

## NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

**Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors held at 120 Moorgate, London,  
and via video-conference\* on 23 March 2022 between 15:00 and 18:00**

Present:	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Nick Hurd	Ndidi Okezie*
	Ahmed Ibrahim	Hannah McLellan*
	Lamin Tarawally	Tristram Mayhew*
	Jacque Nnochiri*	Ian Livingstone
	Deborah Tavana	Ashley Summerfield
In attendance:	Naim Moukarzel	Amanda Best (apart from Item 7)
	Michael Devlin	Louka Travlos (Secretary)
	Craig Hayward (item 6 only)	Rachel Needs (item 6 only)
Apologies:	Laura Jackson (Gov Rep)	Lord Iain McNicol

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Arrival, Welcome and declaration of conflicts of interests**

Ndidi Okezie declared a potential conflict and as a result it was agreed she would recuse herself at item 7 for the removal of doubt. This was the same conflict previously noted: the organisation she leads had declared an interest in being part of NCS recommissioning, which was to be discussed in Item 7.

## **2. Update from Youth Co-Chairs**

### **2.1** 1) Introduction to Lamin Tarawally, new Youth Voice co-chair

The board welcomed Mr Tarawally as the new Youth voice co-chair of the board to replace Mr Ibrahim, who leaves in July. He was passionate ensuring that young people are empowered to have their voices heard and would build on the strong foundations of youth voice at NCS Trust and prioritise further integration of youth voice into everything NCS does and find better ways to maximise the impact of the forty new youth voice forum (YVF) members he and the other co-chairs represent.

### **2.2** Mr Ibrahim introduced the Youth Voice Forum (YVF) in numbers:

- 100 applications
- 40 YVF members
- 9 regions
- 36 have experienced the NCS programme
- 4 are new to NCS
- 26 New YVF members
- 7 YVF members have joined through the Changemakers programme

### **2.3** 2) Reflection from YVF onboarding weekend

Ms McLellan mentioned that the new Youth Voice Forum had just been onboarded. They would be in place for a year. Her reflections were that they were already highly engaged and more diverse than previously. She gave a summary of the highlights of the recent onboarding weekend:

- CEO update on strategy
- YVF feedback on future products and services
- Future ways of working
- How to navigate NCS Trust and use their voice

#### **2.4** 3) YVF feedback on future strategy

Mr Ibrahim outlined all the areas that the YVF had been involved with and showed the depth and breadth of their engagement. Mr Tarawally outlined the future areas of focus and areas the YVF could improve their engagement with cross functional projects, in particular early engagement with stakeholders about the role they can play. The YVF needs to do more to engage a wider group of young people so that it avoids its views becoming siloed or exclusive. They also outlined some exciting upcoming events including involvement with the Commonwealth games, Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

#### **2.5** The following comments were noted:

- The inputs and activity of the YVF are impressive, however more can be done next year to establish the KPIs related to outputs and outcomes so it can be said in year from now what whether it achieved its objectives
- The NCS Trust YVF and its co-chairs should be elevated within the youth sector and the learnings could be shared with the sector
- YVF co-chairs should think carefully about how to ensure engagement from a large group of 40 on the wider forum
- DCMS panel interviewing new NCS board member were impressed by the feedback from the NCS youth board and their views were valued

#### **2.5.1 ACTION: Youth Co-chairs to invite board members to appropriate Youth Voice Forum events in 2022/23**

#### **2.5.2 ACTION: YVF co-chairs to draft success criteria measured by outputs or outcomes rather than inputs.**

### **3. CEO Update**

Mr Gifford provided an update to accompany the management report. Took the report as read with four highlights:

1. Costs - flightpath for 2023 and 2024 is on track. Trust should be proud that it has been able to reduce Trust costs by 42% over two years.
2. Attrition of staff is high - there is still some uncertainty which will be addressed in the transformation item 7
3. Step-change in government perceptions of NCS - leading the volunteering with Lloyds Bank for the Queen's Jubilee pageant, examples of increasing influence on youth voice within government policy making, DCMS talking to NCS Trust about broader income streams
4. Trust should feel more confident than 12 months ago as its been laying the foundations for cross-political party support

#### 4. Regular business

- 1) The following board minutes were approved:
  - 27 January 2022
  - 23 February 2022
- 2) The 2 December 2021 board minutes were noted
- 3) Approved committee minutes were noted:
  - 16 November 2021 ARC
  - 24 January 2022 ARC

#### 4.4 Action log - for noting

One action from the last meeting had now been closed. It was for Mr Moukarzel to engage the Youth Board to agree the principles of fundraising and business development and this was covered in Item 7.

