



Social Intelligence and The Next Generation

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LONDON



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Foreword

By Michael Lynas, CEO, NCS Trust

In 1968, Robert Kennedy pointed out the limitations of GDP as a measure:

“It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

In many ways, IQ as a measure for individuals has similar problems as GDP as a measure for nations. It's not that economic output or intelligence is unimportant, it's just that there are so many other important factors. This report argues that just as we have developed measures of wellbeing to sit alongside GDP, we should consider social intelligence – our ability to successfully navigate our social environments and interpersonal relationships – alongside IQ.

Our economy is changing at an incredibly fast pace. Technology will continue to create whole new industries and careers, but will also automate millions of existing jobs. It is our responsibility to prepare our young people so they can thrive in this new economy. This report shows that social intelligence is increasingly valuable to employers, because it is our most human qualities – our creativity, our teamwork and our interpersonal skills – that cannot be reduced to computer code. Indeed, employers now see social intelligence skills as more integral to progression at work than academic intelligence. Social intelligence will be a vital ingredient of the economy of tomorrow.

But it's not just about the economy: it's about our society too. It should certainly be a cause of concern that 86% of teenagers said they were sometimes nervous about meeting people from

different backgrounds to their own. And we find that loneliness is a problem for many teens, with time on screens not being a substitute for real face time with friends. Again, it is social intelligence that will improve our wellbeing and enable our young people to make friends and get along with each other in an increasingly diverse country.

To paraphrase Robert Kennedy, IQ measures neither our creativity nor our ingenuity, neither our teamwork nor our confidence, neither the strength of our friendships nor the integration of our neighbourhoods, it measures everything in short, except that which will fuel the future of our country: our social intelligence.

How then do we build our social intelligence alongside our academic intelligence? Often reports like this end by saying it's all about what young people learn in schools. Not this one. There are some lessons that can't be learnt in the classroom. That's where extra-curricular programmes like National Citizen Service (NCS) come in. NCS offers sixteen and seventeen year olds the chance to make new friends from diverse backgrounds, stretch themselves outside their comfort zones and make their mark on their communities.

But if we're to really meet the scale of the challenge, we need to think big. Just as every young person gets an academic education at school, so should every young person have the chance to learn life lessons beyond the four walls of the classroom. That's why at NCS, we want to be a rite of passage and a normal part of growing up for young people in our country.

This investment in our social intelligence will help us to build bridges across social divides and ladders to opportunity in a fast changing world.



Executive Summary

By Dr Jennifer Lau, researcher in the psychology of adolescent mental health, King's College London

The Social Intelligence and The Next Generation report explores the value and importance of social intelligence in today's economy.

In particular, it explores the ways in which this skill set can be nurtured in young people, in order to help them prepare for a fast-changing jobs market, and to enhance their well-being in adulthood.

Social intelligence is the set of abilities and skills that we use to understand and navigate social situations and maintain our relationships. Drawing on both new and already published data, **Social Intelligence and The Next Generation** uncovers new insights into the emphasis that employers place on social intelligence, the impact that poorer social intelligence has on well-being, and the ways in which social skills are still developing and consolidating across adolescence. The report advances a strong case for nurturing social intelligence in adolescents – with a particular focus on teaching a broad set of skills that would enable them to recognise, appreciate and navigate diversity in an increasingly global world.

Through a survey of employers, **'Why is social intelligence important?'** (Section 2, p10) shows that social intelligence is now more important than ever before. In a world where technology can replace many routine tasks – and in some cases exceed manpower – it is the tasks that require the ability to read subtle social signals and act through careful negotiation that cannot easily be delegated to computers.

It is these skills that today's employers are looking for, and many are considering changing recruitment strategies and protocols to reflect this shift. It is therefore crucial to young people's employment prospects that they are prepared for these new selection criteria and can demonstrate these abilities.

'Social intelligence in today's teenagers'

(Section 3, p17) draws on data generated through a larger questionnaire study of teenagers and a smaller more focused study of teenagers who had completed various tests of social intelligence. It shows that social understanding is still developing and consolidating across adolescence. While teenagers value independence, it is clear they are also forming strong group identities to which they are loyal. A possible negative consequence is that today's teenagers struggle to diversify their social circles. As society becomes more diverse and our economy becomes increasingly globalised, it is crucial adolescents in Britain are able to learn social skills to understand and navigate these changing contexts.

The report demonstrates that social intelligence is a crucial set of abilities and skills vital to career opportunities and progression. Moreover, both the adult and adolescent surveys are unanimous in finding strong associations between social intelligence and loneliness. This means that social intelligence has implications for personal well-being as well as economic success. As social intelligence is still consolidating across the adolescent years, it is an important time to develop and refine these emerging abilities and skills. Offering opportunities to do this could have beneficial impacts on adulthood.

Methodology

The report draws on existing literature as well as new research conducted for the purpose of this study. Four separate studies were conducted in January 2016.

The first three were online surveys conducted by OnePoll, market research agency. These included a survey of 200 employers responsible for hiring staff in organisations of varying sizes across the UK who were surveyed on recruitment practices and values. A cross-section of 1,000 representative adults from across the UK were asked to respond to questions relating to their ability to maintain reciprocal and long-lasting friendships during adolescence and their social skills more generally. A similar survey was conducted amongst 1,000 teenagers aged 12-17.

To strengthen these findings a separate study of 188 young people aged 10-20 from the UK was conducted by King's College London. Respondents were asked to complete various tasks measuring social intelligence and social connectedness.



Section 1

Introducing 'social intelligence'

1.0 What is social intelligence?

All too often, intelligence is understood in a very individualistic way.

IQ is measured using tests that are carried out in a solitary environment. And yet, human beings are a social species, and most of the tasks and challenges we face in both work and life have a relational dimension.

'Social intelligence' (SI), or social cognition is the set of abilities and skills we use to understand social situations. It can include basic abilities of being sensitive to and recognising what other people are thinking and feeling e.g. their intentions and emotions, and also more complex abilities such as being able to use this basic social knowledge to predict what other people are going to do next and to change how we behave accordingly.

Social intelligence works with and builds on our emotional intelligence (EQ) by applying our understanding of people's emotions to decide the appropriate form of interaction with others in a variety of social situations.

