City Year UK – written evidence (CCE0105)

Executive Summary
1.1. City Year UK is a youth social action charity and throughout this paper will argue that full-time social action can help strengthen citizenship and civic engagement in young people and all of society. While it is acknowledged that full-time social action programmes for those aged over 18 may not necessarily create socially and civically engaged citizens, they most certainly do help to make these nebulous concepts real, consolidate them and give tangible experiences for young people to draw lessons from.¹

1.2. The Government defines full-time social action as volunteering on a full-time basis i.e. undertaking at least 16 hours a week social action for 6 months or more.² Therefore, for the purposes of this paper when referring to full-time social action in the UK we will use these criteria.

1.3. This paper will demonstrate:
With reference to young people, what citizenship and civic engagement means in the 21st century and why it’s important [question 1].

a) That specific changes to electoral law (voter registration) and volunteering law (granting a legal status to full-time volunteers), would help improve citizenship and civic engagement [question 4].

b) Full-time social action programmes in the UK have proven to strengthen citizenship and civic engagement. This response demonstrates that City Year UK’s programme in particular has achieved this as well as improved school performance and the work-readiness skills and employment rates of its young volunteers [question 4].

c) The need for balance between the role of formal education and youth social action initiatives in strengthening citizenship and civic engagement [question 5].

d) While National Citizen Service does an excellent job in creating active citizens, but it cannot thrive in a vacuum. Government-backed national full-time social action programmes currently used in numerous countries e.g. France, Germany, the USA strengthen national cohesion, citizenship, civic engagement and promote social integration among their participants. We contend that the UK should establish a similar programme [question 6].

e) While the Casey Review painted a worrying picture of social integration in the UK, youth social action can play a prominent role in countering this problem [question 10].

1.4. The paper will also give a brief background of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s independent review into full-time social action by young people. The review will investigate legal and regulatory barriers to full-time social action in the UK, consider the merits of a legal status for full-time volunteers and recommend actions the Government can take to increase the number of participants and programmes. We urge the Committee panel to pay particular attention to the recommendations of the Review and seek the opinions of its Chair and panellists when making its own recommendations to Government.

Introduction
2.1. City Year UK welcomes the House of Lords Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement’s call for evidence and would be delighted to provide further written or oral evidence if required.

¹ Renaisi: Shaping Civic Leaders: The impact on City Year UK alumni, 2015.
2.2. City Year UK is a youth social action charity which challenges 18 to 25-year-olds to tackle educational inequality through a year of full-time voluntary service. As mentors, tutors and role models in schools, they support pupils growing up in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK, ensuring that no pupil falls behind educational owing to their socio-economic background.

2.3. City Year UK launched in London in 2010 and has since expanded to the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. During this time the organisation has partnered with almost all types of primary and secondary state schools, including academies, free, community and faith schools. This year, 142 volunteers are supporting pupils in 23 primary and secondary schools.

2.4 City Year UK initially identifies potential school partner by the percentage of their pupil premium population - typically of no less than 30 per cent and often much higher.

2.5. City Year UK Volunteers become an integral part of each school, working in teams of between 6-10 volunteers in to help to make it an enjoyable place to be and a natural place to learn. They develop positive relationships with the children and support them by:

- giving one-to-one or small-group tutoring and coaching regularly late or absent pupils
- running before and after-school clubs and social action opportunities
- providing in-classroom support
- being a presence on the school playground at break times
- organising and leading events, celebrations and projects to unite the school and community.
- coaching to encourage positive character traits crucial to strengthen citizenship and civic engagement such as responsibility, sense of duty, optimism, perseverance, self-control, emotional resilience, confidence and ambition.

2.6. City Year UK also works alongside each school to identify 10 per cent of its population for closer support. Typically, these pupils exhibit poor attendance, disruptive behaviour and low achievement in English and maths. Evidence shows that the service provided by its full-time volunteers leads to improvements in the attendance, behaviour, grades and attitudes of the pupils they support. Consequently, City Year UK has been praised in eleven OFSTED reports since September 2013.

2.7. Full-time social action helps volunteers to develop the transferable skills vital for transitioning from education to employment. Independent research of City Year UK’s alumni from its first six years found an unemployment rate of 3 per cent, dwarfing the national figure of over 12 per cent. What’s more, 91 per cent are in employment or full-time education within just three months of finishing the programme. Evidence within this consultation response will also show the programme’s significant impact on strengthening citizenship and civic engagement of its participants.