#### 4.5 Verbal updates from Committee chairs

- 1) **Audit and Risk** - Mr Wigdortz had been interim chair for three meetings - 16th November, 24th January and 7th March. Highlights were discussing outcomes of CSR, extending internal audit contract, ensuring supplier health through contract changes, robust data protection and risk management and saying farewell to long standing attendees: external members Jas Khela & Darren Xiberras and Sidhu Dabinderjit who led the NAO audit team. There remained two vacancies for ARC membership which he hoped would be filled by two incoming board members.
- 2) **Safeguarding** - There were no meetings since the last board update.
- 3) **Impact** - There were no meetings. The first meeting was scheduled for 6th April.
- 4) **People and Remuneration** - Mr Summerfield outlined that the committee had covered how to retain key people through a period of uncertainty and rapid transformation, future organisational design and how to ensure staff remain excited about the Trust's future direction despite a smaller financial settlement

#### 5. Governance

##### 5.1 New Board member appointments - verbal

**5.1.1 Board Appointments:** Interviews had taken place and there was consensus among the panel about the two candidates that best met the criteria. The appointments would go to the Prime Minister and Privy Council following DCMS ministerial approval. It was hoped that appointments would be made in April.

**5.1.2 External members:** The new ARC chair would likely look to appoint new external members to ARC. The Chair requested that the board support the incoming ARC chair with recommendations for suitable candidates.

**ACTION: Board members to support income ARC chair with recommendations for external members to ARC - ideal profiles are a CFO and and audit partner**

## 5.2 Policies for approval

- The Safeguarding Policy was approved with a minor amendment to the table on page 86 suggested by Ms Nonochiri. It had already been approved by the Safeguarding Committee
- Data Breach Management Policy was approved (it has been approved at ARC)

*The meeting was adjourned for a short break*

## 6. 2022 Delivery update

*Lord McNicol joined by video call*

### 6.1 ACTION: Trust to organise programme visits for board members

### 6.2 Ms Best introduced the speakers for each section who lead respective service lines:

- **Part-Residential** programmes in summer and autumn
- **Changemakers** - activities in communities
- **Skills Booster** - in-school NCS programmes
- **NCS Connect** - digital offer
- **Futuremakers** - employability programmes for 18-25 year olds

### 6.3 Residential

*What is it?* An exciting part-residential programme, consisting of 5 days and 4 nights away from home followed by a 5 day Social Action Project delivered locally 47,986 people will be participating this summer delivering around 3000 social action projects, which equates to around 1.4 million hours of social action between June and September.

*Performance:* 42,600 fully signed up. Aiming for 61k sign ups; at 70% which was on track to hit target by end of the Summer. It was noted that overall cost of user acquisition has been reducing over the years as the brand awareness has increased and the paid media has reduced.

### 6.4 Changemakers

*What is it?* Changemakers is a new programme introduced in 2019 and consists of accessible, regular community action groups in every Local Authority offering 5 hours per month of activities and support to young people, equipping them with the skills and tools required to undertake their own social action

*Performance:* Changemakers is showing strong performance already this year and we expect to achieve, if not exceed the agreed target for 2022. This would mean over 67,000 hours of local community action this year.

*Broader community impact:* Despite being a relatively new offer the demand for Changemakers has been high and we are already discussing the potential for over-performance for 2022 with our Partner network. Ms Best shared some examples of high quality youth led grass roots projects from Changemakers participants.