To illustrate the various components of social intelligence, we can look at how they are used in this example. John uses the tone of his manager's email and the way she looks at him as he walks into her office to infer that she is pleased with his recent progress report (John is recognising the thoughts and feelings of another person). He had originally been planning to bring up the issue of a promotion in a few weeks' time, but based on the way she acted in today's meeting, he now thinks she would be supportive of his request (John is using this knowledge to predict how this other person will act). So, after the meeting, he emails his manager politely requesting another meeting to discuss his career progression (John is now using this information to shape how he will act in order to meet his goals).

In today's society, the way we interact with others has changed dramatically. We now rely more on a variety of methods to communicate with others, from traditional face-to-face interactions with known individuals to a much wider social network of known and unknown individuals in our social media distribution lists.

With globalisation, there is also an increasing need to successfully interact with people from different backgrounds and countries. Given these changes, this report argues that the development of social intelligence, and specific skills within it, is more important now than ever before, both in terms of our personal well-being and potential impact on the economy.

1.1 How does social intelligence develop?

The building blocks of social intelligence are present very early in life.

Babies are born with a natural tendency to look at human faces, particularly their mothers, and by the end of the first year of life, they can reliably discriminate between different facial expressions and use the different emotional expressions of their parents to guide behaviour (Sorce et al., 1985). As they grow into toddlers, they begin to grasp that other people have minds and feelings which are separate from what they themselves think, feel and know (Buttelmann et al., 2009). Throughout childhood, children are increasingly able to use their understanding of others to shape their own behaviour – for example, in simple acts such as helping others when they are in distress (Staub, 1979) or more complex decisions such as choosing friends who share their values, rules and characteristics (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980).

But this is not the end-point (see figure 1 showing timeline of social cognition development, p8). As they enter the teenage years, young people undergo many changes, many of which are key to the continued development of social intelligence.

Changes fall into four categories:

- 1. Biological** e.g. puberty, continued brain development
- 2. Social** e.g. transition to secondary school, more time spent with friends
- 3. Cultural** e.g. being exposed to individuals who are different to them, particularly in an increasingly diverse country and across social media networks
- 4. Psychological** e.g. gaining more independence from their family, less reliant on parents

Together these changes mean that for adolescents, social relationships take on more significance with negative peer experiences and peer pressure more keenly felt. They also become more complex and diverse with social cliques and crowds emerging, which can make it more challenging to meet people outside of that group. Given reduced parental guidance, these complexities present a new set of challenges for young people in order to make the most of their social world.

The teenage years are therefore a crucial time for the development of social intelligence. While many sophisticated social skills may emerge and be refined through practice with peers, it could be that additional opportunities within schools or extracurricular activities could help teenagers to reach the full potential of their social skill set. Such opportunities could even have a beneficial impact on well-being and social confidence into adulthood.

By drawing on existing research and two pieces of new research, this report will show:

- Why social intelligence is increasingly important in today's economy (**Section 2**)
- How social intelligence continues to improve across the adolescent years in British teens and how it is linked to indices of well-being both as a teen and in adulthood (**Section 3**)
- What can teenagers do to improve social intelligence (**Section 4**)

Figure 1: Timeline of social cognition development



Early-mid adolescence (13-16 years)

- Adolescents spend more time with friends than family members
- Youngsters begin to form cliques (small groups of peers organised around particular themes or activities) and 'crowds' also emerge (cliques are part of this larger structure) e.g. 'jocks', 'brains', 'populars', 'loners'
- Adolescents are also most susceptible to peer influences e.g. will take more risks when peers are around
- Adolescents react more negatively to peer exclusion and more positively to peer inclusion than adults



Section 2

Why is social intelligence important in today's economy?

As discussed in the previous section, social intelligence – the intuitive ability to detect and understand emotions and intentions in others, and the capacity to use this knowledge to predict and change the behaviour of others and ourselves – may be an increasingly important skill set to have. This section of the report shows how social intelligence is highly valued in the modern workplace, and how an individual's social intelligence can affect their mental well-being.

“*In this fast-changing world, businesses like ours require employees to be adept at working with people from diverse backgrounds, to be resilient and comfortable with change and adept at making the most of opportunities. For this reason, we believe social intelligence is a fundamental skill that our future leaders will be expected to excel in.*”

Vicky Wallis, Director of HR, Santander

2.0 Employers value social intelligence, and say it has an impact on pay and career progression?

Over the past 15 years the economy has already seen a considerable shift from a focus on low-skill, routine jobs to higher skill, non-routine occupations.¹ As a result the value employers place on 'soft skills' has skyrocketed, leading a greater focus on character and resilience education in schools. Yet as our workplaces become even more automated and the world economy becomes more global and interdependent, the required skill set will become increasingly relational.

The skills that cannot be replaced by technology but are essential to navigating the globalised workforce, such our ability to build relationships, negotiate and communicate effectively with others and interact in and understand a diverse workplace, will therefore become some of the key attributes driving our economy.

This is indicated by new research amongst 200 employers² which shows businesses are already beginning to place a higher value on social intelligence, both in terms of hiring staff and progression once in the workplace. This is echoed by the findings amongst adults³ which showed those with higher social intelligence levels were more likely to earn more than their peers with lower SI levels.

Top 10 skills needed for progression:

1	Verbal communication	71%
2	Teamwork	69%
3	Interpersonal skills	65%
4	Initiative	64.5%
5	Ability to self-manage	57%
6	Flexibility	54%
7	Planning and organisation	53%
8	Time management	52%
9	Confidence	50%
10	Written communication	45%

Key findings

- Employers predict earnings can rise an average of 31% for workers who have higher levels of social intelligence⁴
- Two thirds of employers (63%) would not hire an employee who had low levels of social intelligence⁵
- 73% agree high social intelligence levels are essential to development and progression in the workplace
- 55% of employers believe employees with low social intelligence levels are unlikely to reach senior management positions
- Employers see social intelligence skills as more integral to progression than academic intelligence or initiative

Key out-takes

- In an increasingly automated and globalised workplace, we are seeing a trend in businesses placing more value on social intelligence skills
- Those with higher levels of social intelligence have the potential to earn more than their colleagues

2.1 Employers value social intelligence more than IQ

Traditionally, many occupations require those applying for jobs to fulfil competency tests to measure specific skill sets e.g. mathematical ability. Our research suggests that employers' priorities have now changed and these kinds of tests may be less informative.

