



NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

OFFICIAL

Minutes of a meeting of the board of directors held by teleconference at 4:30 pm on Thursday 02 April 2020

Present*:

Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
Paul Cleal	Dame Julia Cleverdon
Ndidi Okezie	John Maltby
Ian Livingstone	Lord Iain McNicol
	Ashley Summerfield
Jermain Jackman (Youth representative)	
Michael Devlin (Secretary)	

Apologies: Dame Sally Coates Tristram Mayhew

In attendance*:
Observer Deborah Tavana

*all by teleconference

1. Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Brett welcomed the Board. No new conflicts of interest were declared by any members.
- 1.2 Mr Wigdortz and Mr Cleal updated the Board on the recent meeting with the Permanent Secretary and how positive it had been and commended the NCS team for their work with DCMS to ensure the meeting's success.

2. Coronavirus

- 2.1 Management Update - Mr Gifford updated the Board on the documents tabled which included the paper submitted to the permanent secretary meeting, as well as the slides tabled at a recent NCS town hall.
- 2.2 Mr Gifford reminded the Board of the four key objectives that had been the focus of NCS in response to coronavirus: 1) How NCS can deliver support for young people in the isolation phase digitally, 2) How NCS can support young people's participation in volunteering, 3) what parts of the curriculum can be delivered through an adjusted programme, and 4) how this presents an opportunity to connect with the youth sector more broadly in the delivery of support for young people.
- 2.3 Mr Gifford outlined that confirmation on budget and approach from the Secretary of State was outstanding and expected imminently. Communication has been delayed as a result.
Mr Gifford presented the three phases of activity NCS is structuring its response to. 1) Staying connected - updated the website with content on coronavirus - NCS has seen 12000 hits to the NCS website, and also supporting activity digitally through the network partners. 2) Keep doing good - this is utilising the infrastructure to connect young people - an example was the email sent to 100000 grads on the call to action - 4000 had

connected into the NHS website using the NCS website to drive volunteering activity. 3) Moving forwards - what can be done on the programme - during Autumn (dependent on medical advice for any social gathering) looking at different variations of the programme, potential support during the time that school remains open, and the approach to 2021.

In terms of suppliers, Mr Gifford is awaiting confirmation to finalise timing, but will contact suppliers with information on how they can support the revised approach - digitally, through school programme support, and through supporting other elements of the youth sector. As suppliers, accommodation partners are slightly different and there may be an ability to enable a release of spaces that can be used elsewhere but there are some robust discussions to be had once the green light is received

As it pertains to staff, Mr Gifford then detailed recent town halls and feedback received. The communication channels being regular and open have helped to support this and the ability to communicate and re-point workload will support this.

On the budget, as a result of coronavirus NCS is working with the government on the reduced budget for 2020 with reduced participation numbers, and there will be confirmation of the 2021 approach as part of the agreement. There will be a refund process for parents of children who can't participate in the summer programme in 2020 once the decision has been approved

- 2.4 Mr Wigdortz thanked Mr Gifford and invited the board to provide comment and any questions they may have in response to the outlined approach.
- Mr Summerfield attended the town hall and commented on the uplifting and supportive tone set by Mr Gifford, and the virtual approach was working well.
- Mr Summerfield wondered how NCS could still support social cohesion digitally, and also be in schools in 2020 to drive a big 2021 programme. Mr Gifford described the two aspects to the virtual approach - where people were allocated to a digital cohort, NCS was writing out to them to encourage mixing through digital tutorials. The 'Be Epic' element of the summer curriculum is where the bonds are normally created, and the tutorials are focussing on using this curriculum in the content for those.
- Mr Wigdortz asked about 2020's 16 year olds being able to do the programme in 2021 - acknowledging this would need DCMS approval. Mr Gifford outlined that there was flexibility for 17 year olds but it may challenge delivery capacity. Work on 2021 capacity was a focus area and the numbers targeted for participation in 2021 would need to come back to the Board for further discussion.
- Mr Livingstone questioned whether this opportunity could enable teaching digital skills and digital creativity for young people to enable greater reach and future skills production. Mr Gifford acknowledged the limitation of the digital curriculum in terms of content but also channel (through providers as well as direct). NCS was working with other sector members on how it can be scaled up.
- Mr Jackman asked about the involvement of young people in the creation of the proposal as tabled. Mr Gifford responded that the youth board feedback had been received but also that separate leaders meetings had responded to specific questions. Mr Gifford detailed that feedback from young people was for NCS content to support but not be the same as schools - they are already receiving content from schools and NCS should feel different. In addition, there had been a request to increase support on mental health and bereavement and to act as an advisor on opportunities for young people under 18 to volunteer.
- Dame Julia complimented Mr Gifford on the work but was concerned about the lack of activity until September/October and wanted to understand the plan to get young people involved in activity in the next few months in partnership with other sector members. Mr Gifford updated that online tutorials were already in place and there was budget to support this activity immediately, however the benefit to sector organisations would be through 'benefit in kind' through sharing expertise and infrastructure, and that any financial support was still a question being explored in DCMS. Dame Julia asked about what engagement had taken place with the Department of Education. Mr Gifford updated

on the membership at different government meetings but there was work that needed to continue to support the government with linking these conversations.