#### 6.4.1 The board noted:

- The subtle nuance of ensure young people who sign up are motivated to give back, but not overwhelmed by the commitment and put off before coming on programme

- That impact statistics should reflect not only the participants of the programme but the number of organisations and community beneficiaries who have benefited from it
- While the sign up target for residential programmes was reduced from previous years, in line with DCMS guidance and reduced overall budget, the overall number of young people NCS will reach through all its services should be higher than previous years.
- Future evaluation would need to account for the relative impact and value for money of the new service lines, as compared with its residential (which has been robustly evaluated as having significant impact) and other comparable youth interventions
- NCS stands with Ukraine: as a publically funded body, NCS is available to all age eligible refugees and asylum seekers but it will go further in guaranteeing places, providing bursaries and using its social media reach to amplify and publicise wider youth sector opportunities and guidance for young refugees

## 6.5 Skills Booster

*What is it?* The Skills Booster offer involves the delivery of NCS content in schools and other education settings. Content covers 'Personal Development' curriculum areas such as careers, employability, and 'real world learning'. Learnings from Skills Booster will inform the design of 2023 community programmes.

*Intended impact:* Skills Booster has been adapted in 2022 to allow us to support young people more with resilience in the run-up to GCSEs and to include a greater focus on vulnerable young people including those at risk of becoming NEET. Qualitative insights from schools and partners suggest programmes remain socially mixed along key demographics.

*Demand and wider benefits* Over 60% of the Partner led Skills Booster has already been booked / delivered with a number of network partners requesting over-delivery. Trust Skills Booster enables Trust to leverage corporate partnerships and codesign with organisations such as Barclays. This will be delivered in the 2nd half of the year.

### 6.5.1 It was noted:

- Skills Booster could be a central pillar of the Trust's future corporate partnership strategy such as offering brand partnership exclusivity in exchange for sponsorship

## 6.6 NCS Connect

*What is it?* Online hub full of bitesize content for young people and sometimes written by young people on everything from debates and life skills to interviews and creative challenges and much much more.

*Performance:* Since launch in Jan 2021, NCS Connect has already reached its 2m unique engagements KPI with 2.87m engagements to date. Overall NCS Connect unique website interactions since launch are 60k and from the start of the financial year to date is 48.5k against the KPI of 55k by the end of March '22.

*Engagement:* Connect engagement is high. Users on average spend double the time on Connect vs the main website with 4.46 mins vs 2.46 mins. Users are reading over twice as many pages per session vs the normal site with 5 pages vs 3 pages. Connect also generates +4% more returning visitors compared to the main site showing that the content we have is "sticky" and relevant with a low bounce rate (people leaving as soon

as they land on Connect) at 30% below the main site's 38% bounce rate. There is still much to do on our digital strategy but we are learning at pace.

*Success:* Connect has also proven it can influence and convert EOIs and sign ups (to payment hand off), generating 5.4k EOIs and 2.7k sign ups since launch and 4.6k EOIs and 2.2k sign ups since the start of the financial year.

*Impact:* Connect drives increases in positive responses to questions about:

- feeling positive about people from different backgrounds
- Motivation and opportunities to help others
- Confidence about employability
- connection with other people
- develop new skills
- Improved mental health and fun!

#### **6.6.1**

Mr Hayward summarise the following points:

- Connect has been a launchpad for testing future digital offers
- It has achieved value for money in a world of reduced marketing and paid media budgets
- It has driven sign ups: of 60k visits 3K young people have signed up which is a better conversion rate than paid media
- Content marketing is becoming a strong future marketing channel
- User generated content: for young people by young people is a compelling and authentic proposition. This is especially true of youth rising podcast- co-creating content with young people content that resonates with young people
- New Content platforms give the means to develop new partnerships such as Stonewall or Swamp motel
- These are a part of the portfolio which may not be have as deep an impact as residential but nonetheless provide rich learning experience which broaden access

#### **6.6.2**

It was noted:

- Parents could be engaged in the digital platform to support and influence their children to engage with NCS in the same way that the in-person sales channels do
- Where the Trust is looking to gain corporate sponsorship, it is the more niche inclusion demographics and how the Trust enables access that could attract corporates
- The community forum needs to strike the balance between providing structure and a safe environment for our age groups, as well as allowing them the freedom to share their own content - aggregated and amplified on our social channels and more curated highlights of summer activity
- The Trust is currently running market testing around the value proposition of Connect Plus - e.g. live workshops versus virtual self-learning. User testing and market research should be built into the product development Youth co chair insights included:
  - There are a lot of other organisations in this space and young people are tired of e-learning
  - Agreed there could be a clearer value proposition for NCS's e-learning