**QUESTION 1: What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?**

3.1. Citizenship is about understanding one’s role and responsibility to others, as well as understanding society’s challenges and working collectively to make a difference. A good grasp of what it is to be a citizen and a sense of civic duty are the key to an inclusive and prosperous society.

---

3 Statistics available on request.
3.2. In a global and technological age, concepts of citizenship and civic participation are changing. Technology has made all corners of the world accessible for UK citizens and visa-versa. Social media and other digital technology have led to a rise in clicktivism (the word has even recently been added to the Oxford English Dictionary) meaning the way people engage in their society is changing. The Charities Aid Foundation found the proportion of people who said they had filled out a petition within the past year increased from 21 per cent in 2015 to 56 per cent in 2016.4

3.3. The role of citizenship and belonging in society has seldom been so important. Britons’ sense of unity is being tested on a number of fronts. Brexit, Scottish Independence and terror5 are all highlighting our differences at a time when being united by a shared identity would provide strength.

3.4. While the traditional rhetoric of citizenship and civic engagement may not resonate with the public and especially young people, this does not mean they are disinterested in becoming active citizens. Annual levels of civic participation and civic consultation have increased from 33 per cent to 41 per cent and 16 per cent to 18 per cent respectively between 2015-16 and 2016-17.6 In 2016-17, 60 per cent of adults had engaged in some form of civic engagement (participation, consultation, or activism) and/or formal volunteering, an increase from 2015-16 (55 per cent).

3.5. Worryingly though, youth awareness and engagement of social action is much lower than older citizens.7 This is because unlike older citizens, young people are not given the time and space to explore youth social action, which is known to have a positive impact of citizenship and civic participation. As a part of The Scout Association’s A Million Hands social action programme, a survey of 3,000 young people found that 82 per cent of 12-24 year olds across the UK believe it is important that young people help to solve some of the biggest social issues in this country, but only 36 per cent believe they were given that opportunity.

3.6. City Year UK believes and demonstrates below, that citizenship and civic engagement are strengthened through practical application of values and ideals and full-time social action can provided a impactful platform for this. There must be focus should be on helping young people to understand their communities and giving them the opportunities to express themselves and make a positive contribution independently.

3.7. While work is still to be done to strengthen the citizenship of the adult population, City Year UK feel it is imperative to place significant emphasis on targeting young people when seeking to improve citizenship and civic engagement. We believe that if real change is to be achieved, policy makers will require vision and must be bold. What we propose through our suggestion for a national full-time social action programme would undoubtedly require these traits.

QUESTION 4: Do current laws encourage active political engagement? What are your views on changes to the franchise for national or local elections, including lowering the voting age? Should changes be made to the voting process or the voting registration process?

---

4 Daily Telegraph online: Brexit drives a rise in 'clicktivism' as armchair activists signing online petitions more than double, 2017.
5 Hope not Hate: Fear and Hope 2017, 2017.
6 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport: Community Life Survey 2016-17, 2017.
7 50 per cent of those adults aged 75 and over were aware of social action in their local area in last year compared to 27 per cent of those aged 16-24. This same disparity between the age groups can be seen in those involved in social action at 20 per cent of those aged 75 and over, compared to 11 per cent of those aged between 16 and 24.
Electoral law

4.1. There is always a temptation to use the legal system to encourage active political engagement. Compulsory voting is used for example in Australia and votes for 16 year-olds have long since been championed in the British system (and have indeed been used in Scotland).

4.2. City Year UK sees merit in an opt-out system of automatic voter registration. The current system of individual electoral registration (IER), introduced in 2014, discourages engagement in formal politics through elections. The process of registering to vote is intimidating and cumbersome and therefore reinforces all the worst stereotypes levelled at formal politics. Placing the onus on young people in particular, who can lack awareness of the need to register, risks them missing out on the right to cast their ballot. Although, this is not only a youth issue and the process of voting registration must be made easier for every citizen.

4.3. For example, in spite of the good levels of political awareness engaging in full-time social action produced among City Year UK volunteers, following the announcement of a snap election there was a significant level of confusion regarding whether they needed to register and how to do so. In spite of advancements in technology and social media, this level of confusion and uncertainty must not be disregarded. Furthermore, election campaigns often ‘heat-up’ within the last month of campaigning (demonstrated by the 2017 General Election campaign), but by this time those who thought they were disinterested and had not registered may well have become engaged, but ultimately would be denied their right to vote.

