



## NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of directors held at Hemmingford House, Stratford-Upon-Avon, CV37 7RG, at 3:00 pm on Thursday 24 June 2021

Present	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Ndidi Okezie (by teleconference)	Jacquie Nnochiri
	Ian Livingstone	Lord Iain McNicol
	Ahmed Ibrahim (Youth rep.)	Ashley Summerfield
	Hannah McLellan (Youth rep.)	Deborah Tavana
	Tristram Mayhew	
In attendance	Sarah Knight (Secretary)	Lizzie Hanna (CFO) (by teleconference)
	Michael Devlin (Director of Governance) (by teleconference)	Anna Kittow, EA to the CEO
Apologies:	John Maltby	Paul Cleal
	Nick Hurd	

### 1 Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting. No conflicts of interest were declared. Apologies from Mr Maltby, Mr Hurd and Mr Cleal were noted. The Board passed on its best wishes to Mr Cleal who was receiving his OBE for his contributions towards diversity and inclusion.
- 1.2 Mr Wigdortz outlined the objectives of the strategy day which would be taking place the following day as follows:
- Bond and connect to the NCS portfolio of services
  - Hear from young people about their priorities and the role they see for NCS
  - Understand where NCS is today and plans for 2021
  - Recap the Youth Review submission and get behind a future direction that aligns with Government and youth priorities
  - Obtain Board input on confirming NCS' direction, and gather ideas for how Board members can support
- 1.3 Mr Wigdortz praised the positive momentum which NCS had built up through its work to transform its offer while cutting costs, but cautioned that it was not the time to be complacent and there was much to do. Mr Wigdortz specifically commented on growing impact and numbers, as well as improving digital capability. Becoming a strategic partner and support to the Government and the youth sector in serving young people was crucial, and NCS had an important role to play in helping young people 'catch up' post Covid.

### 2 Management report

- 2.1 Management Report: Mr Gifford gave an overview of the Management Report, drawing out the following key messages:
- **CSR, Youth Review and Government Engagement**: Positive engagement and recognition of NCS' efforts had been received from the Secretary of State and Minister for Civil Society on NCS' efforts to transform, cut costs, and provide a wider range of opportunities for young people; Treasury had recently approved a proposal for the Trust to support DWP's "Kickstart" programme; and numerous MPs signing up to visit the programme, were all positive signs. This momentum

must be kept up as the Trust moved into the Comprehensive Spending Review in the Autumn where it planned to submit a compelling submission for the NCS future as part of the Government's wider youth strategy.

- **Summer 2021**
  - Mr Gifford noted that the budget for FY 21/22 did reduce the numbers of young people benefiting from NCS compared to previous years.
  - The Trust had endeavoured to create a portfolio which would provide a range of opportunities while maximising the numbers of young people who were able to benefit.
  - Due to Covid restrictions, it had been necessary to cancel the 3 week residential and it was expected this would have a further impact on numbers. This was very disappointing as it was oversubscribed and would result in two consecutive summers without the most impactful experience that the Trust offers.
  - The focus was therefore on quality. Last year had yielded good data on impact and the Trust was building on this. He cited examples of positive work with young people with Special Educational needs (SEND) in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), levelling up communities, and large-scale trials taking place in opportunity areas.
  - That said, Mr Gifford noted the trade offs involved between curriculum objectives, social mix and numbers. For example, school bubbles boosted numbers but were less effective for social mixing. Targeting pupil referral units was excellent for young people who were harder to reach but compromised on social mixing. The Trust was looking at ways to boost better mixing within schools.
- **Leadership at key events:** The Trust was proud that NCS was increasingly making its presence known at high profile events.
  - Together with Scouts, NCS was taking a leading role in the upcoming 'Thank you day' with Levi Roots as sponsor, encouraging people to organise barbecues to help society to reconnect. 400 barbecues had already been planned, including No 10 holding a barbecue in their garden to which NCS had been invited.
  - The Trust was working with the Hope Collective (in memory of Damilola Taylor) to help change the poverty of aspiration and lift communities. The Trust had organised 'hacks' on various themes such as "employability" and "community", and was hosting an event in London which is likely to be attended by the Prime Minister.
- **Showcasing the Trust in an 'innovative' space.**
  - As part of diversifying its portfolio, the Trust had launched the UK Year of Service, offering work placements to young people which benefited the community while building skills. The Trust was expecting 400 young people to sign up to the programme by Autumn. Reviews of the first pilot would be done via round tables with politicians.
  - The Trust's involvement in Kickstart had now been approved by the Treasury and the Trust was facilitating 124 placements within its network. This had the additional benefit of providing an income stream which allowed the Trust a greater degree of flexibility.
- **Local MP support.**
  - Three members of the Shadow Cabinet, five shadow Ministers and five Ministers of State were already signed up to visit the Summer programme. In addition, a Parliamentary drop in session was scheduled for September.
- **Staff**
  - Recent news of funding for next year's programmes had given employees a boost. A positive outcome from the CSR and good summer would further improve morale but there were signs of strain. Specifically,

