EVALUATION OF SUMMER & AUTUMN 2014 NCS DELIVERY

February 2015

“It was inspirational and has enlightened me, I know now how to succeed”

[Sam, Autumn 2014]
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Dame Kelly Holmes Trust National Citizen Service
2014 Evaluation Report

1. Executive summary

The Dame Kelly Holmes Trust has been involved in the specialist provision of support to NCS projects since 2010. In 2014, the Trust has worked with the NCS Network in areas across England where local providers have the option of deploying athlete mentors with the purpose of motivating and inspiring at key phases of the programme.

In 2014/15, the Trust:

- Deployed 43 athletes to the Summer and Autumn NCS programmes, who collectively delivered 210 athlete days (184 full days and 26 half days);
- Engaged with 42 local delivery partners across 5 regions across the UK;
- Directly impacted on 15,020 young people (12,075 in Summer 2014 and 2,945 in Autumn 2014).

The findings in this evaluation are positive. Participants, local partners and athlete mentors all reported positive outcomes.

- Participants and local partners reported the positive effect of having athlete mentors involved in the NCS programme.

  “I feel that the athlete contribution is excellent. The young people are always engrossed with what the athletes have to say and their stories, they capture the attention of the young people in a way that LDP’s cannot and they give a project that special value.” [Lisa, LSP]

- Most of participants and local partners that responded felt that all the different aspects of the NCS programme were either highly or fairly inspirational. In particular, 85% of participants and 96% of local partners that responded reported that ‘meeting the athlete mentor’ was highly or fairly inspirational.
- Participants reported feeling more motivated to complete the rest of the programme and about their futures as a result of the session with the athlete; local partners reported observing the same increase in motivation.
- Athletes reported strong positive outcomes for themselves as well as participants. These included, increased knowledge, skills and abilities.
2. **Background**

National Citizen Service (NCS) is a Government-backed initiative that brings together young people aged 15 to 17 from different backgrounds to help them develop greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility, with a view to creating a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society.

3. **Programme overview and Trust involvement**

The NCS programme is split into four phases:

- **Phase 1 – Adventure:** In their first week, participants attend an outdoor activity centre, getting to know each other, living away from home and making new friends.
- **Phase 2 – Future:** Participants are reunited with their group to live away from home in university-style accommodation.
- **Phase 3 – Making a difference:** Participants have a chance to put into practice as a team the skills and experience they’ve learnt to a social action project.
- **Phase 4 – Graduation:** Participants, partners and athletes join together to celebrate participant’s achievements and continue to develop their network.

Dame Kelly Holmes Trust athletes are involved in delivering full or half day sessions during Phase 3 of the NCS programme. However, some athletes also deliver during phases 2 and 4.

The Dame Kelly Holmes Trust has been involved in the specialist provision of support to NCS projects since 2010. In 2014, the Trust has worked with the NCS Network in areas across England where local providers have the option of deploying athlete mentors with the purpose of motivating and inspiring at key phases of the programme.

4. **2014/15 key highlights**

The Trust...

- Deployed 43 athletes to the Summer and Autumn NCS programmes in 2014, who collectively delivered 210 athlete days (184 full days and 26 half days);
- Engaged with 42 local delivery partners across 5 regions across the UK;
- Directly impacted on 15,020 young people (12,075 in Summer 2014 and 2,945 in Autumn 2014).
5. Aims of the evaluation

The key aims of this evaluation are to assess outcomes and evidence across two key research questions:

- Is there direct evidence that as a result of our work...the life chances of the young people on the margins of society that we engage with are improved?
- Is there direct evidence that as a result of our work...our athletes have added value to the (scale, scope or duration of) impact achieved for the young people?

This report focuses on the outcomes of the athlete session on the NCS programme as reported by young people participants, local partners and athletes.

6. Method

6.1. Evaluation

A random sample of athletes were sent paper-based evaluation forms to distribute to participants at their delivery days. In total, 390 responses from young people from across the Summer and Autumn NCS programmes was collated. Young people were asked to provide their feedback on the overall programme, their session with the athlete mentor, and for any other feedback about the NCS programme.

