

The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care

National Citizen Service (NCS) Interviews 2016



How did you hear about the National Citizen Service?

KF: "Youth Moves advertised at The Park Centre and I signed up with my mate because it looked good. Anyone can do it if you're 15-17."

CF: "NCS came into my school and I put my name down, my foster carer's son had done it before as well"

SG: "I got a leaflet and saw a presentation at college. My foster carer helped me sign up "

What happened after you signed up?

KF: "I got invited to an Induction Event for about 2 hours to meet people who would be going on NCS – we got given free Domino's pizza. We had a list of things we needed to take; I didn't really need any extra stuff – just a few toiletries and some new thick socks"

CF: "There was a 'get to know you' thing at The Park Centre, my foster carer came with me because I didn't know anyone yet"

SG: "I went to meet others who were going to do it as well. I am from Eritrea and I'm still learning English. Everyone else in my group was from England and they were really nice"

When did NCS start?

KF: "I went on 27th June, I had to go a day late because I had an exam, but it was ok, they picked me up from home in the minibus, I was looking forward to it"

CF: "In August. We had to change the date actually but it wasn't a problem"

SG: "We chose a date in August and we went from Ashley Down College "

What did you do in the first week?

KF: "We went to Somerset and stayed at Bridgwater College. There were four blocks; two for girls and two for boys plus a Common Room with pool tables and stuff. There were eight boys in my block and two members of staff. I got on with everyone and there were a few people I already knew. We did kayaking, rock climbing and a long hike, the rock climbing was my favourite. Can't believe the girls beat us at kayaking – me and my mate kept zig-zagging into the bank! It was pretty funny"

CF: "We stayed in a college and did lots of activities. I'd never done kayaking before; it was fun apart from falling in because my clothes really smelled afterwards! Everyone could do what they wanted in the evenings so long as we were back by a certain time. It was easy to speak to the Team Leaders and they helped; if something was wrong you could go to them"

SG: "We went camping in tents with sleeping bags. There was lots of food and you could take your own snacks if you wanted to. We went canoeing, climbing, river walking and had a campfire. I'm not very good at swimming but you don't need to worry. You have a life jacket and they look after you really well. I'd never been rock climbing before but everyone helped me a lot and I enjoyed it. At the end of the week we made a shopping list for the second week"

What about the second week?

KF: "We went to UWE with our group – the accommodation was better and the showers were amazing. We had to budget for the week - £300 to feed seven people; we shopped in Asda and went to Subway a few times as well as cooking outside for ourselves. The main point of the week is to meet different charities and find out about what they do"

CF: "We were learning more about how to live on your own and budget for food. We went into lecture theatres at the Uni to listen to the charities"

SG: "We stayed at Bath University, it was a really special place and the rooms were like a hotel. We made a timetable and took it in turns to cook. People talked to us about their charities; like for Downs Syndrome children, helping animals and helping homeless people"

And after that?

KF: "Our group chose to work with LinkAge who do sports for older people because my mate and I are qualified sports coaches so we knew a bit about what to do. We spent one week planning; ringing people like the Co-op for donations and getting sports kit for free – we had to work pretty hard but I'm good at persuading people! Then we approached a local old people's centre and they brought some of their group up to The Park. We did games and some cooking with them. A lot of them were about 80 and they couldn't hear very well or move about much but it went well and I think they enjoyed it"

CF: "We supported the 'Dementia Friendly' charity by taking awareness raising packs into shops and giving out purple angel stickers. I learnt a bit about dementia. It wasn't as easy as the first week but we did something good for other people"

SG: "I wanted to help the homeless but my group chose Bristol Refugee Rights, which was ok too. We planned how to raise money; we made cakes and sold them in The Galleries and held a Family Fun Day. My foster carer donated some money and so did I. I think my group raised £800 for our charity. We got clothing and shoes to donate as well for people who arrive from all different countries. I am a refugee and I think it is really good that people have rights and get help when they come to England"

What was your favourite bit?

KF: "The second week at UWE because we were all staying together in one block and we had a party which was sick. We got to experience the actual Uni accommodation as well which was pretty nice so now I know what it would be like at Uni. The Team Leaders were good too because there was lots of banter"

CF: "The first week because we could socialise and meet people including new people from outside Bristol"

SG: "Everything is fun in NCS, I can't choose! I made new friends and we met up to go to the Bristol Balloon Fiesta and we've got a group messenger chat on Facebook now"

Least favourite?

KF: "Getting up at, like, 8.30 in the morning..."

CF: ""Listening to all the charities; there were a lot and some of them talked for a long time"

SG: "I liked all of it, if it hadn't been for NCS the summer would have been really boring and I would have stayed at home a lot more"

Proudest achievement?

KF: "Passing! We all met up at the City ground a few weeks later and got presented with a certificate and met up again with our group after"

CF: "Completing NCS. I went on the radio as well to promote the 'Dementia Friendly' charity"

SG: "My English got so much better that I was moved up two groups at College; ahead of some of my classmates from last year even though they've lived in England longer. I used to be shy but now I talk all the time!"

What would you say to another young person who was thinking of going?

KF: "Don't worry about it and give it a go, everyone's nervous at the start but everyone just clicks naturally. Maybe persuade a friend to do it with you – NCS can put you with someone you know if you want. I reckon it was really good"

CF: "It's worth it. It's beneficial and helps others out at the same time. It's recognised and you can put it on your CV".

SG: "You should definitely go; you'll make lots of friends and although it's hard at first everyone is kind and friendly, I thought it was amazing"

What's next for you?

KF: "I'm going to volunteer for Youth Moves alongside college and working at part-time. Then next year, when I'm 18, I'll apply and hopefully get an interview to be a Team Leader next summer"

CF: "Doing my A Levels at college. I want to study Law and Criminology at University in the future"

SG: "Keep working hard at college and stay friends with my NCS group"

If you would like to say "yes" to NCS; check out their website: www.ncsyes.co.uk or contact The HOPE on 0117 903 6282 for more information.