4.4. While it must be acknowledged that attempts were made by the Labour Government of 2005 to implement automatic registration of voters via the CORE system, which were later abandoned, City Year UK believes that this is still the best option to enable civic engagement in formal electoral politics. Lessons must be learned from this attempt and the issue should be readdressed.

Volunteering law

4.5. Nevertheless, use of legal changes which explicitly focus on political engagement are just one option at the disposal of policy makers. City Year UK believes a positive change to the current law which has the potential to improve citizenship and civic engagement, without explicitly focusing on electoral law, is the granting of a legal status to full-time volunteers.

4.6. In order to create more active citizens and increase civic engagement, it is imperative that young people are shown why they should engage with the process and not simply given more opportunities to do so. Without underpinning civic engagement with the ‘why’, further measures will fall victim of the same flaws present in the existing system.

4.7. City Year UK has demonstrated that full-time social action can encourage active and engaged citizenship in a UK context through its ‘year of service’ programme. Volunteers are issued a survey at the beginning and the end of the year that assess their development across a number of areas. Evidence from this survey showed engagement with the programme, helps to shape positive social attitudes and create engaged citizens. Volunteers reported impressive attitudinal shifts over the course of our programme such as an increased likelihood to vote and take a leadership role in civil society and improved attitude towards other social groups (age, ethnicity and religion). For example:

---

- There was a 22 per cent rise in volunteers who said they were very likely to vote in the next General Election.
- There was a 40 per cent rise in volunteers who felt people in society could be trusted.
- City Year volunteers are over twice as likely as their peers to cite a responsibility to their community as a motivation to volunteer.
- Volunteers are more over 70 per cent more likely than their peers to take on a leadership role in civic society.

4.8. Furthermore, a 2015 study\(^9\) of City Year UK alumni which compared their attitudes and behaviours to civic leadership with that of those who had not completed the programme but had taken part in the 2013 national Community Life Survey (CLS), showed that City Year UK alumni were far more civically engaged than their counterparts. For example:

- By and large, the alumni are 9 times more likely to complete a paper or online questionnaire and 10 times more likely to be involved in a face-to-face or online group about local services or problems in your local area than a young person from CLS.
- Similarly, 74 percent of the alumni, compared with 37 per cent of young people from CLS (2013) believe that they can influence decisions affecting their area.
- City Year UK alumni are three times more likely than a young person who has not done a ‘year of service’ to volunteer.

4.9. While it must be acknowledged that full-time social action programmes for those aged over 18 may not necessarily create socially and civically engaged citizens, they most certainly do help to make these nebulous concepts real, consolidate them and give tangible experiences for young people to draw lessons from.\(^10\)

4.10. Despite this, current law punishes full-time volunteers and discourages participation in full-time social action because despite the hours full-time volunteers currently dedicate to serving their community, the Government classes them as NEET (not in education, employment or training). They are in legal limbo, categorised as part of a huge social problem and therefore denied even the most basic support enjoyed by the unemployed, students or those in work.

4.11. Below are a number of ways the law makes it difficult to do full-time social action and therefore limits the expansion of programmes:

- **National Insurance Credits (NICs):** Full-time volunteers are not entitled to Class 3 NICs. They make a positive contribution to the economy and their communities yet because they have no recognised status they are unfairly punished by not being automatically granted the NICs that would protect their pension entitlements. Contrastingly, those looking for work while on benefits, caring for children or sick relatives and doing jury service do qualify.
- **Ill-health:** Full-time volunteers can be given expenses by their charity, but charities are forbidden from paying those expenses if the volunteer is ill for a day or two. That makes it hard for people to sustain their commitment over several months or a year.
- **Personal development training:** Full-time volunteers are forbidden from receiving personal development training, or help from the charity they serve with when they look for jobs at the end of their programme, even though career progression is a major motive for, and benefit of, taking part.

---

\(^9\) Renaisi: Shaping Civic Leaders: The impact on City Year UK alumni, 2015.

\(^10\) Renaisi: Shaping Civic Leaders: The impact on City Year UK alumni, 2015.
4.12. If the barriers to engaging in full-time social action were removed, there is potential for tens of thousands—rather than several hundred—of full-time volunteers to serve in the UK every year, through which strengthening their citizenship and civic engagement. As will be explored in response to question 6, this has been achieved in countries including the USA, France, Germany and Italy, where governments have put ‘civilian national service’ on a proper legal footing; establishing it as rite of passage for young people.