Local delivery partners involved in the NCS programme were invited to complete an electronic evaluation form following their programmes. Partners were asked to reflect on the impact of the athlete session on the participants, their own experience of the athletes session and for general feedback the athlete’s impact on the participants and programme.

Athlete mentors involved in delivering were invited to complete electronic evaluations at the end of the Summer and Autumn delivery. Athletes were asked to reflect on their overall experience of the NCS programme and the impact of their session on the participants and themselves.

The following table outlines the number of complete evaluations across Summer and Autumn NCS delivery:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total number of people involved in the programme</th>
<th>Number of evaluations received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>15,020</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local partners</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete mentors</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where a Partner deployed athletes on Summer and Autumn NCS programmes, some have complete the evaluation twice to reflect the different programmes and athlete delivery involved.

While young people and athlete responses are low in relation to the respective sample size, we believe the findings remain important and usable in our evaluation of the programme overall.

7. Findings

7.1. Experience of participants

7.1.1. Impact of their session with the athlete

Overall, participants responded very positively to the involvement of the athletes in the NCS programme. 73% of respondents reported that athletes were important to the success of the NCS programme. 23% of respondents reported that it was nice to have the athletes involved but that they weren’t essential to the success of the programme.

The following chart shows participants responses to statements about how motivated they felt as a result of their session with the athlete.
Chart 1: Participants responses to statements about motivation

The chart shows that as a result of the session with the athlete:

- 94% of respondents felt more motivated to complete the rest of the NCS programme;
- 95% of respondents felt more motivated about their future.

A key theme emerged in participants responses to what was particularly good about the session with the athletes. In their free-text responses, 168 respondents referred to the athlete story as being “inspirational,” “motivational” or “interesting.” Reflecting on athlete stories, participants commented:

“It was inspirational and has enlightened me, I know now how to succeed” [Sam, Autumn 2014]

“His story was easily relatable in the sense that he failed but was still able to succeed.” [Jo, Autumn 2014]

“It was very insightful and helped me to understand that everyone has struggles just like me.” [Nicola, Summer 2014]

Participants were asked to reflect on what they learned from their session with the athlete. Only 12 out of the 390 respondents did not respond to this question. Responses referred to knowledge, skills and abilities, including: “leadership,” “team-working,” “organisation and planning,” and “communication,” and “determination,” “setting goals,” “to never give up,” and “confidence.”
“Just because your past might not have been the best you can make your future better.” [Beth, Summer 2014]

“Be more confident and don’t be afraid of who you are. If you want something grab it with both hands.” [Nicole, Autumn 2014]

Participants were asked what they felt would improve the session with the athlete. 88 (23%) respondents said they would not change anything; 66 (17%) did not respond. Out of the 236 participants that did respond:

- 27% felt that the athlete session would have benefitted from including more activities or being more interactive;
- 10% felt that the session would be better if it was longer. Where expanded on, respondents felt that this would allow more time for activities and participation.

Other suggested areas for improvement that emerged included having better facilities, “more comfortable seats,” “bigger screen,” and more equipment.

With regards to the athletes themselves, 5 participants suggested showing more footage of the athlete doing their sport, or them actually doing a demo of their sport. One respondent suggested the session could benefit from the perspective of more than 1 athlete. Another respondent thought it could be interesting to hear about what the Trust did.

Overall, the responses indicate that participants benefitted from having the athletes deliver a session. Participants reported that they improved their knowledge and skills and found the athlete stories inspiring and motivational. Importantly, the session with the athlete also increased participants’ motivation through the rest of the programme.
7.1.2. Impact of the programme

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement to statements about communication and feeling connected to their local community. The following charts shows participants responses to statements about the NCS programme:

**Chart 2: Participants responses to statements about the NCS programme**

The chart shows that as a result of the NCS programme:

- 95% of respondents felt more confident communicating with a wide range of people;
- 81% of respondents felt more connected to their local community.