#### **6.7**

##### **Futuremakers**

*What is it?* 447 roles created for 18-25 year olds on 6-9 month job placements with skills training and wrap around support

*Kickstart:* NCS Trust employed 11 young people through the scheme

Overall continuing to support 39 young people, tapering down as the scheme comes to a close in August 2022

Revenue: £606k income £4m to the network

*Performance:* 340 jobs across the UK - 278 UK Year of Service & 62 Kickstart (above national trends for Kickstart Scheme)

*Impact* - outcomes assessed through robust independent evaluation

- Participants have the confidence, connections and attributes to make the most of opportunities
- Whether members secure a job/EET opportunity afterwards
- Whether members are involved in a socially beneficial activity afterwards
- Nearly 80% of all participants were NEET before getting a job through NCS
- 53% of UKYoS members are on DWP benefits
- NCS Trust Led sector round tables with Onward, DWP & youth sector Kickstart providers
- Award winning: Youth Voice & Youth Friendly Employer Awards from Youth Employment UK

Through delivering Futuremakers the Trust has:

- Built its knowledge, network and credibility in the employability sector
- Built the infrastructure to manage and convert a pipeline of business development opportunities
- Delivered robust evidence of the benefits of a service year
- Run an employability programme for young people including virtual learning
- Delivered cross functional projects and apply supply chain management expertise to a new sector

*What's next?* - National Lottery Heritage funding bid due in a few weeks for £2 million of funding And looking to expand UK Year of Service through match funding.

Key questions for Trust management were:

- Futuremakers seems to be a promising future programme, how can it ensure its sustainability if impactful?
- Changemakers and residential were both on track but how can it ensure performance in a year of change?
  - There remains risk in transition NCS's network to new contracts in 2022/23, some of this risk can be mitigated through adjusted targets
- What are the barriers to us signing up more Kickstarters? What more can we do to attract underprivileged young people?
- How can the Trust be sure through its evaluation that Kickstarters are leaving with the skills to go on and get jobs?

## **7. Transformation**

### **7.1 Transformation update**

*Ms Okezie recused herself and confirmed that she had not received any board papers for Item 7. She left the video call.*

Mr Devlin outlined the Transformation update since the last meeting. The highlights were:

- Feedback from the government on the Strategic outline business case
- Questions from HMT about how we measure impact to ensure there is a value

for money calculation that the Treasury have accepted

- Accounting for inflationary pressures on the business case including the Spring statement
- The percentage of central management costs and if it should be a lower proportion
- Should the focus be more on levelling up and targeting than universality - we have held ground based on our universal vision
- We were approved and awaiting written confirmation
- Submission in Mid april to the HMT approval process

*Ms Best left the room*

## **7.2 Income Generation Strategy**

Mr Moukarzel reminded the board about their feedback from last time. The following was noted:

- Good feedback from the YVF and they signed off the principles
- Pipeline is being developed
- To make this sustainable we will need some changes in legislation

*Ms Okezie rejoined the call*

## **7.3 AOB**

No items were raised

## **7.4 NED only session**

Brief discussion about the agenda items and broad support for the CEO and management team was noted.

The meeting closed at 18.00

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Committee/board at its meeting on 23rd June 2022 and signed by the Chair as authentication.



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Chairman

## Action Schedule

Min	Action	By whom?	Status
2.5.1	<b>Youth Co-chairs to invite board members to appropriate Youth Voice Forum events in 2022/23</b>	Ahmed Ibrahim & Hannah McLellan	To be brought in June
2.5.2	<b>YVF co-chairs to draft success criteria measured by outputs or outcomes rather than inputs</b>	Ahmed Ibrahim & Hannah McLellan	To be brought in June
5.1.2	<b>Board members to support income ARC chair with recommendations for external members to ARC - ideal profiles are a CFO and audit partner</b>	All NEDs	To be discussed in June/July
6.1	<b>Trust to organise programme visits for board members</b>	Miriam Jordan-Keane	All NEDs have been offered a visit