

NCS Trust Skills for Jobs Consultation Submission



Abstract:

On Wednesday 21 September 2022, NCS Trust responded to the Department of Education-led consultation, Skills for jobs: implementing a new further education funding and accountability system. The submission responded to Question 13, which focused on a proposal for providers to be able to earn a given percentage of their Skills Fund allocation on innovative provision, and examples for how this facility could best work.

NCS Trust agreed with the Skills Fund allocation proposal on innovative provision, and proposed UK Year of Service as a good example of a new, tangible, employer or employability-focused non-qualification provision.

The UK is facing significant youth employment challenges

Our country continues to face significant youth employment challenges, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. Huge skills shortages and a lack of a young talent pipeline remain in many crucial sectors, such as in the Net Zero economy, as well as the health, education and social care sectors. These are areas of strategic significance for our society and economy, as well as being sectors that offer the opportunity for meaningful and rewarding long term careers. However, too often young people are not being engaged in a way that encourages and supports them to take part in, and stick with, existing initiatives such as apprenticeships. NCS Trust has developed a new approach that addresses this problem: **UK Year of Service**.

UK Year of Service: an innovative programme to address these challenges

UK Year of Service, an NCS initiative, is a unique employability programme that helps young people aged 18-24 get work ready and world ready through nine to twelve month work programmes with three core elements:

- Paid work placements of 30-35 hours per week
- Life skills training
- Enrichment both within and beyond placement, and support for exit routes into further education or employment

Placements are diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all young people. They are embedded in the local community, focusing on the healthcare, public service, and green sectors. The programme design embeds robust evaluation from the start, with the goal of building a knowledge base for how a service year programme can thrive in the UK: **transforming young people's lives through employment, training, and social cohesion**, whilst also filling gaps in skills shortages in these areas of the economy.

"I have gained so much confidence in myself over the months as I have been supported by an excellent team (...) It has provided me with a greater understanding of what I want to do in the future and has shown me to ignore my self-doubt" - Ashleigh, Manchester

How does UK Year of Service work?

By engaging young people in a way that is compelling, and supporting employers and technical training providers to develop underlying essential skills, UK Year of Service ensures that young people not only access, but also stick with, long term employment and technical skills development. This is achieved through delivering national, cross-employer training and events that support young people and help them develop their personal and social skills.

And by providing support directly to employers looking to engage and develop their young talent pipelines. In turn, this approach delivers a triple benefit: personal and professional development for young people; increased engagement and talent retention for employers; and social and economic benefit back to society.



Impact on youth employment

The first UK Year of Service pilot stage placed 278 young professionals into roles across three sectors: environment, health & social care, and public services. This programme not only creates jobs in every region of the UK, **it also helps to forge links between employers, participants, and the communities in which they operate**, as evidenced by our first pilot when placements were delivered in partnership with ten lead organisations and a network of 75 employers (64% charities). During recruitment, **those who faced significant barriers into employability or into specific sectors were prioritised**; more than half the programme members were on government benefits before the programme, with many of that cohort coming from lower income households and underrepresented groups. The majority of placements are still 'live', however early outcome trends show that around 70% **of those leaving the programme are going directly into education, employment or training**. The next stage of the programme will have an emphasis on providing green

jobs, in response to the skills shortage, featuring roles such as Climate Adaptation Officers, Forest and Environment Assistants and Trainee Green Energy Doctors, among many other green and Net Zero opportunities.

“Our partnership through the delivery of the UK Year of Service programme is currently employing 27 young people in The Conservation Volunteers across the UK, from Belfast to Stirling and from Hull to London. Our offer of environmental traineeships was massively oversubscribed, and has resulted in a very diverse group of Conservation and Wellbeing Nature Trainees, engaged in both urban and rural natural heritage projects, gaining training, qualifications, work experience, confidence and connections.” - The Conservation Volunteers



To date, UK Year of Service has worked with thirteen placement partners to engage over 75 employers (64% charities) and deliver almost 300 placement opportunities. From our first pilot, 26% are from the cohort from Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities, 53% were accessing government benefits (e.g. Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance), and 67% were actively seeking employment before joining the programme.

Young people’s UK Year of Service experience

Luc, 22, from Nottingham, signed up to UK Year of Service as it appealed to him as an opportunity to get experience in the charity sector and incorporate his passion around impacting the climate crisis. Luc felt he had missed out on work experience opportunities due to the restrictions during the pandemic and noted that connections with peers were hard to maintain during his second and third year at university.



During his UK Year of Service placement, Luc worked with the Youth Engagement Department with the British Red Cross. Throughout his placement, Luc delivered impact to the communities he worked with, designing and developing a structured programme to school aged children around climate change and environmentalism. Luc developed professionally throughout the programme, improving leadership, communication, and problem solving skills as well as developing confidence.

Here is what Luc had to say about his experience:

Do you think schemes like Kickstart/UK Year of Service can help young people into employment?

"I think these schemes are very important as they give opportunities many businesses may not be willing to give, due to lack of education/experience. It allows many underprivileged young people to gain valuable experience."

What impact has the programme had on you?

"It has given me experience and in-roads into the charity sector that may have been hard to gain without volunteering. It has given me the chance to work with and educate younger people."

How has NCS helped you?

"NCS has provided training and brilliant events to connect and meet others on the scheme. NCS offered the perfect role for me personally, as the description was open, meaning I could follow my interests and incorporate them into my job role."



To see how UK Year of Service members found their experience, scan the QR code below and watch our short videos