Participants were also asked to reflect on how inspirational they felt different aspects of the NCS programme were. Responses are shown in the following chart.
The above chart shows that the majority of participants felt that the different aspects of the NCS programme were highly or fairly inspirational. 85% of respondents reported that ‘meeting the athlete mentor’ was highly or fairly inspirational; 62% of the respondents reported that ‘meeting members of the local community’ was highly or fairly inspirational.

7.2. Experiences of local delivery partners

Local delivery partners involved in the NCS programme were invited to complete an electronic evaluation form following the completion of their programmes. Some partners also offered their personal thanks and appreciation via email directly to the Trust. Partners were asked to reflect on the impact of the athlete session on the participants and whether and how the athlete session could be improved.

7.2.1. Impact of the programme

Local partners were also asked to reflect on how inspirational different aspects of the NCS programme were. Responses are shown in the following chart.
The above chart shows that local partners felt that all the different aspects of the NCS programme were either highly inspirational or fairly inspirational. The highest rating was given to ‘meeting young people from different backgrounds’ (98%); the lowest rating was given to ‘meeting members of the local community’ (89%).

7.2.2. Impact of the session with the athlete

Overall, local partners responded very positively on the involvement of the athletes in the NCS programme. 77% of local partners that responded reported that athletes were important to the success of the NCS programme.

“I personally and professionally feel that to not have the athletes as part of NCS would affect the outcomes and experience the young people have, the aim of the athlete involvement underpins the infrastructure of the project and gives it that edge over everything else...” [Graeme, LSP]

One local partner reported on the unique perspective and abilities that athletes brought to the programme.

“I feel that the athlete contribution is excellent. The young people are always engrossed with what the athletes have to say and their stories, they capture the attention of the young people in a way that LDP’s cannot and they give a project that special value.” [Lisa, LSP]
21% of local partners that responded reported that it was nice to have the athletes involved but that they weren’t essential to the success of the programme.

The following chart shows local partners responses to statements about participants’ motivation as a result of their session with the athlete.

**Chart 5: Local partners responses to statements about participants’ motivation as a result of their session with the athlete**

The chart shows that as a result of the session with the athlete:

- 83% of local partners felt participants were more motivated to complete the rest of the NCS programme;
- 94% of local partners felt participants were more motivated about their future.

Reflecting on the motivation of participants following the session with the athlete, one local partner said:

“Motivational, inspiring, fun, active, interesting – the young people all enjoyed the time with the athlete and it is a vital part of the project. Keeps motivational levels high and young people stay engaged with the NCS because of the athlete involvement and sessions. Impacts on the social action projects and the motivation levels of the groups when starting the projects.” [Lisa, LSP]
Local partners were asked to provide their feedback on what they felt was particularly good about the session with the athletes. 36 partners felt that the session was “motivational,” 27 partners felt that the athletes engaged really well with the young people, 24 partners felt that the athlete stories were really powerful, and 22 partners mentioned that the session was “inspirational.”

Local partners were asked what they felt would improve the session with the athlete. 15 (28%) respondents said they would not change anything; 10 (19%) did not respond. Out of the 28 participants that suggested improvements, there was no overriding theme that emerged. However, 8 local partners felt that the session would be better if it was longer, and 3 local partners felt that the athlete session would have benefitted from including more activities or being more interactive. 3 local partners felt that athletes could have engaged more equipment or resources to fit the participants' different learning styles or for participants to take away to revisit in the future.

Overall, the responses indicate that participants benefitted from having the athletes deliver a session and found their stories inspiring and motivational.

7.3. Experience of athlete mentors

Athletes were asked to reflect on their impact on the programme, and what they felt was the impact on the young people. 18 athletes responded to the evaluation; the number of days each delivered across Summer and Autumn 2014 ranged from 1 to 9 days. The weighted average number of days delivered was 4 days over 210 delivery days.

7.3.1. Impact on participants

All of the athletes that responded to the evaluation felt that their session had a positive impact on the participants. 6 athletes mentioned that they had received positive feedback from participants and/or local partners. One athlete wrote that he had received positive feedback from parents too:

“Getting a lot of positive feedback from parents, staff and the young people involved. They are really enjoying it and producing excellent work.” [Courtney Fry, Athlete Mentor]

4 athletes mentioned that they observed that young people were inspired and motivated by their session, 3 athletes felt that their own story about their journey was extremely impactful.