According to new research⁶ most employers now place greater emphasis on being able to understand, navigate and negotiate social situations and social relationships than they do on academic abilities. Two thirds agree social intelligence is more important than IQ and a third even feel a person's IQ level is becoming irrelevant.

As social intelligence become more valued, application processes now need to catch up with this change in priorities before it begins to impact their bottom line. Employers report that they are already spending too long interviewing 'good on paper' candidates that lack social intelligence, wasting up to 600 hours a year.

It would be helpful to employers if applicants' resumes could reflect their social intelligence as well as more individualistic educational achievements such as demonstrating with examples their ability to listen, work in groups, how they maintain interpersonal relationships, and how they also resolve conflicts and receive feedback from others (Sleigh & Ritzer, 2004).

Key findings

- 60% think social intelligence is more important than IQ, a third (33%) even think IQ is becoming irrelevant
- Senior management teams have higher social intelligence levels than academic ability - 79% of employers rated their senior management team as having high social intelligence whereas only 74% said the team had high IQs

Key out-takes

- Assessing social intelligence in the application and selection process for jobs is becoming increasingly prioritised
- More opportunities are needed before employment to allow young people to demonstrate their social intelligence skills in CVs and interviews

“ Social intelligence training has become a significant part of our leadership and customer service professional development programmes. We focus on helping our people to recognise their own mind-set, their emotional triggers, and to understand and manage the impact they have on those around them. ”

Vicky Wallis, Director of HR, Santander

2.2 Employers say social intelligence needs to be developed before people enter the workplace

From their experience, employers said social skills were difficult to teach and train, and more could be done to nurture and enhance these skills before reaching the workplace, for example, in the formative years of childhood and adolescence.

If education is to prepare Britain's children for an increasingly competitive global market, employers are indicating social intelligence needs to be a higher priority.

Another question raised by these findings is whether more opportunities should be given at school and university for students to demonstrate SI skills. 62% of employers believe more investment and programmes are needed outside of the school system to help young people develop social skills.

Suggestions for developing SI skills in schools (Sleigh & Ritzer, 2004):

- **Formal student presentations:** to practice and develop confidence in oral communication and maintaining a professional demeanour
- **Inviting community speakers to give talks on topics that are of interest to students:** through these experiences students can benefit from a role model and are also invited to share opinions through facilitated discussions
- **Organising career building workshops** and within these exercises that can involve role-playing different formal interpersonal scenarios to practice professional social behaviour, such as giving feedback to another person or negotiating conflict
- **Organising more formal professional community interactions:** these could be anything from showcasing students' work to the community through mini-exhibitions or through work experience placements that involve interactions with members of the community in a professional setting

Evidence suggests (Ipsos Mori, 2014 Evaluation Report) recommending programmes outside of school that encourage social interactions with young people and adults from different backgrounds such as National Citizen Service (NCS) could also be beneficial in developing social intelligence skills including confidence, teamwork, resilience and communication.



“ Social intelligence is a multi-faceted, complex issue and the earlier young people learn about and develop skills in this area the more comfortable and effective they will be when they enter the workplace.

We know that young people often struggle to make the transition between education and work and one of the main reasons is their ability to deal with the dramatic difference between these two environments. The NCS programme can support this, equipping teenagers with the confidence and skills for future success. We wholeheartedly recommend the programme, it is a life-changing experience that can help young people make the move into the workplace a more successful one, both for them and for their employers. ”

Vicky Wallis, Director of HR, Santander

Key findings

- Qualities relating to social intelligence e.g. communication (44%), teamwork (42%) and social skills (42%) are the most valued qualities in young people entering the workforce – more so than writing (17%), decision making (20%) and even initiative (39%)
- Social intelligence is impossible to teach once in employment – social intelligence/ social skills (23%) is one of the top five hardest skills to teach in employment
- 68% agree social intelligence/social skills are difficult to teach once in employment

Key out-takes

- More needs to be done to develop social intelligence before entering the workplace
- Schools should consider more formal and professional social skills training, in collaboration with the community and businesses
- Parents should consider out of school programmes such as NCS, x & y to build confidence, resilience and teamwork

2.3 Social intelligence in the teenage years has an impact on adult well-being too

Not only does good social intelligence have an impact on work performance and career progression but in our personal lives, social intelligence plays a vital role in helping to develop positive social relationships and support networks.

These positive social exchanges in turn play an important role in maintaining good adult mental well-being (Coyne & Downey, 1991).

Research shows social intelligence as a teenager also impacts adult well-being. Findings from 1000 adults showed that those who reported having greater social skills and more reciprocal friendships as adolescents⁷, and therefore had higher social intelligence scores were also happier and had lower levels of loneliness in later life. This adds to other data supporting predictive links between

peer problems in youth and later adult mental well-being (Parker & Asher, 1987).

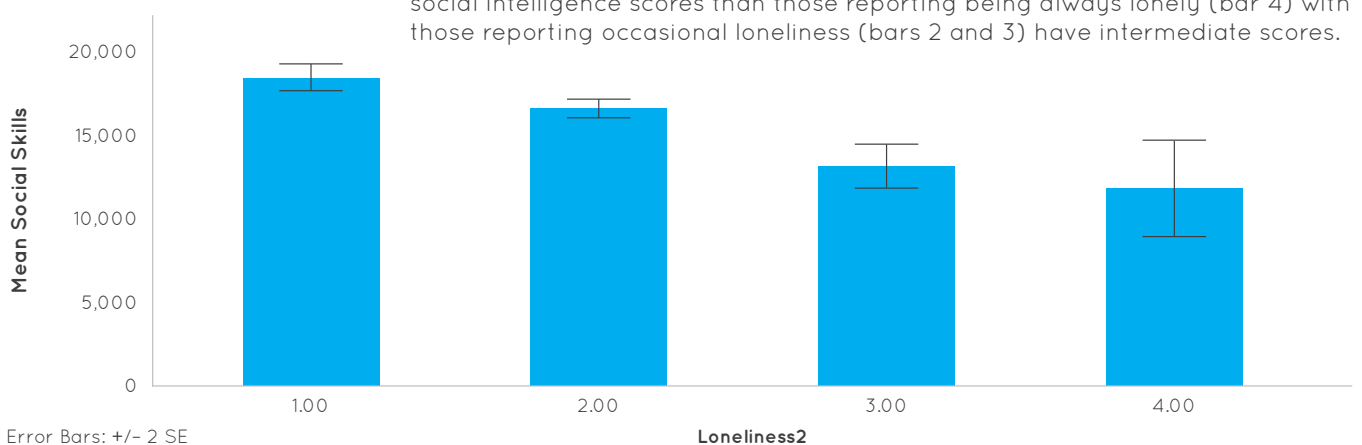
Other long-standing research may provide some of the clues for these relationships. Social support has been found to have direct benefits on well-being (for example, integration in a wider social network may mean that an individual has more practical resources at hand to help them avoid negative experiences, such as economic problems, which could increase a psychological disorder). Social support has also been found to help build resilience against stress and therefore the negative consequences of stress on mental health (Cohen & Ashby Wills, 1985).

