

BOOSTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERING FOR AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Civic participation can dramatically increase both the resources available to support young people's education, and community action carried out by children and young people themselves. The hours spent in the classroom are only part of the story of children's educational attainment. Teachers, facing ever increasing demands, cannot and shouldn't be expected to do everything. To add to the breadth and depth of education available to school children we need to leverage community resources.

Increasing civic participation would open up a rich supply of community-held knowledge that could complement classroom learning, offering diverse expertise and knowledge that cannot be easily captured in traditional education models. It would also help inspire future generations of digital makers. As Nesta's **Young Digital Makers report** argues, we need to mobilise volunteers across England to help children learn how to use technology to shape the world around them.

There is strong evidence to support greater community involvement in the services and support provided to children. For instance, the impact of one-to-one and small group tutoring on student performance has been demonstrated by initiatives such as the Access Project. Currently provision can be patchy, and we should aspire for all areas to benefit from the knowledge held by communities. This demands a rapid increase in the rate at which we scale up mentoring and tutoring initiatives.

At the same time, the school years are a pivotal period for children to start engaging in civic participation. By ramping up efforts to encourage children and young people to volunteer in their local communities we can create immediate benefits and make civic participation part of the DNA of future generations.

1. Establish an expanded National Citizenship Service (NCS) by the end of the 2015-2020 parliament.

- The government should commit to building on the existing NCS scheme, widening participation and offering a set of year-long placements by 2020. An annual scheme should offer the chance for young people to receive a stipend and

other benefits while participating and should have parity of esteem alongside vocational training and further education.

- To fund this expansion, the government should explore mixed sources of funding. This could include public subsidy using savings from holding down cash benefits to families with older children (as recommended by IPPR). It could also

include corporate sponsorship and/or contributions from organisations hosting NCS volunteers, as is the model for existing schemes such as City Year – with which the government could work to expand the programme.

2. A Social Action Premium should be paid to schools to catalyse community participation in the education and development of children and young people.

- The Department for Education (DfE) should create a modest, dedicated revenue grant to schools – similar to the PE and Sports Funding Premium. Schools could use this, for example, to subsidise volunteer tutoring and mentoring, peer-led support and parent volunteering, through organisations offering tried-and-tested schemes, such as the Access Project and Spice Time Credits.
- The grant should have a specific focus on improving access to targeted groups of pupils who may be in highest need, such as children who do not reach school readiness at the Early Years Foundation Stage, or who are eligible for Free School Meals.

3. Every head teacher should have access to tried-and-tested volunteer run mentoring and tutoring schemes.

- DfE should launch a Rapid Scaling and Replication Fund to help new and existing impact volunteering schemes in schools, such as tutoring and mentoring, to scale up quickly.

- The fund should focus on developing new models for volunteer-led tutoring and mentoring schemes to achieve scale and reduce their cost, such as through licensing. Specific attention should be placed on opening up access to schemes through digital platforms to ensure areas of low community resources have access to volunteer tutoring.

4. Trial the use of Future Credits, a scheme to incentivise volunteering during school years with rewards later in life, such as student loan repayments.

- DfE should pilot a scheme which enables young people to earn credits for participating in ‘kite marked’ community action throughout their school years. This could be similar to the **US AmeriCorps Segal Education Award scheme**, through which credits earned in school are redeemable against student loan repayments in future.
- Different ways of structuring and monetising rewards should be trialled to establish the model that maximises additional activity and likelihood of future civic participation.