genders, all classes, races, dis/abilities, and from a range of geographical locations within the UK will come together to experience the programme.

However, it is recognised that volunteering will be a huge undertaking for some young people and they will have the opportunity to register with their friend or friends if they wish to be offered a place on the same programme.

Pre-programme preparation

One week prior to the start of the programme young people will attend a weekend preparation course. This fun, two-day event will give the young people all the information they will need to take part in the programme. They will also get to meet some fellow participants, have their health and fitness assessed and take part in some team building activities.

Young people can quit at any time during the whole programme. They can also be asked to leave if their effort is not evident.

Week 1 (7-day residential)

Personal development – Young people will work together to solve problems and learn teamwork. They will also have the opportunity to explore their thoughts, feelings and actions in relation to becoming young adults.

Weeks 2,3,4 & 5

Community involvement – With the support of the voluntary sector, young people will be allocated a placement or a team project which will benefit their community. They will be given appropriate training and time to plan in order to make the most of their experience. Young people can also choose to create their own community-beneficial task.

Week 6

Challenge – Young people will undertake arduous tasks that will challenge them both individually and as a team so that they generate confidence in themselves and others. The only requirements will be the willingness to work together and the determination to push themselves. We hope that the military, public services, sporting organisations, businesses and outdoor organisations will be able to offer young people a challenging experience.

14 Footnote: Hansard, Col. 1599WA, 10 July 2006.

15 DfES: Participation in Education and Training of 16-18 year-olds by Labour Market Status in England 1992 onwards, 2006

Post-programme celebration and recognition

Young people completing this programme will have been through many challenging experiences and their achievements deserve to be celebrated.

A celebration ceremony will be held where each young person will be given the opportunity to state what it means to them to be an adult British citizen and how they view their future. At this point they will be eligible for any grant that they have earned and be able to choose their good cause. The aim is to encourage young people to further their development and continue to be involved in their community.

These celebration ceremonies will take place at various venues including sports stadiums, town halls, military bases, hotels and Parliament.

Rewards

Young people will be given a small allowance during their community involvement but they will also be awarded a grant. This grant will only be awarded if they complete the programme and attend the celebration at the end of the programme. The grant will be in two parts: 50% will be awarded to an organisation to help the young person's development, such as training, employment or overseas travel; 50% will go to a good cause of the young person's choice. If, for example, the young person wanted to work with a good cause overseas, 100% could be used for this aim.

1 week prior to programme	Week 1 7-day residential	Weeks 2, 3, 4 & 5	Week 6 7-day residential	1 week after the programme
Preparation	Personal Development	Community Involvement	Challenge	Celebration
<p>Talk through programme, meet the staff and participants, check fitness, enjoy ice breakers & Q&As</p>	<p>Daytime: Participants will work together to solve problems and learn teamwork.</p> <p>Evening: Participants will take part in discussions exploring their thoughts, feelings and actions in relation to becoming young adults.</p>	<p>Participants will be allocated a placement or a team project that benefits their community.</p> <p>Participants will be given time to plan plus the training they need to play a full and active part.</p> <p>Participants will receive a small allowance and, on completion of the programme, a grant, half of which can be spent on their future training or development, the other half donated to a good cause of their choice.</p>	<p>Participants will undertake arduous tasks that challenge them individually and as a team. If they quit or are sent home they will not be eligible for their grant and not allowed to attend the celebration.</p>	<p>An opportunity to celebrate, make commitments and plan for the future.</p> <p>Family, friends, community members, potential employers and voluntary organisations will gather for the participant's big day. Participants will make a short speech explaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they have learned • How they will use their grant • What being an adult British citizen means to them

