1: Committee of Public Accounts conclusion:
NCS has shown early signs of success but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport lacks the data to measure long-term outcomes or understand what works.

Recommendation:
The Committee expects the Department to establish a clear plan, and secure agreement with other Government Departments where necessary, by September 2017 for how it is going to evaluate the long-term impact of NCS.

1. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (“the Department”) agrees that it is important to understand how the National Citizen Service (“NCS”) impacts the lives of the young people who participate and is committed to continuous improvement in the design of the programme. In order to explore the best approaches to evaluating the long term impact of the NCS programme, the Department commissioned an independent feasibility study (“the Study”) by London Economics. The Study identified options which would deliver findings by summer 2019 and also to a longer timescale, to be informed by the study. The Study, which reported in February 2018, is provided alongside this response.

2. The Study identified three components which could be used to evaluate the long term impact of NCS:
   a. evidence on higher education outcomes (using existing datasets to compare educational outcomes for past NCS participants with those of a comparison group);
   b. identifying NCS participants in existing, ongoing longitudinal studies to provide evidence of long term impact in future years; and
   c. commissioning a bespoke longitudinal study to evaluate nine long term outcomes of NCS over a five year period.

3. The Department has decided to proceed with component A and plans to commission this work from an independent provider. The Department has already contacted the Department for Education and will immediately begin discussions with them as it is anticipated that the work will utilise the Longitudinal Educational Outcome (LEO) data. The Department has also decided to commission an evaluation of the impacts of the 2018 programme on participants in line with previous years.

4. While this approach will not address all nine long term outcomes as set out under component C, it will give the Department an understanding of the effects of NCS participation on a young person’s educational outcomes and should yield data in 2019.

5. The Department has decided not to pursue Options B or C at this time. Longitudinal study options, including commissioning a five year bespoke longitudinal evaluation, would require significant investment (c. £4 million) beyond the current Spending Review period. In addition to the evaluation work outlined above which we will carry out in 2018 and 2019, the Department will consider funding for a longitudinal study as part of plans for funding the National Citizen Service into the next Spending Review period.