Developing the mental processes and skills that help us build and harness our social relationships is therefore vital in developing resilience against stress and other more serious mental health issues.

Key out-takes

- Social intelligence in the teenage years can impact well-being during adulthood
- Developing social intelligence during teenage years could reduce loneliness and improve well-being in later life

Key stats



Section 3



Social intelligence in today's teenagers

Section 2 showed there is an economic case for a greater focus on social intelligence in Britain today. However as discussed in Section 1, the building blocks of adult social intelligence are likely to lie in childhood and adolescence.

Section 2 also highlighted that social intelligence in the teenage years could impact adult well-being. This section explores the current levels of social intelligence in young people in Britain, how it develops with maturity, what the impacts of low levels of social intelligence could be and what challenges British teenagers face in their friendship groups.

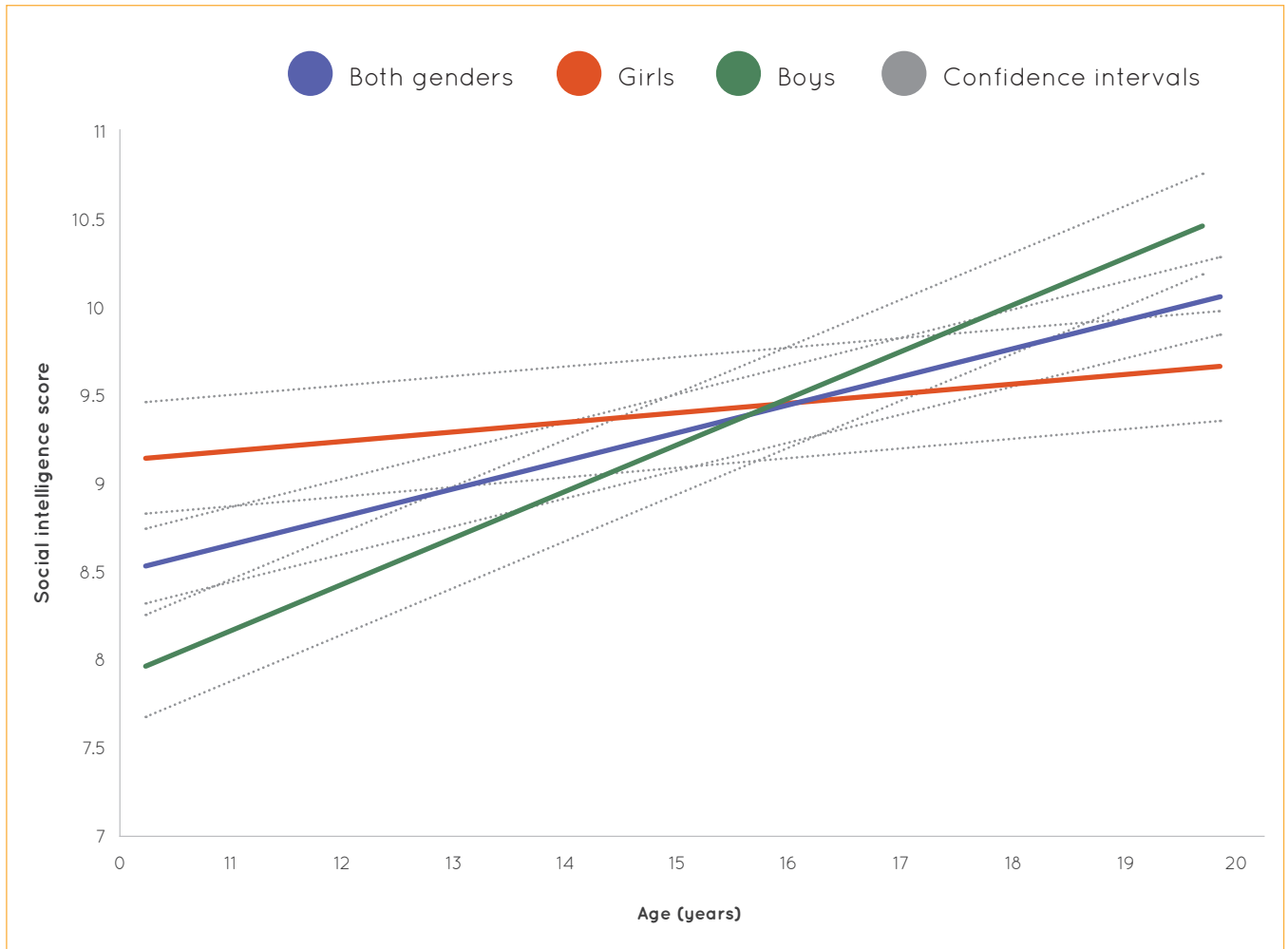
3.0 UK adolescents show a steady improvement in social intelligence from late childhood to the late teens

Social development is not complete by the end of the childhood years. In fact there continues to be changes in the social brain across the adolescent years (Blakemore, 2008), with brain regions involved in the processing of social information changing in size and function, and gradually morphing into their adult form.

Consistent with these findings, data from 188 adolescents⁸ also showed a steady improvement in social intelligence⁹. These young people had been shown various film clips and asked to reason about the beliefs, intentions and emotions of a protagonist when interacting with another character. Their responses were scored according to how accurate they were in articulating the true motivation of particular characters (see figure 2, p18).