Example One

Team Work – Community Project – Military Week

1 week prior to programme	Week 1 7-day residential	Weeks 2, 3, 4 & 5	Week 6 7-day residential	1 week after the programme
Preparation	Personal Development	Community Involvement	Challenge	Celebration
<p>Introduction weekend Talk through programme, meet the staff and participants, check fitness, enjoy ice breakers & Q&As</p>	<p>Daytime: Team Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raft building • City fact finder competition • Makeshift rescue exercise • Equipment prioritising and problem solving • Create a drama/ comedy about your experience <p>Evening discussion: Exploring adulthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an adult? • What is commitment? • Britishness? • Sex/ relationships? • Who do I admire? • Is revenge always bad? 	<p>Team Projects Working with the voluntary sector – as a team complete all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a mural on a local hospital wall • Create a play for the local hospice/ residential home • Create a forum to gather the views of young people • Create a training session and teach pensioners to use the internet • Recycle some old clothes and set up a fashion show 	<p>Military Basic training with the Marines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assault courses • Zip lines • Drill and cleaning • Night exercises • Map reading <p>Participants will be respected at all times but participants must put in the effort to complete the course.</p>	<p>Final Parade Military style, with a band and a march past before the speeches from participants. High ranking officers attending.</p>

Example Two

Communal Living – Work Placement – Three Peaks

1 week prior to programme	Week 1 7-day residential	Weeks 2, 3, 4 & 5	Week 6 7-day residential	1 week after the programme
Preparation	Personal Development	Community Involvement	Challenge	Celebration
<p>Introduction weekend Talk through programme, meet the staff and participants, check fitness, enjoy ice breakers & Q&As</p>	<p>Daytime: Communal Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours' silence • Leadership election • Feed everyone for £10 • Create a gift for one another • Feedback to one another <p>Evening discussion: Exploring Adulthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is rich and poor? • What is spirituality? • Is marriage a must? • What should be done about the environment? • Is discipline a good thing? • Is violence ever needed? 	<p>Placement Work placements, a choice of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm work • Supporting the police • Care home • Working in a prison • Helping the fire service • Road cleaners • Child care • Working in a kennels 	<p>Outdoor pursuits Build up to the Three Peaks challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map reading • Hill walking • First aid training • Rock climbing • Orienteering • Complete the Three Peaks challenge 	<p>Civic celebration with Mayor and celebrities.</p>

Example Three
Survival – Personal Assignment – Mini triathlon

1 week prior to programme	Week 1 7-day residential	Weeks 2, 3, 4 & 5	Week 6 7-day residential	1 week after the programme
Preparation	Personal Development	Community Involvement	Challenge	Celebration
<p>Introduction weekend Talk through programme, meet the staff and participants, check fitness, enjoy ice breakers and Q&As</p>	<p>Daytime: Surviving outdoors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter building • Navigation • Build a fire for cooking • River crossing • Make a presentation <p>Evening discussion: Exploring Adulthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 16 the correct age of consent? • Is honesty always the best policy? • Does family come first? • What should be done about the environment? • Is discipline a good thing? • What is important to me? 	<p>Individual assignments Participants can use any special talents they have to the benefit of their community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a free music concert in the park. • Work in a newspaper office and create a report. • Conduct a piece of research and produce the findings. • Create a website for a local group. 	<p>Sport and Fitness Build up to a mini triathlon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuit training • Road running • Healthy eating • Cycling • Swimming • Mini triathlon 	<p>Stadium Sports venue with local sports stars</p>

4. Programme characteristics and benefits

Our vision is of a programme that will be attractive to young people because:

- It will be of the highest quality.
- It will be demanding, to ensure that the significance of participation is recognised by all.
- Each component of the programme will promote a 'can do' spirit.
- Employers will recognise the value of the programme.
- There is an opportunity available for a grant towards further development, including overseas service.
- The programme will be viewed by society as a recognised step towards adulthood.
- Participants can attend with their friends.
- They can gain funds for a good cause of their choice.
- Past participants will recommend it.
- It will be a fun and challenging adventure.

The programme will have something to offer every type of young person:

- It will help those with low confidence to make the most out of life.
- Those who are overly academic will discover there's more to life.
- Drifters will gain a sense of achievement and focus.
- Average achievers will be inspired to stretch their potential.
- For isolated individuals, it will be a chance to make friends.
- For high achievers, it will be a new chance to shine and support others.
- It will teach tough young people to respect others' opinions.

