The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award – written evidence (CCE0264)

The request:

The Committee are particularly interested on any information you could provide on: 1. how representative people who take part in The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award are in comparison to the general public (the percentages from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the percentage who are entitled to free school meal would be useful) as well as information on 2. the costs per placement.

After the evidence session the Committee were interested in what other organisations were like in terms of value for money and reaching the hardest to reach. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award was raised by members as a possible comparator and it would be good to hear alongside your general information to what extent a comparison between your organisation’s programme and the one run by the NCS trust would be a fair comparison.

Background:

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award charity (see Annual Report and Accounts attached) is engaging record numbers of young people in activities that develop them as individuals and engages them in positive action in their local communities and wider society, whilst recognising the very high level of commitment and personal progress required by awarding the young achievers with, what has become, the worlds leading achievement award for young people.

During the 2016-17 year a record 271,439 young people started their DofE programme.

A DofE programme will often take more than a year to complete so, at any time, there are around 420,000 young people doing their DofE activities across the UK.

A record 133,369 young people achieved their Duke of Edinburgh’s Award in the year.

The DofE programme is run through 10,800 centres that are overseen by 2,601 DofE Licenced Organisations.

The DofE does not attempt to calculate the “social return” on the investment in its activities. We have not yet seen a reliable or consistent means of calculating “social return” that would provide useful comparable data for your committee or to steer our development. We do however attempt to place a value on the volunteering commitment of young people doing their DofE. Our 2016/17 cohort gave over 2.8 million volunteering hours to their communities. (this counts only those completing their volunteering section activity in the year – many more started or were continuing their volunteering section) If the thousands of charities and organisations they supported had employed a young person at just £4.05 per
hour to do what they have done for them, this is **over £11.4m of benefit to society**. We have absolute confidence in our numbers as they involve neither subjective reports nor assumptions. They are based on hard data input by the young people themselves and signed off as being accurate by their Leaders.

This is of course just part of the “social return” on investment in the DofE. The benefits of engaged, motivated, employable, fitter, active citizens, resulting from their DofE participation is incalculable but palpable when you meet a young person from whatever background that has achieved a Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. We can only look on in amazement at organisations that feel able to extrapolate and predict in £1s the savings to the Health Service, Benefit funding and long term civic engagement their activity purports to reap. Who would believe it!?

We see the value of DofE to society in every conversation we have with an employer that tells us they look for and value DofE on applications. Every Award participant that recounts the life changing experiences they have had and how DofE was the focus for their interview for a job, an apprenticeship or university place. And, every parent that recounts how the DofE brought their youngster out of their shell, gave them confidence and opened up new horizons.

1. **How representative are people who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award in comparison to the general public (the percentages from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the percentage who are entitled to free school meal would be useful)**

The DofE is probably unique as a youth charity that is active in all parts of the UK, being welcomed, encouraged and valued by governments, local authorities, education, community leaders, employers and parents everywhere. The DofE network is probably the UK’s most comprehensive network of youth development related organisations. DofE programme delivery relies on around 40,000 volunteer leaders.

The DofE attracts and engages young people of all backgrounds and abilities. Participants broadly reflect the communities from which they are drawn.

DofE is delivered predominantly through schools; 60% from state secondary schools and academies, whilst just 18% are from independent schools. A further 10% participate through a uniformed youth group such as Scouts, Guides, ATC, ACF, Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade etc. The balancing 12% are made up of young people in the secure estate (YOIs, prisons), higher education, sixth form colleges and further education, special schools, community youth groups and trainees in businesses (a growing number of apprenticeship programmes utilise the DofE).
The DofE involves young people of all backgrounds and abilities. We believe passionately that the experience of doing their DofE programme enlightens and broadens the vision and prospects of each young participant. Starting from where they “are” and engaging them in a journey of self discovery unique to the individual. We do not require them to “break records” only to “beat their personal best” and demonstrate tenacity and commitment over a sustained period of activity in each of the sections of the Award programme. So, DofE is not easy but any young person can do it. Whether you are physically or mentally disabled, living in the squeezed middle, attending a top fee paying school, incarcerated in a young offenders institution or your average kid in your average school in your average town or village, the DofE can make a very positive difference to your life.

Ethnicity is not a barrier to participation in The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. The table below presents the ethnic profile of the DofE participants who chose to declare their ethnicity. As you will see, we broadly reflect the population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 Census England &amp; Wales</th>
<th>DofE UK 2016-17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86% white</td>
<td>68.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2% mixed</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5% Asian/Asian British</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3% Black / Black British</td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1% Other</td>
<td>1.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>1.63 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>16.2 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disadvantage:

We do not have access to statistics on Free School Meals for our participants but we do apply a “disadvantaged” measure to both our objectives and as a measure of our performance. We aim for 20% of our participants to have home post codes in the lower 30% of the IMD and/or be in the secure estate and/or are in special education and/or are registered disabled.

A record such 49,453 “disadvantaged” young people started on their DofE programme in the last year.

2. Information on the costs per placement
The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award is a registered charity and Royal Charter Company. The annual operational expenditure of the charity was £10.5m in the 2016-17 financial year.

The average cost to the charity of each individual starting on their Award is approx. £38.

The fee charged to the young participants is: Bronze level - £20, Silver Level - £20, Gold Level - £27.

The balance of funds is raised (hard earned) by the charity through the usual range of charitable fundraising activity, commercial partnerships, licence fees and investments. Whilst there is no central government support sought or received by DofE, there are varying levels of devolved government funding support in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Each participant is however required to fund their own activity. Whilst this is usually supported by their school/centre, this is the greater cost of the programme for a participant. The type of activity a participant undertakes will often be dictated by the cost or the ability of their school/group to provide it.

3. to what extent a comparison between your organisation’s programme and the one run by the NCS trust would be a fair comparison.

It is extremely difficult to compare NCS with other organisations and activities. Particularly when some (such as Scouts, Guides, DofE and others) are based on a dependency on the ultimate demonstration of active citizenship – an adult’s free choice to use their time and commitment to volunteer, and then NCS is government funded to pay for all adult engagement.

We have studiously avoided superficial comparison with NCS. How would the committee like to compare organisations? Cost, outcomes, numbers of participants? From headline costs, we are many times cheaper and reach many more young people. A DofE programme requires young people to engage in a sustained commitment to their activities. NCS is a relatively brief experience. A DofE Award carries value and creditability. I don’t think participation in NCS is viewed in the same way. But that’s comparing chalk and cheese. Whilst the Residential element of the NCS programme could gain you the Residential section of a DofE Gold Award, the extent of volunteering would not achieve even a DofE Bronze volunteering section. But perhaps government designed NCS to achieve different outcomes to DofE? So, I’m not at all sure comparison is helpful. Government needs to be clear about the outcome it is looking for from its £1.2Billion investment and be sure that the NCS programme is the best way to deliver it.

The committee will not be surprised to hear that we believe DofE delivers better outcomes for young people and communities through the tried, tested and valued DofE programme and the currency of a recognised and valued Award. We are achieving high levels of youth
engagement and have greater demand than we can serve. We have no need to spend on advertising to attract participants.

The NCS programme does not appear to be as cost effective as the Scouts or Guides or Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade or Outward Bound or DofE or many others. None of them requires so much public money to convince young people to do their programme or activity. Would they deliver a better outcome for society with that same funding? I’m certain they would.