while the recent People Survey showed an enduring belief in the purpose of NCS, uncertainty was having a growing impact and resulting in regret leavers.

- In general, the People Survey had been largely positive but had also highlighted areas that could be improved and the Trust was listening and evolving in response.

2.2 Mr Wigdortz thanked Mr Gifford for his updates. The Board raised the following points in discussion:

- Kickstart had much mileage to serve young people and also to develop links to monetary organisations within the commercial sector and this was a direction the Trust should continue to explore.
- The UK Year of Service would be open to NCS alumni and non-NCS alumni with a current ambition of a 50/50 split. This would be another entry point into the NCS journey to help young people evolve as citizens and build impact.
- There was a discussion on whether all ALBs were subject to the same levels of uncertainty as the Trust. Covid had affected all organisations in this regard and budgets had been reduced across ALBs and the sector, with some facing existential financial issues. This had resulted in a more competitive funding environment where all organisations had to prove their worth. Now was the time to keep thinking about how to do more for less, innovating to grow while reducing unit cost.
- The Trust was working well with sector organisations and there was a good collective appetite for collaboration in the face of the Youth Review and upcoming CSR.

### 3. Finance Update

3.1 Ms Hanna took the papers as read and updated the Board with the following key points:

- The CSR submission and the Summer season remained key focuses for the Trust.
- Contract Change Notices (CCNs) for the Autumn 2021 programme were due to be completed by the end of August 2021, capturing the fact that Autumn 2021 was no longer a residential programme.
- Kickstart had received sign off from the Treasury.
- The cost optimisation strategy was still on-going but the Trust had been stretched in some areas.
  - Not being able to contract past Summer 2022 had proved problematic however it was now confirmed that the Trust would be able to contract through to March 2023 which would partially address these issues.
  - Resources have been reallocated to mitigate the risk of stretched skill sets to optimise Summer 2021 delivery and launch of key projects e.g. KickStart
- It was further noted that although the cost optimisation strategy is right sizing the Trust cost base, to be able to grow and evolve the Trust portfolio of services in line with the strategic objectives some areas will need investment in the near future. Cash currently stood at £10 million, but the Trust is committed to the cash strategy levels of £2 million to ensure good managing public money and in line with government requirements to ensure cost is held centrally and not in the ALB. The Trust cash is higher at present as it holds £5 million for accruals and £2 million of underspend.
- Ms Hanna reported that the Trust's risk profile continues to be stable and no funding was at risk.
- Headcount stood at 212, which had last been seen in July 2018. This was 14 heads favourable to the budget.
- The Trust's activation of contingency 2 (removing residential elements) had released £4 million of accommodation payments which had created an additional buffer for the Trust which would be discussed with DCMS.