**QUESTION 5: What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship?**
At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?

5.1. The role of formal education plays in encouraging good citizenship and civic engagement is undoubtedly important. However, policy solutions in this area have paid too great an emphasis on the role of the curriculum and teaching in encouraging good citizenship.

5.2. Teaching of citizenship and civic engagement should be available from the earliest level of primary school through to the end of formal education as a minimum. But it must be acknowledged that more of a balance can and must be struck between what can and should be pursued in and outside of the classroom. It is universally acknowledged, teachers are already overstretched. Demands are made of them to cover every conceivable topic - especially ones where they cannot be expected to be experts (such a Government and politics). An academic qualification in citizenship is of course to be encouraged, but choice is important. More can and should be done to promote citizenship and political studies among young people, but coercion might not the best route.

5.3. More creative policy solutions are needed. Policymakers must look outside of schools and towards the youth social action journey to help supplement what is taught in school and to make sure it will be practically applied. Youth social action demonstrates to young people the values of citizenship and civic engagement through practical experience. Through programmes run by the Scouts, Girlguiding, NCS, Volunteering Matters, vInspired and City Year UK, young people can mix with people from different backgrounds and work in teams for the betterment of their communities.

5.4. Increased Governmental support for youth social action through funding, promotion and recognition, in tandem and with equal regard with measures taken to improve and promote citizenship education and civic engagement through formal education, are much more likely to be successful in reaching the objective of strengthening citizenship and civic engagement in our society.

**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?**

6.1. City Year UK wholeheartedly supports the NCS programme and believes it does an excellent job in helping the process of creating active citizens.
6.2. Compulsion is not the way in which to improve citizenship and civic engagement. Coercing people to undertake an activity in order to strengthen their understanding of citizenship will only foster an environment in which resentment towards participation can grow and have the opposite effect to what is desired.

6.3. We also agree with Lord Blunkett when he stated during the passage of the NCS Act, that at least aesthetically keeping Government at arm's length of the NCS programme will encourage young people to participate. The moment the political element of NCS is noticeably increased, it will be transparent that this a Government-sponsored programme and risks turning young people off. The NCS brand is young, vibrant and celebrity-backed and in its own right now has reached 100,000 participants annually. It should be allowed the space to grow and develop organically without the added pressure to increase the political element of the scheme - especially since the NCS Trust is undergoing a period of change following the confirmation of the NCS Act and National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports into its governance and delivery.

Beyond NCS

6.4. However, it must be remembered that NCS makes up part of a mosaic of volunteering opportunities for young people. It cannot thrive in a vacuum. It's vital, now more than ever, to give the next generation the chance to play their part in shaping our country and themselves through service to others. NCS at 16 should be the beginning and not the end of those opportunities to serve.

6.5. The governments of other countries have gone further than the UK has in relation to youth social action. Governments of France, the USA, Germany and Italy to name a few, have established full-time social action programmes to help tens of thousands of (mostly young) volunteers to pour 25 hours of their time every week, for up to 24 months at a time, into good causes and public services. Participants serve to help solve some of their society's biggest issues in areas such as:

- Health and social care
- Education
- Conservation
- Disaster relief
- Homelessness
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Natural and man-made heritage

6.6. These governments usually establish such programmes through primary legislation and then set up bodies which; attribute a badged status to participant programmes that have passed quality assurance, monitor and scrutinise the programmes to maintain quality and, distribute funding to charities that run approved programmes so they can scale-up their service. Government funding typically goes towards the running of such bodies and to help fund charities pay their participants a 'living stipend', which is often set above the level of benefits they would receive for being out of work, but below the wage they would receive for undertaking paid employment.

6.7. While the emphasis of the programmes can vary and many report significant impacts on public services and participants employability, they all facilitate their young participants to serve in teams to tackle significant social issues and share the objective to strengthen national cohesion, citizenship, civic engagement and promote social integration among their participants. The below

---

summary of programmes in France, the USA and Germany therefore focuses on the impact of the programmes on the aforementioned areas.

France
6.8. France has a Government sponsored full-time social action programme called ‘Service Civique’. The initiative was launched in 2010 and aims to strengthen national cohesion and promote social diversity among its 16 to 25 year-old participants, who can engage in the programme for a period of 3 to 12 months. It can be carried out in 9 main areas: culture and leisure, international development and humanitarian action, education, environment, crisis intervention, memory and citizenship, health, solidarity and sport.