In line with other findings showing that girls have an advantage in social intelligence compared to boys, different age trends in these data were also found for boys and girls. Boys showed a great improvement on this task. While they under-performed relative to girls before the age of 16 years, around this juncture, they began to 'catch up' performing at similar levels from 16 onwards suggesting that adolescence may be a peak development time for boys.

Figure 2: Graph of social intelligence levels through adolescence



Key out-takes

- Girls' social intelligence levels grow gradually through adolescence whereas boys showed greater jumps in progress after the age of 16
- Around age 16 is a peak development time for boys in the development of social intelligence

3.1 Seeking independence and interdependence

Whilst it is commonly assumed the teenage years are time for growing independence primarily from parents and other authority figures, research also indicates it is a time when adolescents begin to become more reliant and interdependent on their peer groups.

Whilst 86% of teenagers agreed it is important for them to act independently, 50% also said it was important for them to maintain harmony in their group and 65% agree their happiness depends on those around them. It may be that the need for integration and belonging to a group is what drives teenagers to form friendships within more tightly-knit and exclusive cliques.

Although sometimes this can be negative, such as engaging in risk-taking behaviours together (LaGreca et al., 2001) or restricting the individual to those who are similar to them, being part of a social network could offer many of the benefits of social support.

Seeking independence is therefore a focus, but successfully interacting within peer groups is also key. With teenagers yearning for both, there is an argument for giving young people the opportunity to build their independence but within their groups in order to hone their social intelligence and confidence.

Key out-takes

- Group interaction is almost as important as seeking independence in the teenage years
- The tight group dynamics of adolescent peer circles could be useful in helping young people develop better social skills, social intelligence and social confidence

3.2 Social intelligence and loneliness

Loneliness is a particular challenge for adolescents as it is a period of transition to independence from parents and other authority figures to spending more time with peers (Laursen & Hartl, 2013).

Inevitably there will be some anxiety about building good peer-to-peer relationships – and in fact, there is high risk for social anxiety onset in this period (Haller, Cohen Kadosh, Scerif & Lau, 2013). There is also evidence to suggest social concerns and worries in young people can have negative impacts on well-being and mental health and also more general functioning such as school performance and recreational activities (Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, 2007; Van Ameringen, Mancini, & Farvolden, 2003).

Research amongst 1,000 young people¹⁰ reflects this with 62% of teenagers stating that they are sometimes lonely, a third rarely feel as though they are popular with their friends and one in twenty suggesting they never spend time with friends during weekends. Only 58% felt there was always a close friend there for them to turn to and a third admit it is difficult to make friends.

Moreover, the study suggests an intrinsic link between the development of social intelligence and loneliness during the teenage years. Those who had better social skills and stronger friendships also relied on a larger support group and were less lonely as a result. Developing social intelligence levels early on in life is therefore vital in reducing the possibly devastating impacts of loneliness.

Key findings

- 62% of teenagers are sometimes lonely
- One in twenty teenagers never spend time with friends during weekends
- A third (32%) of teenagers rarely feel they are popular with their peers
- Only 58% of teenagers said they always had one close friend they could turn to
- Only 30% of teenagers said their friendships were always long lasting
- 36% of teenagers believe 'it's difficult to make friends'

Key out-take

- Loneliness is a particular challenge for adolescents but can be reduced by improving social intelligence skills and developing stronger support networks

“ I used to class myself as socially awkward, and as a result I purposefully isolated myself so I wouldn't have to face situations I was uncomfortable with. I had people I talked to at school, but I didn't feel confident enough to call them friends, I felt disgusted with myself and was incredibly lonely.”

Seven Jacobs, 16 from Tower Hamlets, a graduate of NCS

3.3 Challenges for British teens in developing social intelligence

3.3i Navigating diversity

As the world becomes increasingly globalised, connected and diversified, those entering the workplace and adult life need to be equipped to understand differences in interaction styles across ages, cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds.

Adapting one's communication style to successfully interact with those who are different to oneself is a key necessity in the modern workplace and wider community, and thus preparing young people for these situations is vital not only to personal development, but to social integration in society.

Whilst the expansion of social networks has opened up opportunities for interacting across cultures, the reality of teenagers' day to day lives is often very different. For example, with schools often attracting similar students in terms of background and ethnicity, it is no surprise that two thirds of teenagers say their peer groups are very similar to them in terms of background, and almost nine in ten are sometimes nervous about meeting people from different backgrounds¹¹.

The research suggests this could be down to a lack of awareness of opportunities, with one in five young people stating that they don't regularly have conversations with adults other than their parents¹², and one in five stating they don't have any opportunities inside or outside of school to mix with people from different backgrounds¹³.

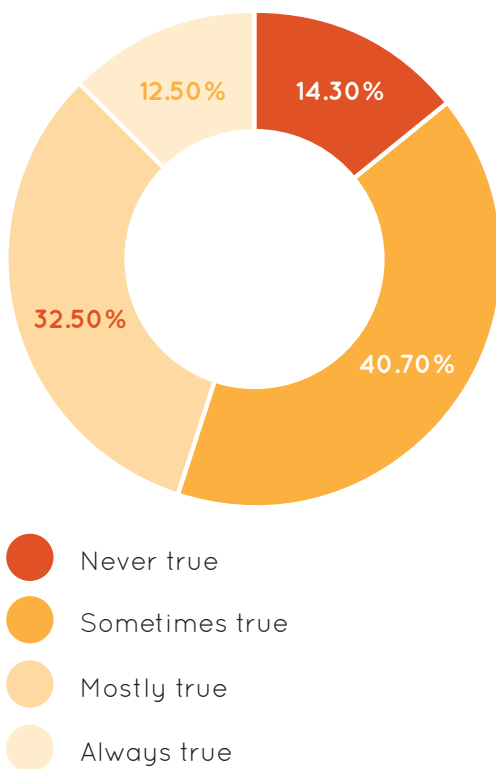
Whilst their social intelligence skills are developing, adolescence offers an opportune moment to develop these skills. However, if we do not encourage and support our young people to overcome their nervousness around people from different backgrounds, we could begin to see a new skills gap emerging in the workplace.