Young people with special needs

We are keen to engage with organisations that work with young people who have particular needs. It is anticipated that every component of the programme will include opportunities for young people with special needs, and it will be the undertaking of the participants to look after one another's needs as far as possible. Specialist organisations may also be approached to supply staff for the running of the programme.

The most hard-to-reach young people

We recognise that there are many organisations in the UK's voluntary sector and penal system doing an excellent job with the most hard-to-reach young people.

If our new national programme is to be truly universal it must work closely to support these agencies and to understand any special needs their young people may have.

This is especially important as once a young person enters the programme he/she will not be given any dispensation for unacceptable behaviour. Hard-to-reach young people should be encouraged to take part in this programme because it offers them a fresh chance to succeed, on a level playing field with everyone else.

5. Common approach

Creating a new, high quality, six-week national programme available to all young people is a major undertaking. There are approximately 650,000 16-year-olds living in the UK at any one time. We will only be able to deliver the kind of experience set out in this document if organisations and agencies from across all three sectors work together.

Delivering each component of the programme is a multi-agency task and while different styles and methodologies are welcome, it will be important that a common and consistent ethos is presented to young people by all the staff involved. With the voluntary sector, statutory services, and the private sector all collaborating to deliver the programme, a common approach and framework is critical to ensure quality.

This common approach will ensure that young people participate within an environment which:

- has clear aims and where participation is voluntary
- appreciates them and believes in their potential
- is physically and emotionally safe
- is experiential, interactive, challenging and fun
- is non-judgmental but has clear and firm boundaries of acceptable behaviour
- respects individuality, diversity and choice
- encourages the expression of opinions, creativity and personality
- values teamwork and a sense of community
- strives to build positive relationships
- encourages continuous contribution, learning and development

To ensure that those delivering the programme act in accordance with the above, we will ensure the development of a training programme for all delivering people and organisations.

Complementing the work of the youth sector

The creation of this programme will be a complement to the work of the youth organisations – both large and small – operating in Britain today. It has been designed to enhance and include their efforts and we will ensure:

- That they have the opportunity to help deliver the programme
- That they have the opportunity to offer their services into it
- That young people are referred to them after the programme

Enhancing social mix

Collaboration will be particularly important in delivering the programme's vision of achieving a real social mix. Some organisations are often funded to work with a particular type of young person; others are seen as having a traditional demographic or thematic interest. As such, many organisations would appreciate support in achieving better social mix for their existing activities. A key aim of our new national programme is to achieve social mix and we will therefore invest in bringing organisations and their young people together to achieve this.

6. Accreditation and database development

In order to deliver the NCS programme at scale, a robust accreditation process and standard must be established. This accreditation regime must ensure high quality and flexibility in order to engage those best able to participate in the programme's delivery, and to incorporate organisations of all sizes and methodologies.

Accreditation will look to draw on the experience and expertise of standards which are currently being used and respected nationally and the youth sector specifically – for example, Investors In People, ASDAN, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Investors In Communities.

In order for the NCS programme to be successful at scale, a comprehensive database of registered delivery organisations will need to be established. We will look to draw on the expertise of current networking organisations in the development of this database – for example, Umbrella Voluntary Organisations, Local Government Networks, Rural Networks, and Business Networks.

7. Recognition by society

Our planned national programme is intended to be demanding, to take young people out of their comfort zone and to encourage them to take a fresh look at themselves, other people and society. It would be a major undertaking for any person at any age. To volunteer to take part in this programme at 16 years of age is an act worthy of respect. To see the programme through to the celebration ceremony is an achievement deserving of admiration and acknowledgment.

Community

We hope that the celebration ceremonies for the new national programme will become important community events. Most young people would like their families to be proud of them but not all get the chance. This programme, culminating in its public ceremony of recognition, will offer all young people that chance. These public ceremonies will mark a key milestone in a young person's life and provide an opportunity for family, friends and the whole community to let the young people know that they are valued.

