



‘The Challenge’ to be model for Conservative Party’s National Citizen Service programme

David Cameron cited ‘The Challenge’ programme, run by The Challenge Network charity, in his launch of the Conservatives’ National Citizen Service policy today.

The Challenge’s aims are to help young people understand the responsibilities of adulthood, to bring them together with people of different social backgrounds and to motivate them to get involved in strengthening their local communities.

The programme recruits teams of diverse 16 year olds from their local community to take on an intensive course that includes physical, creative and civic challenges. It culminates in them planning and running their own community project. A typical team of 12 young people will be drawn from 10-15 local schools plus referrals from other youth organisations.

The programme pilot took place last summer with 158 16-year olds in Southwark and North Hammersmith. This summer, 630 participants from London and Birmingham will take part.

The programme has three main sections:

The Personal Challenge: One week of outdoor activities for 5 teams of 12 people in a residential setting to bond the teams together, build self-awareness, a sense of personal responsibility and trust.

The Team Challenge: Teams are challenged to serve their local community using skills they are passionate about (e.g. designing and performing a show for residents of an Age Concern day centre, staging a public debate in the community about a local issue, running a multi-sport skills coaching course for young children).

The Real Challenge: Teams have a week, working alongside community representatives, to explore some of the key challenges facing their neighbourhood and commit to a project that will bring the community together (e.g. organise a street party, neighbourhood gallery, community sports day etc.). Each team then has four weekends to plan and deliver these projects, with the support of a dedicated mentor and a full-time community organiser.

The Challenge Network’s Chairman is Patrick Shine. Patrick is a partner of The Shaftesbury Partnership and has extensive experience in social entrepreneurship, including six years with UnLtd. The executive team draw on professional and voluntary experience from the private, public and charitable sectors: Craig Morley, Chief Executive (Procter & Gamble, The Prince’s Trust, Raleigh International); Jon Yates, Director of Programmes (Tear Fund, Acumen Fund); Doug Fraley, Director of Talent & Marketing (U.S. Army, Google).

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The charity's Advisory Board includes Stephen Peck (Director of Programme and Development for The Scouts), Ginny Lunn (Director of Policy and Development for The Prince's Trust), John May (Chief Executive of Young Enterprise), Nick Wilkie (Chief Executive of London Youth) and Stacey Adams (Chief Executive of Raleigh International).

Ends

For further information please contact Craig Morley, Chief Executive, The Challenge Network, on 020 7921 4203 or craig.morley@the-challenge.org.

Notes to editors:

- Photographs of programme activities at the following links:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45159087@N05/sets/72157623249517832/> (Real Challenge)
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45159087@N05/sets/72157623124849735/> (Team Challenge)
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45159087@N05/sets/72157623249448790/> (Personal Challenge)

- The Challenge Network is an independent, registered charity (no. 1129239) established in April 2009, with headquarters in Lambeth.
- Other trustees are Phillip Udeh (founder of Community Builders and a founding youth trustee of V), Alison Inglis-Jones (public affairs professional and leader of community mentoring projects in South London) and Richard Sargeant (Department for Energy and Climate Change and founding director of Engineers without Borders, UK).
- The charity has been funded by a variety of private philanthropists, trusts and foundations, including the V Match Fund.
- The Challenge Network partners with a wide variety of organisations to deliver The Challenge, including Envision, The Outward Bound Trust, The Prince's Trust, Young Enterprise and London Youth.
- The Challenge Network web site is www.the-challenge.org.
- One of the graduates, Leila Saad, commented, "This has been an amazing experience – It really changed the way I think about myself and other people and made me realise how much I can actually achieve."
- A parent, June Parker, commented, "I've already told my friends that you have to send your child on The Challenge as it's giving something back to the community. It makes them a more rounded person and it's such a brilliant experience."