“ It is important to build young people's social skills within their peer groups before giving them the confidence to break out of these groups in environments where they feel comfortable to do so. It is not about forcing teenagers to leave their groups, but involving peers in activities where they can step outside their comfort zones, including learning to interact across diverse groups. ”

**Natasha Kizzie, Head of Marketing,
NCS Trust**

Figure 3: I am nervous meeting someone from a different background to my own



Key findings

- 86% of teenagers said they are sometimes nervous about meeting people from different backgrounds to their own
- 66% of teenagers said their friendship group are from similar backgrounds to themselves
- Only 29% of teenagers had diverse friendship groups in terms of demographic, religion, nationality and disability
- One in five adolescents (20%) say they don't have any opportunities to mix with people from different backgrounds to their own, either at school or outside of school



“ In all honesty, I had no idea about other people from across the UK. I came from a very secluded area where everyone was practically identical to myself. I was focused on good grades and didn't find any need to speak to people out of my comfort zone – which worked for me as I was too nervous about how I'd be perceived by different people across the country. It wasn't until I went on NCS that I met new people outside my social circle and realised how important it was to help understand different types of personalities and how best to work effectively in a team, as well as build your own confidence around social skills. ”

Jemimah Gilpin, 18 from Tunbridge Wells, a graduate of NCS

Key out-take

- The ability to mix with people from different backgrounds is a key indicator of social intelligence, and success in an increasingly diverse workplace, yet more needs to be done to develop these skills in young people

3.3ii Tight cliques are not always positive in girls' development

The survey revealed teenage girls could be an especially vulnerable group. While they reported better social skills than males, they were also reported in having less diverse friendship groups and more nervousness around meeting people from different backgrounds, resulting in higher loneliness levels.

- 62% of girls agree they have at least one close friend, compared to 54% of boys
- 66% of girls are sometimes lonely, compared to 58% of boys
- 88% girls vs 83% boys felt nervous around meeting people from different backgrounds
- 67% girls vs 65% boys say their friendship group is similar to them in terms of background

These findings can be analysed in light of previous literature suggesting that adolescent girls tend to immerse themselves in tighter, smaller social groups (Galambos, 2004). On one hand, these smaller groups may provide more intensive support and therefore help develop social intelligence levels to a certain degree. Yet on the other hand, their intensity can mean that the acceptance and rejection of peers is amplified, contributing to negative outcomes such as loneliness, anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Another piece of research suggests that girls tend to be more affected by their friends' depression levels than boys (Conway et al, 2011).

With fewer opportunities for social mixing reported by this group, greater support and encouragement from parents and the school is required to expand social networks to prevent loneliness and other mental health problems.

Key out-take

- Girls are more prone to loneliness than boys and require greater encouragement to improve social mixing across different backgrounds

3.3iii Online usage and its impact on loneliness

Many reports have highlighted the possible negative benefits of social networks on young people's social skills, education and mental health (Tsitsika et al, 2014). Concerns range from more serious concerns, such as cyberbullying, to concerns about not being able to interact in face-to-face exchanges.

Surprisingly, this study of 1,000 young people did not find a negative correlation between increased online usage and social intelligence levels. In fact, those who reported having more fulfilling and stable friendships reported spending more time online than their peers. This could be an indication that, for young people, the internet offers another platform for interacting with others and practicing their social skills – and possibly making friends.

Whilst online interactions could be important in the development of social intelligence, it is a more primitive form of interaction that cannot replace real life connections and face-to-face interactions. Using emojis, for example, can help relay an emotional response to others, but the depth of social intelligence required to decipher its meaning is limited as it does not involve the understanding of facial expressions, body language or tone of voice.

The study of adults also suggests increased online usage in later life is associated with increased loneliness. These findings suggest that teenagers and adults may use the

internet for different reasons; for teenagers, it is a vehicle for extending their social support system, while for adults it may be used to mask other sources of life dissatisfaction.

Key out-take

- Online usage does not impact on social intelligence levels during adolescence but can be linked to loneliness in later life



“ For me, social media is a great way to make new friends with similar interests to mine. I have a friendship group that has a passion for politics, but something I've always found interesting is American politics. It wasn't until I found the confidence to do a live experiment with a journalist to test the paper's credibility for fact checking that I became a viral hit, being picked up by *The New York Times*. From that moment, lots of Americans added me and we still talk to this day about politics. The likes of Twitter and Facebook have given me a chance to make friends all over the world. ”

Benjamin Wareing, 17 from Preston, a graduate of NCS

3.4 Pen portraits of adolescents with differing levels of social intelligence

It is clear from the results reported in this survey and the wider literature that teens vary in how good they are at navigating social situations. The exact reason for these variances might differ between individuals. Here are four cases of how different social intelligence levels may exhibit themselves in individuals.

1. Socially anxious

These individuals have considerable anxiety about new social situations and evaluation from peer groups. They dread social situations, such as presenting to colleagues or classmates and fear going to places where they may meet new people. These situations often lead to individuals feeling nauseous or ill with worry and, as a result, they will often make excuses not to attend social gatherings, and may even play truant off school or work.

2. Social misunderstanding

These individuals find the behaviour of others a complete mystery. They are unable to understand why people say things they do not mean e.g. why someone may pretend to like a present when they don't. They find social situations highly unpredictable because social rules seem to change all the time. They will find these situations a little stressful and may prefer to spend time doing solitary activities that are much easier to predict and understand.

3. Social peer pressure

This kind of individual is desperate to be liked and accepted by others, particularly in close peer groups. They are likely to be insecure about themselves and their abilities and, as such, they are likely to copy others in order to seek approval, such as taking up smoking or drinking.

4. Social online user

This kind of individual may enjoy spending time online, sometimes surfing the net but also spends time in chatrooms with other people. He/she finds it far easier to interact – and to be him/herself – away from the need to make an effort with social niceties. He/she can say and do what they like without anyone ever finding out it was them.



Section 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

4.0 What have we discovered?

Social intelligence is the set of abilities and skills we use to understand social situations. The research presented in this report points to four key conclusions around the importance of social intelligence in the workplace and in well-being. The findings form the basis for the actions it will recommend.

