



Enriching Education Recovery: Summary of new polling with children and young people, parents and teachers

October 2021

Overview

As providers of key learning and character-building experiences outside of the formal learning environment, National Citizen Service Trust (NCS Trust), together with Scouts, are interested to better understand the public's views about the impact of the pandemic on the lives of children and young people, and the importance they place on extracurricular and enrichment activities in the context of education recovery.

This paper presents highlights from new research, conducted in partnership with pollsters YouGov, to generate deeper insights into the perspectives and preferences of audiences we see as key stakeholders in approaches to education recovery: teachers, parents and children and young people.

These findings can be read in conjunction with a discussion paper, **'Enriching Education Recovery'**; the outcome of a collaborative initiative convened by NCS Trust in partnership with the Centre for Education and Youth. The discussion paper draws on these latest polling findings, as well as wider evidence, to explore a range of opportunities for expanding the provision of non-formal learning for children and young people.¹

¹ See NCS Trust and Centre for Education and Youth (2021). *Enriching Education Recovery - the role of non-formal learning, extra-curricular and enrichment activities in supporting transformational education recovery for children and young people*. <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

Key research findings

- 1. Extracurricular and enrichment activities are considered important by all audiences surveyed in supporting children and young people to overcome the impacts of the pandemic.***
- 2. Life-skills (such as independent living, cooking and financial planning) emerge as the most important area of support people would like to see outside of formal education.***
- 3. There is a clear preference for extracurricular activities to be delivered within the normal school timetable, rather than through extending the school day or shortening school holidays.***
- 4. There is a strong preference for specialist organisations to deliver these activities rather than teachers, and among children and young people for activities to be delivered off school grounds.***

Why this research?

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on children and young people - disrupting their education, stalling their future career prospects, and taking a heavy toll on their wellbeing and mental health.

The 'education recovery' agenda has focussed heavily on the importance of academic catch-up, rightly emphasising the devastating impact of learning loss, especially on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

But, there are many other areas where children and young people have also missed out - including in being able to participate in 'non-formal' extracurricular and enrichment activities, which also play a vital role in a broader education recovery experience. We already know from research conducted earlier this year by NCS Trust, that young people want to see more support post-pandemic around extracurricular activities (72%) and learning opportunities outside of school and college (75%).²

Whilst there has been notable research conducted into the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, including on their formal learning and education³, there has been limited exploration into the public's views about extracurricular and enrichment activities more specifically.

² NCS Trust and Youthsight surveyed a representative sample of 1,084 young people aged 16-19 in England online, using Youthsight's youth panel, between 17 and 22 February 2021. Read more [here](#).

³ For example, [NCS Trust and Youthsight survey](#) examining the role of young people in rebuilding our nation; the [Youth Employment UK Youth Voice Census Report 2021](#); and, [Children's Commissioner. The Big Ask](#)

This polling has been conducted to provide insights that help to address this gap, and to also inform wider research, analysis and dialogue on education recovery and non-formal learning to support the broader Discussion Paper (referenced above), that can be read in conjunction with this document.

Methodology

NCS Trust and Scouts wanted to carry out robust representative research with parents, teachers, and children and young people - key audiences with a stake in the education recovery agenda. The aim was to understand attitudes about a range of aspects relating to non-formal education and its potential role in supporting children and young people as we build back from the pandemic.

Working with independent researchers YouGov, we took a three-pronged survey approach as follows:

- 1,070 primary and secondary school teachers in England surveyed online between 24 and 29 September 2021 using YouGov's nationally representative Omnibus panel.
- 796 parents of children aged 18 and under in England, surveyed online between 24 and 28 September 2021, using YouGov's nationally representative Omnibus panel.
- 1,001 children in England aged 9 to 18, surveyed online between 24 September and 6 October 2021, weighted to be representative of all children aged 9 to 18 in England.⁴

Main results

1. Extracurricular and enrichment activities are considered important by all audiences surveyed in supporting children and young people to overcome the impacts of the pandemic

It's no surprise that teachers, parents and children and young people feel that one of the big impacts of the pandemic has been **children's disrupted education**: cited by almost 9 in 10 teachers (89%) in our survey, and 3 in 4 parents and children and young people (75% and 74% respectively). But, almost as many believe that having **fewer opportunities for engagement in extracurricular activities and experiences outside of school** has been an issue: 84% among

⁴ Note that broadly question wording was kept as consistent as possible across the three audiences to aid comparison, but in some instances question wording was amended to ensure it was suitable for younger age groups in the CYP sample.

teachers and 68% among parents. Two in 3 children and young people (66%) also recognise this as a consequence of the pandemic.

Whilst the majority of the three audiences surveyed recognise that children and young people need **extra support with formal, academic catch up** (58% of teachers, 63% of parents, and 68% of children and young people respectively agree with this), even larger proportions agree that they need **more access to extracurricular activities and wider learning experiences**: almost 9 in 10 teachers (88%) and 8 in 10 parents (78%) want to see more around this. Eight in 10 children and young people (80%) also want to see more access, specifically outside of school.⁵

We also see clear support for **more access to trusted adults who can provide advice and support**, such as careers advisers, therapists and youth workers: 86% of teachers agree children and young people would benefit from this kind of support, as do 73% of parents and 69% of children and young people.