“The young people seemed to enjoy the session and respond well to my story. The feedback I had from the LDP in Staffordshire (where I delivered 3 of my 5 sessions) was positive and they said the group really seemed to connect to my session.” [Rich Parker, Athlete Mentor]
Athletes were also asked to reflect on the activities that they delivered and what they felt worked best with the participants. Athletes felt that the sessions worked best where they introduced an activity that the whole group enjoyed and engaged with, and were able to reflect on their learning:

“The young people really enjoyed the Zombie game. I feel that it worked well because it involved the whole group. It included setting goals and aiming for something, then evaluating and adapting their plan to improve.” [Carol Galashan, Athlete Mentor]

Athletes found that some of the physical activities sometimes tended to exclude individuals or divide the group a little: “it excluded those that didn't grasp the skills needed for it,” “A football activity, mainly because the boys kept having a go and the girls took a back seat. I needed to structure the activity better or let the girls choose a different task,” “the less active students found any games hard and wanted to drop out.”

Some athletes felt that a combination of practical and theory-work worked well to keep the group engaged:

“Too much of any one thing disengages people so the variety seemed to work well. The activities were simple but still posed psychological and physical challenges that broke the ice as well as informing discussions.” [Gavin, Athlete Mentor]

7.3.2. Impact on self

All of the athletes that completed the evaluation reported the positive impact that the programme had had on them. Athletes felt that the programme gave them the opportunity to “use different skills,” “gain insights into my strengths and weaknesses,” “develop my delivery skills,” and “use various teaching practices.”

Some athletes reflected on feeling “enlightened” and on how much they enjoyed delivering the session. Four athletes specifically highlighted how the programme was personally “beneficial and rewarding” for them:

“I felt that the days I worked on the groups received it well and seemed very engaged. Leaving me feeling it was a good exercise with my time been well used.” [Paul Broadbent, Athlete Mentor]

16 athletes reported that they had improved their knowledge, skills and abilities as a result of being involved in the programme. The following table summarises the key themes that emerged.
Table 2: Athletes reflections on their learning as a result of being involved in the NCS programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the NCS</td>
<td>Adapting/being flexible</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Trust</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Engaging with young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delivery approaches</td>
<td>Feeling more relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Delivery style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Greater confidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that athletes felt they improved across a number of areas as a result of being involved in the NCS programme. Further to this, 89% of the athletes that responded to the evaluation felt that they would be able to use the skills they had learned from working on the NCS programme in other areas of their my life.

8. Summary

- Overall, the findings in this evaluation are positive. Participants, local partners and athlete mentors all reported positive outcomes.
- Participants and local partners reported the positive effect of having athlete mentors involved in the NCS programme.
- Most of participants and local partners that responded felt that all the different aspects of the NCS programme were either highly or fairly inspirational. In particular, 85% of participants and 96% of local partners that responded reported that ‘meeting the athlete mentor’ was highly or fairly inspirational.
- Participants reported feeling more motivated to complete the rest of the programme and about their futures as a result of the session with the athlete; local partners reported observing the same increase in motivation.
- Athletes reported strong positive outcomes for themselves as well as participants. These included, increased knowledge, skills and abilities.
9. Recommendations

In general, most of the feedback about the athlete’s involvement in the NCS programme has been very positive. However, going forward, it is recognized that the programme would benefit from ensuring athletes and local partners connect before the session to give athletes a better understanding of the type of group, learning styles, timings, numbers, resources and challenges faced. This would ensure athletes have better knowledge about what to expect when they arrive for their session and plan appropriate/inclusive activities ahead of time, thereby maximizing their time with the young people.

A further enhancement to the young people’s experience of the athlete session might be to provide the participants with tools or resources to take away to use in the future. This could serve to sustain the great work that the athletes do with the young people around beliefs, goal-setting and attitudes.