The freedom to consider and the opportunity to state what 'Britishness' means to each individual is in itself distinctively British. A key part of the ceremony will therefore be the requirement for young people to explain what being an adult British citizen means to them. Their words will not be a jingoistic recital but an opportunity to express publicly a personal statement of insight and commitment. For many, addressing such a gathering, even with only a few words, will be a huge challenge in itself.

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered."

Nelson Mandela

Employers

We will work with employers to ensure that the value of completing the programme is appropriately recognised. We would like to see employers acknowledge the achievements of young people in completing the programme, for example, through work opportunities, fast track to interviews and sponsorships for study and travel. We would particularly welcome and seek to involve employers that offer four-year apprenticeships.

Adult status

Young people completing this new national programme will have:

- demonstrated commitment
- explored their values
- considered what it is to be an adult
- been actively involved in the community
- mixed and worked with people from all walks of life
- faced and overcome challenges
- stated what they believe it is to be a British citizen

These are adult traits and as such, family, friends and community members will be encouraged to acknowledge the transition from childhood and to offer the respect which is due to a young adult. Our policy group will continue to explore how local and national government may also offer recognition for this early adult status. We will explore how the mixed messages which are currently portrayed by age-related legislation have a negative impact on young people's attitudes and behaviour, and how this might be rectified.

Qualifications

The young people who take part in this programme will do so for the experience. They may choose to submit their participation towards any award or qualification which they are taking, but the programme itself will not be certificated, and will not offer an academic qualification. The programme is an experience in and of itself. All that is asked is that participants fully engage with the programme, work together and demonstrate effort.

"Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential."

Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)

Recognition for those who deliver the programme

The quality of the programme will be almost entirely dependent on the quality of the people who deliver it. Whether paid or unpaid the people who staff the programme will demonstrate commitment and an ability to form positive relationships with young people in demanding situations. With this in mind we plan to record the participation of those who regularly make this undertaking and acknowledge them with a badge of honour. In order to register a staff member's input they must have attended the introduction weekend, at least two days of the programme, and the celebration.

Once an individual or organisation has helped deliver 3 programmes, they will be awarded a Bronze Award; 6 programmes, they will be awarded a Silver Award and a letter of thanks from the Prime Minister; 12 programmes, they will attend a ceremony and be presented with a Gold Award.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

A myriad of factors affect a person's life and the choices that they make. This programme will not look to take ownership of their decisions, claiming responsibility for any successes or taking responsibility for any mistakes which are made after the programme. The decision on how they want to live their life resides solely with the young person and they must take the responsibility, credit or consequences for their actions.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to try to monitor or evaluate the programme with a view to establishing a direct correlation between participation and decisions made by any individual.

The programme is only one factor in a young person's life.

It will be important, however, to monitor and evaluate:

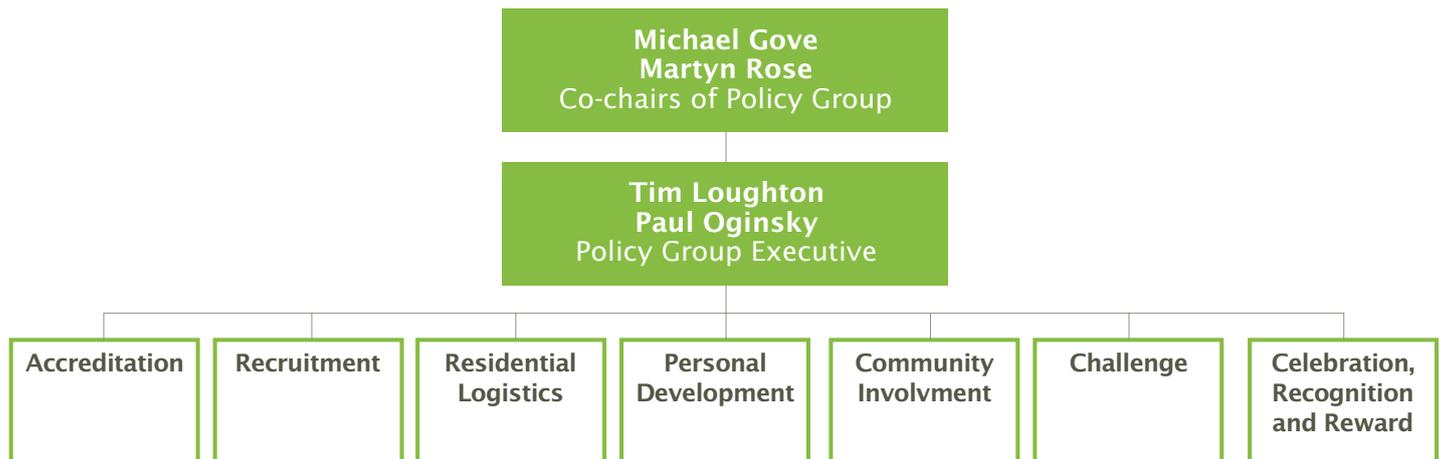
- Whether the programme is meeting its aims in the opinion of the young people and those who know them.
- Whether the programme brings benefits to society in the medium to long term, through a generation of young people who are more purposeful, optimistic and who have a real sense of belonging.

“Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.”

Albert Einstein

9. Policy Group structure and remit

The Policy Group will be jointly chaired by Michael Gove, Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Young People, and entrepreneur and philanthropist Martyn Rose. The executive function will be conducted by Tim Loughton, Shadow Minister for Children and Young People, and Paul Oginsky, Youth Policy Advisor to David Cameron. The Policy Group's membership will also include the chairs of seven working groups as described below.



Working group chairs

The work of The Young Adult Trust was largely led by national youth organisations, and while their contribution continues to be essential to the development of the programme, there is a need to seek broader contribution.

In order to ensure that organisations of all sizes and from all sectors can contribute to the working groups on an equal footing, the chairs of the working groups will be appointed for their impartiality to any particular youth organisation and some funding will be available to cover expenses.

It is recognised that service organisations, the private sector and non-youth-focused community organisations have expertise to contribute. We call on all sectors, organisations and agencies to work together in helping to develop detailed plans for the programme.

The chair of each working group will choose the group members from those organisations who have offered to contribute.

The views of young people

It is the responsibility of each working group chair to ensure that the views and opinions of young people are taken into account in their final recommendations. Young people will therefore be included in each working group and act as special advisors to the Policy Group.

Funding will be available to appoint agencies that specialise in capturing the contribution and opinions of young people.

Name	Experience	Working Group (TBC)
Joseph Gordon	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (London) Member of The Commission for the Future of Volunteering	Accreditation
Kim Taylor Smith	Business and Property Developer	Residential and Logistics
Vidhu Sood-Nicholls	Head of Sales and Support, BSHL, Business Banking, Barclays Plc.	Recruitment
Paul Oginsky	Youth Policy Advisor to David Cameron	Personal Development
Philippa Stroud	Centre for Social Justice	Community Involvement
Colonel Joe Harkon	TA officer (retired) CEO of youth training agency	Challenge
TBC		Celebration, Recognition and Reward

Working Groups' remit

Focus	Example participants	Implementation proposals for validation
Accreditation standards and national register of delivery agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umbrella youth organisations • Award standard organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to build a database of delivery agencies for each component of the programme? • Can the selection of delivery organisations be achieved by using current standards and networks? • Can lead agencies be co-ordinated through local councils? • What should a delivery organisation training day include so as to achieve a consistent multi-agency approach?
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth network organisations • Marketing experts • Specialist focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can registration be kept simple? • What pre-course support and administration will young people need? • How will the introduction weekend work? • How can we ensure take up? • Will the programme and grants incentive be enough to attract young people? • How can the programme tie in with schools and other youth organisations? • How best can we ensure social mixing?
Residential logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility management and development organisations • Youth hostel associations • Outdoor pursuit organisations • Hotel and tourist industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could halls of residence, Ministry of Defence sites and hotels be used to meet any shortfall in residential places? • What are the health and safety requirements? How can these be kept in context? • Could travel be subcontracted whilst still ensuring safety, efficiency and minimum impact on the environment? • Will the staff badge of honour proposal encourage people and organisations to support the staffing of the residential component and encourage volunteers?
Personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist youth organisation • Mentoring organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can a list of recognised personal development activities be created by exploring current practice? • What are the topics for discussions relating to adulthood? • How can staff training and multi-agency working ensure high quality and inspiring content? • What are the health and safety requirements? How can these be kept in context?