- The team’s focus for the next 2 months would be to develop a revised forecast which would be provided to the Board in August.
- The Trust planned to review its infrastructure and service portfolio, with a view to preparing the template for recommissioning over the summer months to define the parameters for commercial delivery which will be fed into the commissioning process. The Trusts next break clause for the provide network is December 2022

3.2 Mr Wigdortz thanked Ms Hanna for her strong reporting and noted positive feedback on improved compliance and cost control from NAO and Ministers.

3.3 Mr Xibberas joined the meeting.

#### 4 Governance

4.1 I&S Committee Separation: Mr Mayhew introduced this item, noting that “safeguarding” and “impact”, while similar, were nevertheless different topics. Safeguarding was a discrete topic which called for expert oversight and the Committee was highly adept at providing this. However, “impact” was a much wider topic and as the Trust moved to a portfolio of services, it needed a broader group to provide expertise to ensure the Trust continued to build its impact. In particular it was considered that the Trust’s impact could have broader oversight from areas of policy, academia and the sector, and thus a proposal had been touted to create an advisory board for impact, while the “safeguarding” committee of the Board would remain

4.2 The Board heard the explanation but it was committed that the Trust’s impact should be a Board matter and there were concerns that a new governance structure would prevent the Board having sufficient oversight over this topic. The Board requested that an action was taken to revert back to them with a proposal on how to ensure that any new group or committee that considered impact would have sufficient checks and governance around it to ensure the Board had appropriate oversight on robust measurement and value for money.

4.3 **Action: Ms Knight to prepare an options paper for the Board on how impact should be overseen going forward so that impact and evaluation can have expert input while ensuring that appropriate oversight is maintained**

#### 5 Regular business

5.1 Board minutes for approval and signature: The minutes from the Board meeting on 17 March 2021 were approved by the Board.

5.2 Verbal updates from committee chairs: Updates from the committee chairs were provided as follows:

- Impact and Safeguarding Committee (I&S): A safeguarding update had been received by the Committee via correspondence on 9th June 2021. Preparation for delivery continued and the Committee considered that strong and up to date arrangements were in place.
- People and Remuneration Committee. The last meeting of the People Committee took place on the 11th March 2021 thus there had been no meetings since the Board meeting on 17th March 2021. The next meeting was due to take place on 9th July 2021. Mr Summerfield noted that given more certainty had been secured for the Trust’s future, more concrete and granular decisions could be made.
- Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). Mr Cleal was absent from the meeting but Ms Knight noted that as the previous ARC meeting was on 8th March 2021, there had been no ARC meetings since the last Board meeting on 17th March 2021. Management continued to work on the Annual Report, with the NAO Audit due to commence on 19th July. The DCMS Chair assurance process had been completed via correspondence. The next ARC meeting would take place on 6th July 2021.

5.3 Verbal updates from Youth representatives: Mr Ibrahim and Ms McLellan thanked the

Board for attending the recent Youth Voice Forum drop-in sessions. A key focus of the Youth representatives had been designing the Trust's Kickstart programme for young people on Universal Credit who were struggling to get into employment.

Mr Ibrahim and Ms McLellan also outlined the key aims and priorities of young people for tomorrow's Strategy sessions, which had been informed by discussions with the Board at the recent drop-in sessions. These priorities were:

- Building back communities and social action
- Personal development and skills, experience and self-confidence
- Employment and employability.
- The importance of the opportunity to have a trip away from home; it was considered that this should be protected at all costs.

5.4 Action log: The action log was reviewed and all actions were agreed as complete.

## **8 AOB**

8.1 There were no items of other business.

The meeting closed at 4:10 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Board at its meeting on 23 September 2021, and signed by the chairman as authentication.

*Brett Wigdortz*

[Brett Wigdortz \(Oct 22, 2021 14:02 GMT+1\)](#)

Chair

## NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

### Board meeting 17 March 2021 - Action schedule

Min	Action	By whom?	Status
4.3	Ms Knight to prepare an options paper for the Board on how impact should be overseen going forward so that impact and evaluation can have expert input while ensuring that appropriate oversight is maintained	Sarah Knight	Open