6.9. Such is the success of France’s ‘Service Civique’ it is to expand to 150,000 places per year by the end of 2017. The programme prides itself on producing civically engaged young people:
- 57 per cent of the young people who were not registered on the electoral roll before their Service Civique year, had done so since completing the programme or intend to do so.\(^\text{12}\)
- 80 per cent of the volunteers intend to vote the next elections.
- 89 per cent of volunteers feel useful to others and to society
- 93 per cent said the programme is a good way to meet people of different backgrounds.

USA
6.10. In the USA, 80,000 young adults participate in full-time social action annually as part of ‘AmeriCorps’.\(^\text{13}\) AmeriCorps is a network of local, state, and national service programmes that connects young Americans each year in intensive service to meet community needs in education, the environment, public safety, health, and homeland security. Participants serve in full or part-time positions over a 10-12 month period. Upon completion of their service, members receive an education grant known as the ‘Segal AmeriCorps Education Award’ of up to $4,725 to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. Since 1994, nearly one million volunteers have contributed over 1.4 billion hours of service to local communities.

6.11. Research\(^\text{14}\) demonstrates that service through AmeriCorps creates empowered and prepared leaders who are civically engaged and committed to strengthening their communities. Alumni believe that the experience improved their ability to bridge divides and solve problems, while also developing skills and expanding opportunity to advance their careers and education.

6.12. Key stats include:
- 80 per cent of alumni feel confident they can create a plan to address a community issue and get others to care about it.
- 93 per cent of alumni said that after serving, they felt comfortable interacting with others different than themselves, as compared to 72 per cent before.
- 94 per cent said that national service broadened their understanding of society and different communities.
- 79 per cent of alumni are involved or plan to become actively involved in their community post-service, compared to 47 per cent prior.
- 94 per cent of alumni are registered to vote, well above the national average.

\(^\text{13}\) AmeriCorps official website: [https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps](https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps) [accessed 5 April, 2017].
\(^\text{14}\) Corporation for National and Community Service: AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study, 2016. [https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/AlumniMediaBriefingContent-01122017-1541_0.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/AlumniMediaBriefingContent-01122017-1541_0.pdf)
Germany

6.13. Germany also offers young people from this age the chance to engage in full-time social action as a transition year through three federal organisations: the BFD, Bundesfreiwilligendienst (German voluntary service); the FSJ, Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr (voluntary social year); and FÖJ, the Freiwilliges Ökologisches Jahr (voluntary ecological year). While all the programmes cater for young people, the FSJ and FÖJ are aimed entirely at young people from the age of 15-27. The FSJ alone allows 50,000 young German’s the opportunity to undertake full-time social action each year. These programmes allow a young person to volunteer full-time for between 6-24 months on a community project close to their hearts for public good.

6.14. City Year UK is calling on the UK Government to create a similar programme, open to all young people. As demonstrated both at home through City Year UK and abroad through programmes in France, the USA and Germany, undertaking full-time social action gives young people a sense of civic pride and accomplishment, giving them a stake in their community and country, while also giving them the skills and experience to launch their future career.

6.15. Polling conducted by Censuswise on behalf of City Year UK of 2,002 people in December 2016 found overwhelming support for a recognised programme of full-time voluntary ‘civilian national service’ for young people in Britain. Over 90% of those polled think a recognised programme of full-time voluntary civilian national service should be on offer for young people in Britain. Furthermore, over half of 16-25 year-olds polled (1,000 in total) say it should definitely be an option for them, and nearly a third would consider signing up for such a programme, if it had a proper Government-backed status.

6.16. There has never been a better time to re-examine how the UK approaches full-time social action. In December 2016 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport announced the launch of the ‘Review of Full Time Social Action by Young People. This independent review is led by former CEO of National Grid Steve Holliday and featured Chief Economist at the Bank of England, Andy Haldane, as a panellist. It will investigate legal and regulatory barriers to full-time social action in the UK, consider the merits of a legal status for full-time volunteers and recommend actions the Government can take to increase the number of participants and programmes.

6.17. City Year UK, alongside the 10 organisations that make up the Full-Time Social Action Coalition, believe this review is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to realise the potential of full-time social action and its impact on strengthening the citizenship and civic engagement of young people in the UK. The Coalition is calling on the review to recommend a legal status for full-time volunteers.