- 1. We need to value social intelligence as well as more individualistic measures** because of its impact on well-being in both adolescence and adulthood, and its implications for Britain's economic performance in an increasingly globalised and technologically sophisticated world. British employers clearly regard social intelligence as a vital quality in an effective workforce.
- 2. Social intelligence needs to be developed early in life.** Data showed that many skills relating to social intelligence were still developing in adolescence. Before these abilities are set too quickly in their adult form, there is a significant opportunity to influence and shape these skills.
- 3. Learning to interact with people from different backgrounds is particularly important.** These skills are an essential part of developing social intelligence and are vital in the modern day workforce, but are currently not being developed in young people whose friendship groups are often similar to them in terms of background. This skills gap needs to be addressed to ensure the next generation are ready for the economy of the future.
- 4. Collective responsibility for developing social intelligence in adolescence.** It is not solely the role of parents, employers or schools to develop social intelligence in young people, it requires greater societal changes. Schools alone cannot address the lack of teenage interaction with adults, or the lack of diversity in many adolescents' social interactions. This is certainly the view of employers, 62% of whom believe more investment and programmes are needed outside of the school system to help young people develop social skills.

4.1 Recommendations for developing social intelligence in teenagers

Research suggests a combination of school and out-of-school activities can improve a young person's social intelligence levels, with parents, schools and extracurricular activities playing an important role.

1. New tests for SI should be set up for employers to take into account more subtle abilities to understand social relationships (e.g. being able to maintain fruitful collaborations with other people from different backgrounds and via online exchanges).
2. Employers should adapt their application and interview processes to spot the signs of high SI.
3. Schools could better support the development of more professional social skills through workshops and organised community activities.
4. Parents and carers should expand and diversify their own social networks and encourage teenagers to have conversations with other adults.
5. Schools and other agencies should consider how to support parents and carers in nurturing SI in their children by recommending programmes and activities outside of school and providing guidance.
6. Confidence in social interaction skills could be better built within peer groups before young people are exposed to new groups.
7. Young people should be encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities such as joining sports clubs, volunteering and NCS – which bring them into contact with a more diverse group of peers, and nurture SI.
8. Adolescents who struggle with social skills and are unable to maintain stable and reciprocal friendships should be carefully monitored for signs of poor mental health and be advised on how to seek help.
9. Further research is needed in this emerging area so that SI can be better quantified, and its causes and impact can be more clearly understood.



Appendix

Appendix

About Jennifer Lau

Jennifer Lau is a Reader in Developmental Psychopathology at King's College London.

She directs the Researching Emotional Disorders and Development (REDD) lab at King's College London and at the University of Oxford. The research of the REDD lab focuses on the emergence of anxiety and mood problems across childhood and adolescence. Some of the research studies carried out by the REDD lab have investigated how poor social cognitive abilities develops across adolescence and how these changes can be linked to emotional problems in the teenage years.

Other research projects focus on the brain substrates of anxiety and depression in children and young people and how these affect information-processing; the role of early-life adversity on emotional development; and the development of new psychological interventions to target early emotional problems in children and young people.



About NCS and social intelligence

NCS is a two-four week programme open to all 16 and 17 year olds across England and Northern Ireland.

It was established in 2011 to create a more cohesive, engaged and mobile society. The programme widens horizons by helping young people to build lasting friendships that bridge social divides, change their aspirations and help them to develop crucial skills for work and life. At the heart of NCS, they tackle three social issues – social cohesion, social engagement and social mobility.

On a social mixing level, the programme works by mixing peer groups in larger teams that have similar interests but are often from different economic, religious and/or ethnic backgrounds to themselves. These teams then bond during a week of team building activities before learning key skills for work and life, which are put into practice when the group create their own social action project in their local community, expanding their networks even further.

Guided reflection is also a core element of the programme. All team leaders are trained to support young people to learn from their experiences, including how they interact with others, such as why people have reactions to what you do and how the cause and effect is not always to do with you. Within their teams, they also learn to play to each other's strengths and cope with people's reactions when trying to achieve something. This increases social intelligence levels by simulating a work environment.

An independent evaluation of the programme by Ipsos Mori suggests NCS is having a positive impact on young people's confidence around meeting new people and communication skills. It is also proven to improve young people's attitudes towards people from different backgrounds and their expansion of social networks, meaning as well as being more work-ready in general, young people are emerging from the programme more socially intelligent.



“*Being born with Asperger syndrome, I knew there could be some difficulty interacting with people, but I wouldn't even put myself out there. Expressing myself was too difficult, and working in a team was something I simply couldn't do. I put these barriers around myself that led to feelings of depression and loneliness, and I knew I needed to tackle these issues to be happy.*

Going on the NCS programme it really tested me, I had all these new people around me and instead of shying away I took the opportunity to expand my skills at relationships. I thought I was doing well, and then my group nominated me to lead the group. I couldn't believe how far I'd come. I'm now passionate about helping people fit in, so much so that I'm developing a programme of sessions to help us understand how to have a more inclusive society from gender, sexuality, race and more. My project, Diverse Nation, will help everyone communicate with each other, a project that I now feel I can run since NCS. ”

Isaac Bolton, 16 from Stourbridge, a graduate of NCS

“ My social skills have always been a real problem for me. Up until recently, I'd deliberately put barriers in place so I wouldn't have to interact with anyone. This even extended to me never answering the phone or doorbell! I had such apprehension when meeting new people, my mind played tricks on me and made me believe people would judge me before getting to know me, and this held me back in so many ways.

Now, since my time at NCS, my life has genuinely changed. After being in an environment surrounded by new people, I gained experience that has impacted me more than I thought possible. I look back and wonder what I was so scared of, I now voluntarily host for a local radio station, work part-time in a call centre and finally have the courage to stand in front of friends and family and give my classical singing performances. ”