Mr Wigdortz urged that as the conversation looked at participation numbers, it was a good time to understand how 2021 could be a step to expanding the programme to all young people as the long term goal. How could this be seen as the opportunity to deliver to a much larger number of young people as a true national citizen service?

Ms Okezie questioned if there would be tens of thousands of people experiencing NCS in 2020 as this wasn't clear yet in terms of who would experience the NCS programme. In addition how this year's year 11s will be supported or experience the programme as a response to the moment we are facing this year. Ms Okezie lastly asked about the approach to supplier costs.

Mr Gifford, responded that there would not be tens of thousands experiencing the programme on any given day or on any given programme but tens of thousands will experience a touchpoint with NCS - digitally, thorough volunteering, or through a local provider, through social action or in school, or in the autumn programme. In terms of the curriculum changes that differ from school - some examples include building a team, engaging in politics and life skills but with extra content such as coping in isolation, bereavement and mental health support. In terms of costs with providers, the conversation would move to a request on how providers would be able to accommodate different activities within the sunk costs (that the government agree are not 'novel and contentious' in terms of managing public money) in lieu of delivering the programme. These discussions will take place in a manner consistent with the terms of the provider contracts, like the right to trigger force majeure, that afford the Trust the opportunity to ensure value for money and protection of taxpayer funds.

Lord McNicol commented that this presented an opportunity for mixing beyond geography which the programme had never been able to move beyond due to the residential approach. In addition, Lord McNicol reminded Mr Gifford of the need to ensure all information is distributed down the full supply chain. Lord McNicol asked about whether there was a mechanism to understand how many of the 4000 grads who had utilised the link to the NHS had gone on to be active? This would then provide a powerful narrative for NCS. Finally, Lord McNicol mentioned that there are other charities who would be able to support on content for bereavement for example and to not take on the sole responsibility.

Mr Gifford agreed the ability to enable national mixing was a real benefit opportunity supported by the digital work. In addition, he agreed the ability to describe the participation of grads in NHS volunteering would be a key story to tell if the reporting was available and compelling.

Dame Julia commented that she saw no reason why NCS couldn't build with other members of the sector, a programme with several streams of activity for ambassadors from NCS to deliver a new wave of activity. It presented a possibility for NCS grads to be like Americ Corps. There was a space for a 'big idea' on volunteering that could help the UK Government to create a real change out of the coronavirus crisis.

Mr Cleal also supported the role of football clubs in the absence of any football, and that interaction between and across other clubs that bring NCS participants together was a good idea. In terms of the costs and treatment, the ability to use the costs in a way that brought about useful content for young people as opposed to unused places, was very important.

Mr Maltby was very pleased to hear of the close working with DCMS and the objectives as outlined were very sound. The ability to use the cohort of intended participants as well as alumni in the spirit of volunteering was another important idea. The support for the budget secured with DCMS was important, but the 2021 budget should be carefully considered given the long term impacts of the coronavirus on the economy and there may be benefit in scenario testing a reduced budget as a result and what could be done. Mr Gifford agreed in terms of the approach in 2021 and the expectation that the budget for unit costs would be strained. Mr Wigdortz hoped that it didn't mean less participation and that broader government support may need to be sought. Dame Julia suggested

that Mr Wigdortz make contact with the minister of state for Education to explore this further.

- 2.5 **Action - Mr Wigdortz to make contact with the Minister for Schools together with Mr Gifford and Dame Julia to discuss the role of NCS more widely.**

3. The Challenge - update

- 3.1 Mr Cleal outlined the key objectives that were set out in this matter and how they had been met. Mr Wigdortz thanked the board members for their work to support the resolution of this situation.

4. Governance

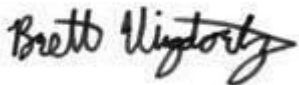
- 4.1 Board minutes for approval - The minutes for the 18 March 2020 meeting were approved by the Board.
- 4.2 Next Board meeting timing - Given the unknowns on medical advice for the team meeting in June, a decision was made to revisit the next Board date in early May. Mr Wigdortz and Mr Devlin will work on this together to understand what may be possible.
- 4.3 **Action: Mr Devlin to understand what day in late July that might work as a fall back for the Board to meet in person for the Strategy day should the June date prove impossible.**

5. AOB

- 5.1 Property Action - Lord McNicol , Dame Julia and Mr Wigdortz agreed to join the sub-group focussing on the NCS strategy as it pertains to Property and decisions. Mr Devlin agreed to approach Mr Mayhew to determine if he is also interested to join the group given his experience in the field.

The meeting closed at 5:50 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the board at its meeting on 01 May 2020 and signed by the chairman as authentication.



.....
Chairman