6.18. Commenting on the announcement of the review Dan Jarvis MP said:

“When the bonds of community are weakening, full-time volunteering brings young people together to serve the common good. This review provides an opportunity for the Government to be more ambitious with its vision for full-time volunteering and build on the foundations laid by the National Citizen Service. Service should be a lifetime mission rather than a month-long programme, and full-time programmes like City Year UK help achieve that ambition.”

15 FSJ official website: http://www.pro-fsj.de/ [accessed 5 April, 2017].
16 Made up of; City Year UK, The Challenge, The Scout Association, Mayday Trust, vInspired, #iwill campaign, Year Here, Student Hubs, Demos and Volunteering Matters.
6.19. Similarly, House of Lords Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement member, Lord Blunkett, stated:

“A year of service has the potential to fundamentally change the attitudes and values of young people in our society. Young people have already shown they can be part of the solution to some of our biggest problems, such as educational inequality, through programmes like City Year UK. This review could form the vital catalyst for the expansion of full time volunteering in the UK.”

6.20. The review panel is due to report its findings back to the Minister of Civil Society in December this year. As this Committee is not scheduled to report the findings of this inquiry until March 2018, we urge the Committee panel to pay particular attention to the recommendations of the Review and seek the opinions of its Chair and panellists when making its own recommendations to Government.

**QUESTION 10: How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?**

7.1. Citizenship and social cohesion go hand-in-hand. Sharing a common identity and values is crucial for the well-being of the UK. The Casey Review\(^{17}\) identified the six ‘British values’, such as respect for democracy, freedom of speech and the rule of law, which City Year UK would not dispute.

7.2. But one thing must be made clear - sharing a common identity and integrating does not require nor equate to homogeneity. A truly integrated society works to demonstrate and uphold its common values while celebrating it differences.

7.3. The Casey Review painted a worrying picture of social cohesion in the UK. For example, it demonstrated that recorded hate crimes are on the increase, socio-economic exclusion is particularly rife among British Muslims, high levels of segregation with poorer and immigrant pupils concentrated in the same schools and fewer social interactions than our population mix would suggest we should across ethnicity, age and social grade

7.4. Yet Dame Louise Casey did reserve special mention for ‘youth programmes that engage young people in altruistic activities’ regarding their ability to help people from different social-economic, racial and religious backgrounds to socially mix. The report pointed to evaluation of NCS which found that 84 per cent of young people on the 2013 programme felt more positive towards people from different backgrounds following participation - although it was observed that these programmes are yet to reach the scale where they can engage those in the most isolated communities.

7.5. Full-time social action through City Year UK is also proven to a positive impact toward young people’s attitudes to those from different backgrounds. Over 50 per cent said that participation in

\(^{17}\) Department for Communities and Local Government: The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration, 2016
the programme had positively affected their attitude toward those from different age groups and ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

7.6. Nasima Akter, 21, City Year UK alumna, said:

"Serving in a school that’s based in a small community, made us all become part of a close-knit community; where everyone knows each other and now about City Year and the bigger picture of why we are there. This has provided me with a sense of purpose; I know I am always welcome back here, and I know what I wish to do, which is to help young adults become integrated into society and have a sense of purpose and value. Being in a school that includes cultures and backgrounds different to what I have grown up around, furthered my knowledge and understanding of other cultures and perspectives. As well as this, I have broadened the mind of many students who are ambitious to learn. They were keen to learn about fasting in the month of Ramadan and some were inspired to experiment and try fasting for a day. This goes to show how eager they are to learn about different religions and traditions and accept individuals wholeheartedly."

7.7. Germany is a great example of where a Government has taken steps to improve citizenship, civic engagement and social cohesion and integration through its full-time social action programme. As well as having a national full-time social action programme for all, Germany has taken steps to extend this scheme to refugees to help them integrated into German society. In December 2015, the Bundesfreiwilligendienst (federal volunteer service) started a special programme for 10,000 refugees. This programme allows refugees people ages 17 and older to volunteer full-time for charity or state organisations for 6 to 18 months for over 20 hours per week, while the state pays for their health insurance and a small stipend to cover their living expenses. The programme is used to help refugees receive German language support, assimilate with German culture and demonstrate work experience in a German context.

**Conclusion**

8.1. Undertaking full-time social action gives young people a sense of civic pride and accomplishment, giving them a stake in their community and country, while also giving them the skills and experience to launch their future career.

8.2. We call of the Committee to recognise the role full-time social action can play in strengthening citizenship and civic engagement in its final report and ask that it pays particular attention to the recommendations of independent review of full-time social action by young people.

*7 September 2017*