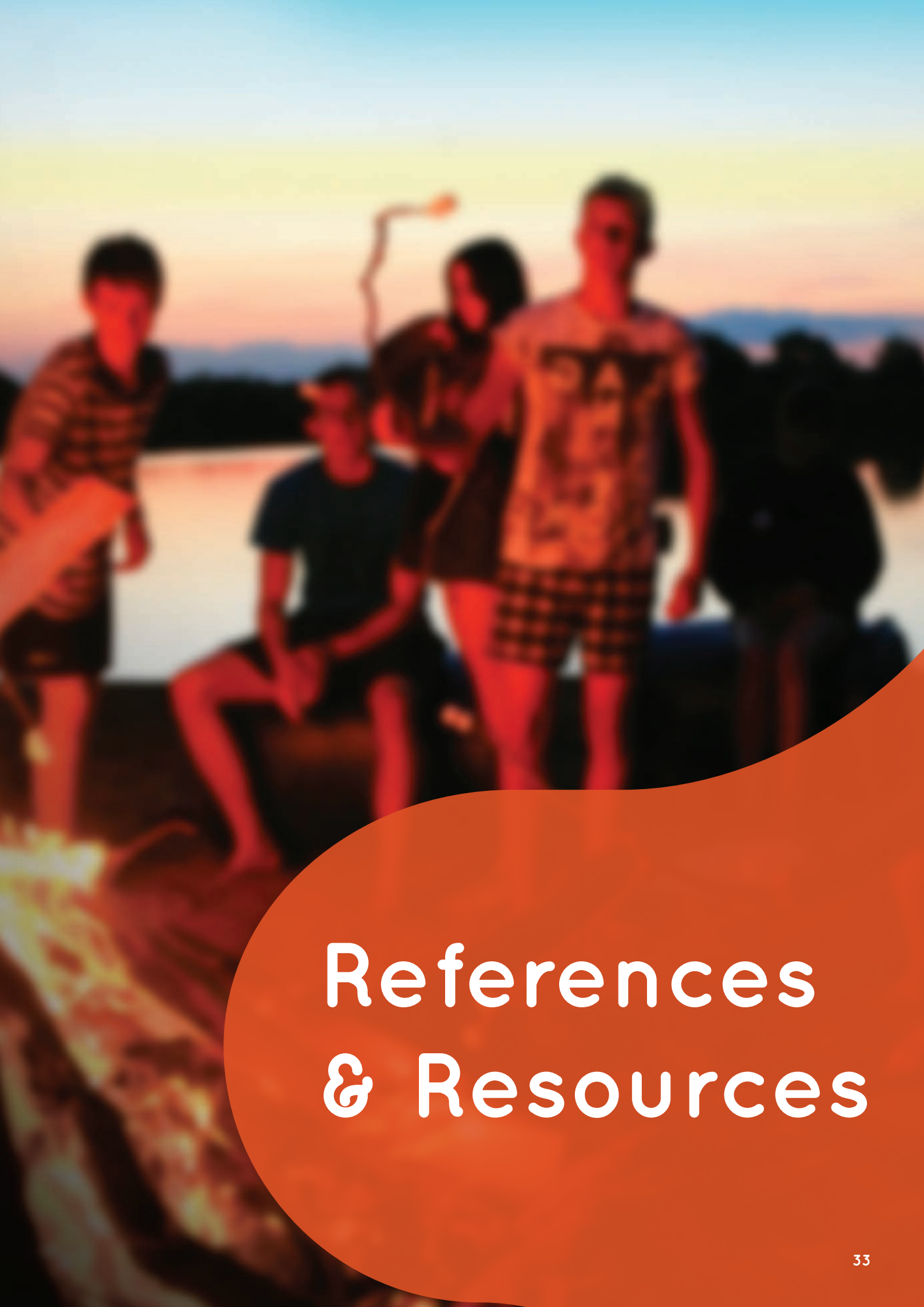
Eva MacDonald, 19 from Lincolnshire, a graduate of NCS

Impact on social mixing

- Over 8 in 10 NCS graduates felt more positive about people from different backgrounds as a result of taking part in NCS¹⁴
- NCS has a 4%pt increased positive impact on young people's social trust¹⁵
- NCS has a positive impact on young people feeling confident about getting in touch with someone from a different school, race/ethnicity, religious background or economic background or with someone who is disabled¹⁶
- 85% of NCS graduates are still in touch with the new friends they made on the programme more than 12 months later¹⁷

Social Intelligence skills development

- NCS resulted in an 18%pt increase on impact on young people's confidence in meeting new people than their peers¹⁸
- NCS resulted in an 10%pt increase on impact on young people's confidence in working with a team¹⁹
- NCS had a 24%pt increase on impact on young people's confidence leading a team²⁰
- NCS graduates were 7%pt more positive than their peers about working in a team with people who had different opinions to them²¹



References & Resources

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1. www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/growth/articles/from-brawn-to-brains--the-impact-of-technology-on-jobs-in-the-u.html
2. 200 employers responsible for hiring staff in organisations of varying sizes across the UK were surveyed on recruitment practices and values
3. A cross-section of 1,000 representative adults from across the UK were asked to respond to questions relating to their ability to maintain reciprocal and long-lasting friendships and their social skills more generally
4. Based on a scale of estimates – how much do you think someone’s earning potential can increase by having strong SI skills
5. Employers were asked to what extent do they agree with the following statement ‘I will not hire an employee who has low levels of SI’
6. 200 employers responsible for hiring staff in organisations of varying sizes across the UK were surveyed on recruitment practices and values
7. Adults were asked to retrospectively report on their ability to maintain reciprocal and long-lasting friendships and social skills as a teenager using standardised questionnaires. They were also asked about their current levels of loneliness and contentment
8. Study of 188 young people aged 10-20 years from the UK who had to complete various tasks measuring social intelligence and social connectedness
9. This increase was not explained by older teens having higher competencies in other areas such as being better at expressing themselves, as these other factors were statistically controlled for.
10. 1,000 young people from the U.K. were asked to assess their own levels of social intelligence by completing a questionnaire on behaviours that are indicative of good social skills. They also answered questions about loneliness and people they turned to in a crisis.
11. 1,000 young people from the U.K. also answered questions about the composition of their friendship groups
12. 19% of 12-17 year olds don’t regularly have conversations with adults other than their parents – survey of 1,000 young people
13. 20% of 12-17 year olds say they don’t have opportunities to mix with people from different backgrounds inside or outside of school
14. Ipsos MORI (2015), NCS 2014 Evaluation, p. 44
15. Ipsos MORI (2015), NCS 2014 Evaluation, p. 45
16. Ipsos MORI (2015), NCS 2014 Evaluation, p. 46
17. Ipsos MORI (2015), NCS 2013 Evaluation – One Year On, p. 13
18. Ipsos MORI (2015), NCS 2014 Evaluation, p. 30
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