The FSI represents 5960 small charities (local, regional, national and international) and community group organisational members across the UK with an income under £1.5 million per annum. We have three clear aims, which are:

a) Champion the role of these organisations within civil society, providing a collective voice to influence locally and nationally through engagement, campaigning and collaboration. Working with our membership, we listen to their issues and raise these with decision-makers

b) To build skills, knowledge and expertise within our member organisations through the delivery of online webinars, training and information videos and resources, face to face training, workshops and conferences, remote and face to face advice and qualifications. We cover a wide range of subjects, fundraising (all methodologies), impact measurement, governance, case for support and strategy.

Our overarching aim is to build a more efficient, effective, accountable and sustainable small charity sector recognised for the contribution it makes in delivering a stronger civil society across the UK.

Executive summary
We surveyed our members for this call for evidence and all respondents supported the broad aims of the National Citizens Service of social cohesion, social mobility and social engagement. However it should be more explicit that social cohesion encompasses the acceptance and appreciation of differences. Young people should not only seek to integrate with other young people from different backgrounds but should also include different inter-generational groups and those with disabilities.

Programmes should be aimed at young people as they become more self-aware, not only of their own capabilities but of how they interact and could integrate with their counterparts and the wider community.

More opportunities should be created to encourage volunteering, whole community engagement and for young people to understand the power of community involvement and their voice in civic engagement.

Everyone should play a part in encouraging young people to become active in civic engagement and that small local charities (third sector organisations) be at the centre through the provision of forums, work experience, engagement with educational institutions and by supporting their beneficiary groups to be active citizens.

National government plays a crucial role through providing funding, training and facilitating collaboration.
Written Submission

Questions: 1/2/3/4/5 No response

Question 6
Do voluntary citizenship programmes such as the National Citizen Service do a good job of creating active citizens? Are they the right length? Should they be compulsory, and if so, when? Should they include a greater political element? Should they lead to a more public citizenship ceremony? Are they good value for money? What other routes exist for creating active citizens?

80 per cent of respondents believed that the aims of the National Citizen Service would achieve the goal of creating active citizenship.

96 per cent of respondents believed that the overall aims of the National Citizen Service were appropriate and played a positive role in creating active citizens. Respondents also believed that as well as fostering understanding about different backgrounds, cohesion should also encompass the acceptance and appreciation of differences, and the integration and understanding of different inter-generational groups and those with disabilities.

When asked if participation in the National Citizen Service should be compulsory 52 per cent felt that it should not be compulsory. Those who felt it should be compulsory (48 per cent) said the programme should start with students at Key Stage 4, year 10 to 11 and be incorporated in the PCSCHE subject syllabus, when students are becoming more self-aware and aware of their counter parts and how their involvement with others, from all backgrounds, could make a positive change in their communities. Participation in the National Citizen Service would continue through to Key Stage 5, Years 12 to 13.

A majority of respondents did not favour adding a greater political element to the National Citizen Service programme (59 per cent), and a more public citizenship ceremony would be welcomed by 68 per cent of respondents.

When asked if the National Citizen Service provided good value for money 23 per cent agreed, 28 per cent disagreed and 49 per cent said they didn’t know.

Three key areas emerged in respect of opportunities that exist to create active citizens:

- **Volunteering:** Encouraging young people to get involved (volunteer) with local civil society organisations. Civil Society organisations should make community volunteering opportunities available for younger people that take advantage of their experiences as well as building their skills for future life.

- **Community Engagement:** Schools should engage with more local civil society groups to showcase the value of their work. Encourage younger people to collaborate with local civil society groups to develop in school projects to deliver against a local challenge.

- **Understanding:** Community programmes be developed that encourage young people to believe that their views matter and support them to become aware of the power of their voice if they make it heard locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
How can society support civic engagement? What responsibility should central government, devolved and local governments, third sector organisations and the individual have for encouraging civic engagement? What can the Government and Parliament do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement?

92 per cent of respondents believed that charities (third sector organisations) should promote and encourage civic engagement. Many of our respondents stated that many small local charities offer opportunities for civic engagement to young people and, through their (small local charities) understanding of local communities, know how to move young people in the correct direction towards a life of civic engagement. Specific engagement opportunities that could be provided by small local charities (third sector organisations) included:

- Provision of short work experience opportunities that would provide a wider view of local communities and the opportunity to mix with people from different backgrounds, ages and abilities.
- Provide forums for young people to engage in local democracy by amplifying what is important to them and guiding them to responsible activism.
- Attending school, college and university career events.
- Be commissioned to provide engagement opportunities for young people to experience, reflect and learn about civic engagement.
- Work proactively with their beneficiary groups to understand the extent to which they can play a specific role in the promotion of civic engagement through spreading awareness of the issues they face and by making links with other parts of the community.

Many respondents commented that both central government and devolved and local government are not proactive enough in recognising the huge contributions that smaller local organisations make to community welfare. They could improve this through a more focussed programme of supporting volunteers and volunteering:

- Local government provide a platform from which small local charities can promote their work and opportunities for involvement with local communities to young people.
- Local government to provide forums where young people from all sections of the community can come together to focus on respect for others and pride in their local area.

Respondents were keen to suggest a number of ways that central government could support small local charities to increase civic engagement within their local communities:

**Funding:**

- Provide funding for programmes that can demonstrate that they facilitate civic engagement and that the programmes result in an increase of civic engagement that delivers positive outcomes within the local community.
- Meet overhead costs for the provision of programmes that promote, facilitate and deliver civic engagement i.e. transport, venue costs etc.
- As suggested above, provide seed funding for the co-production of school and civil society organisation projects that meet a local challenge.
Training:
- Support local civic engagement events/programmes etc. through the provision of training on how to raising awareness through marketing and communications activities, project management, leadership etc.

Collaboration:
- Promote meaningful collaboration between local young people and small local civil society organisations.
- Involve small local civil society organisations at all levels when exploring, developing and implementing. Involvement in co-planning events through their knowledge of and reach into their local communities.
- Use of local data, held by small local civil society organisations, to provide a local narrative to national statistics.

Question 8/9/10/11 no response

Question 12
Can you give examples of initiatives and role models that have helped promote a positive vision of British Citizenship within a tolerant and cohesive society?

Members were asked what initiatives they were aware of that supported young people to be active citizens:
- Girl Guides, Scouts and other similar organisations
- Youth projects delivered through Volunteer Centres
- Educational establishment volunteering programmes
- Organisations like ACT and the Citizenship Foundation
- Eastside and Southside Young Leaders Academy (London)
- Creative Youth Network, Babassa, Princes Trust (Bristol)
- Valleys Kids (Tonypandy)

Members were also asked to put forward suggestions of role models for young people who were aspiring to be active citizens. Whilst there are role models out there, who you choose would depend on the interests of the young people you were trying to engage, therefore responses focussed on groups:
- Young activists and campaigners can be a great example to young people to encourage involvement
- To look to themselves (young people) to be role models at community level, encouraging their peers.
- It was commented that the use of celebrities and public figures can be seen as being either too far from reality for some young people or can raise unrealistic aspirations.

5 September 2017