Focus	Example participants	Implementation proposals for validation
Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering organisations • Issue-based youth organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will issue-based community involvement provide a quality experience? • Can young people provide a list of interesting community involvement activities through an online survey? • How can we best use the support and experience of the voluntary sector? • What are the health and safety requirements? How can these be kept in context? • Can young people be matched with supportive issue-based organisations after the programme? • How can business be involved?
Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military organisations • The police • Civilian service organisations • Fitness clubs • Sports clubs • Team building specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the programme be made challenging without being exclusive by making the challenge about effort and team work? • Will the different challenge experiences be equally tough? • How best can we identify a list of recognised challenge residential? • What are the health and safety requirements? How can these be kept in context?
Celebration, Recognition and Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers • Specialist overseas organisations • Student unions • Local government organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the celebrations be made attractive to young people? • Will the grants system be an incentive to young people? • Will young people appreciate the community celebrating their transition to adulthood in this way? • What percentage of young people will complete the programme? • Will the idea of early adult status work? • Will business give appropriate recognition to the young people who complete the programme?

10. Health and safety

Life is not risk-free and it is very important that young people learn to manage risk as they enter adulthood. Young people on the programme may well face situations which will require them to assess risk and support one another.

Whilst recognising this as a factor, it must be emphasised that a duty of care to the staff and young people who take part in the programme is essential.

All organisations involved in the delivery of the programme will work to the policy standards specified by the lead agency.

These will include:

- CRB checks
- Appropriate and relevant staff qualifications and ratios for all activities
- Risk assessment of venues and activities
- First aid
- Incident and accident reporting system
- Staff and young people behaviour contracts
- Travel safety
- Relevant statutory government guidelines
- Insurance requirements
- Next of kin forms
- Food safety and dietary requirements
- Duty staff

11. Cost and benefits

Our vision of a new national programme for school leavers is an unprecedented offer to the young people of Britain but it does come with a price tag. We will only be in a position to estimate the costs of the programme after the working groups have carried out their detailed work. However, the cost of this programme must be considered against its savings to the economy and the far-reaching benefits to society.

Social exclusion comes with a big price tag – not only for the individual young person who is affected, but for their communities and the economy as well. Unemployment costs the economy upwards of £90 million per week, and youth crime represents a staggering £1 billion bill for the taxpayer each year. Depression caused by underachievement at school could cost the NHS between £11 and £28 million a year. And the costs go beyond the financial: there are also hard-to-quantify costs such as the loss of potential and the long-term, emotional toll of unfulfilled ambitions.

This programme will help young people to develop a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging which will reduce their desire to binge drink, carry weapons and take drugs. It will be a positive and potent weapon to tackle anti-social behaviour.

12. Summary

The vision set out in this document represents a once in a lifetime offer to the young people of Britain. It offers an experience to them as individuals and an opportunity for them to work together and decide for themselves what it is to be an adult citizen of Britain in the modern world. But it also offers the whole of Britain the opportunity to be proud of its young people and to see them as the asset they really are.

Too often young people are depicted as an alien race that lives amongst us without being part of us. As a group they have been described as feral yobs and thugs. Young people need to know and understand boundaries and consequences but the emphasis on ASBOs, curfews and tags is not going to offer young people – or our society – a future full of optimism. This programme presents every young person with a chance to grow into a successful and proud adult, and an unprecedented opportunity to gain a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging. The rest is up to them.

“How we behave towards each other is one of the most important factors in our national well-being and quality of life. Helping young people to realise this is one of the most important investments this country will make.”

David Cameron MP

Tell us your views

This document is very much a Green Paper, and we hope that all relevant parties will comment on the proposals put forward.

To let us know your views, please write to:
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SW1P 4DP

