KIDS – written evidence (CCE0238)

KIDS is a national charity working with children and young people with disabilities, and their families. We support over 13,500 disabled children, young people and their families every year by delivering over 120 services throughout England. Kids is unique; there is no other organisation dedicated to providing such an extensive range of services to disabled children and young people, aged 0 – 25 years, irrespective of their impairment or condition.

Part of our work involves engaging young people in consultation and coproduction for other organisations, such as Local Authorities. We have groups of young people who have developed their skills and insights to be able to reflect on their experiences and to consider the experiences of their peers. Two of these groups have been engaged in reviewing some of the questions posed by the select committee.

Several of the questions posed by the committee were adapted to be accessible to the young people taking part in the activity.

Main themes that emerged were that access to meaningful employment is key to being able to engage with society – providing independence and positive self-esteem. The ability to engage in community activities and make a difference to local communities was also a key component in active citizenship for young people.

What do you think Citizenship involves?

Young people described citizenship as involving

- Being part of a wider community and being an active part of that community
- Being able to access services
- Abiding by the rules of society
- Being able to find employment (a particular concern for people with disabilities)
- Caring for other people
- Being able to live independently and having positive self esteem

What does being a good citizen mean? How can people be good citizens?

This question brought to the fore many views about how accessible society is for disabled people.

The ability to gain information in order to be able to participate was raised – adaptations to information allow people with disabilities to make informed choices at, for example, election time. There is a shortage of such adapted information.

Ways in which people can be good citizens include:
- Tolerating and accepting difference
- Avoiding discrimination and prejudice
- Being kind to people
- Volunteering and getting involved in local communities

**Is there anything about being a good citizen that you are stopped from doing, or that you find difficult to do? What things stop you, or make it difficult?**

- A lack of employment opportunities for disabled young people creates a huge barrier to gaining independence
- Accessible transport is a significant barrier to being engaged in communities and society in general
- A lack of understanding, acceptance or even tolerance of people with disabilities. In particular relating to employment and career opportunities.
- A lack of appropriate volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities limits the ability to engage.
- Voting in elections: A lack of accessible information to help inform disabled people, along with issues regarding transportation to actually vote.
- A lack of good quality education for young people with disabilities has a significant impact. More support at school, along with education systems designed to enable young people with disabilities to more fully realise their potential, is needed.

**What activities or examples could show that someone is a good citizen?**

- Wider access to the National Citizenship Service for people with disabilities
- Volunteering in projects like the one creating these responses – engaging in public speaking, petitioning and being active in your community; having an influence on the world
- Caring for the environment
- Voting
- Being informed about the social and political world
- Being aware of rights and responsibilities
- Supporting and caring for others
- Gaining employment
- Joining Brownies / Scouts. Taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- Paying taxes, abiding by the law, being polite

**What could help you to become a more active citizen?**

- Opportunity
- Employment
• Access to opportunities such as National Citizenship Service, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Prince’s Trust. Many participants found they could not access the NCS as a result of their disabilities.
• Gaining a good education