2. Life-skills emerge as the most important area of support people would like to see outside of formal education

So what kinds of extracurricular activities and wider learning opportunities do people want to see?

'Life-skills' (including independent living, cooking and financial planning) emerges as the most important from a list of options presented for all three audiences surveyed: cited by 79% of teachers, 73% of parents and 68% of children and young people.

Sports also scores highly for over 3 in 4 teachers (77%), and for around 3 in 5 parents and children and young people (61% and 57% respectively). **Outdoor pursuits** also score highly: 74% of teachers, 61% of parents and 58% of children and young people see **outdoor activities** such as hiking or camping as important. Sixty-seven per cent of teachers and 55% of parents also like the idea of more **nature-based activities** such as tree planting, though just under half of children and young people advocate for this (47%).

We also see an appetite for more support around **skills for the workplace**, such as communication and presentation skills, for over half of audiences surveyed (59% of teachers, 56% of parents, and 51% of children and young people).

Trips away from home through residential experiences are supported by 3 out of 5 teachers (60%), but by smaller proportions of parents and children and young people (both 44%).

⁵ For children and young people this question was asked in specific reference to extracurricular activities and wider learning experiences which take place outside of school.

There is also some appetite for **volunteering or social action** in the local community; activities which we know help to support key skills development, build confidence and improve wellbeing.⁶ This includes over half of teachers (54%), plus 40% of parents and 31% of children and young people.

3. There is a clear preference for extracurricular activities to be delivered within the normal school timetable, rather than through extending the school day or shortening school holidays

When it comes to the role that schools can play in enhancing access to extracurricular and enrichment activities, there is significantly more support across all three audiences for doing this by **using time within the normal school timetable** (up to an hour each day), rather than through **extending the school or college day** (by up to an hour). As [Table 1](#) shows, the former is supported by over 6 in 10 teachers (61%), 7 in 10 parents, and 3 in 4 children and young people. The latter is supported by just 27% of teachers, and 36% of children and young people, though more parents support than oppose the idea (44% vs. 33%).

There is limited support for **shortening the school holidays** or using time at weekends, particularly among teachers (7 in 10 of whom actively oppose this idea).

Table 1: Support/ opposition to the following ideas for how schools could help to increase access to activities and other learning experiences

	Teachers		Parents		CYP ⁷	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Like	Dislike
Guaranteeing at least one hour every day within the normal school timetable to take part in these kinds of activities	61%	22%	70%	14%	75%	7%
Extending the school/ college day by up to an hour to allow more time for these activities without shortening time for academic work	27%	59%	44%	33%	36%	45%

⁶ See NCS Trust (March 2021). [Empowering the next greatest generation through social action and volunteering](https://wearencs.com/our-insights). <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

⁷ The question and scale was adjusted to take it more suitable for a younger audience, but the question should still be broadly comparable across all three audiences

Shortening the school holidays or using time at the weekends to allow more time for these kinds of activities	14%	70%	38%	39%	28%	50%
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4. There is a strong preference for specialist organisations to deliver these activities rather than teachers, and a preference from children and young people for activities to be delivered off school grounds

All three audiences surveyed agree that when it comes to thinking about models for delivering extracurricular activities and learning experiences through schools, the better approach is for schools to **partner with specialist organisations to deliver these experiences on the school grounds** (76% of teachers, 64% of parents, and 74% of children and young people agree with this idea) - see [Table 2](#). There is much less appetite to see **teachers deliver these experiences**, especially among teachers themselves - just 9% agree with this idea.

Around half of children and young (51%) people would like to see such **activities and experiences take place off the school grounds as needed**. Teachers and parents express more mixed views here, with around 1 in 3 (32%) and 1 in 4 (24%) agreeing with this idea, respectively.

Table 2: Agreement/ disagreement to the following ways extracurricular activities and learning experiences could be delivered through schools

	Teachers		Parents		CYP ⁸	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Teachers are best placed to deliver these activities and experiences on the school grounds, rather than specialist providers (e.g youth organisations, sports groups)	9%	67%	19%	44%	37%	26%

⁸ The question and scale was adjusted to take it more suitable for a younger audience, but the question should still be broadly comparable across all three audiences

<i>Schools should partner with specialist organisations (e.g. youth organisations, sports groups) who deliver these activities and experiences in the school grounds</i>	76%	9%	64%	15%	74%	7%
<i>These activities and experiences should take place off the school grounds as needed</i>	32%	17%	24%	21%	51%	11%

Conclusions

This new polling from NCS Trust and Scouts has helped shed further light not only on the role of 'non- formal' learning in education recovery, but also what this could look like in practice.

Taken together with the wider evidence looking at the impact of Covid and the role extracurricular and enrichment activities can play, these findings have been invaluable to informing the wider discussion paper on **'Enriching Education Recovery'**, referenced above.

Further information

For further information about the research, please email research@ncstrust.org.uk

For press enquiries, please contact the NCS Trust PR Team on email pr@ncstrust.org.uk

For more information about the work of NCS Trust visit <https://wearencs.com>, and Scouts visit <https://www.scouts.org.uk/>