



National Audit Office

Report

by the Comptroller
and Auditor General

Department for International Development

International Citizen Service

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Department for International Development

International Citizen Service

Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

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Sir Amyas Morse KCB
Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office

21 November 2017

This report looks at the implementation and performance of the International Citizen Service.

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Key facts

£4,028

unit cost per volunteer

£145m

International Citizen Service (ICS) budget (excluding VAT)

36,000

target number of volunteers for ICS over the programme's life

18 to 25 years

age range of ICS volunteers

£800

minimum volunteer fundraising contribution

12 weeks

duration of typical volunteer placement

1:1

ratio for UK to in-country volunteers

11:1

ratio of applicants to places in 2016

Summary

1 In October 2010, the then Prime Minister announced the government's intention to launch "an International Citizen Service to give thousands of young people who couldn't otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others". In 2011, the Department for International Development (the Department) launched the International Citizen Service (ICS) to provide volunteer placements for 18- to 25-year-olds and team leader placements for 23- to 35-year-olds. It brings together young people from the UK and developing countries to volunteer together in some of the poorest communities in the world. ICS seeks to make a positive contribution to:

- poverty reduction and sustainable development in the host country;
- volunteers' personal and social development; and
- build volunteers' skills to better understand international development.

2 The Department has committed a total of £173 million (including VAT) to ICS between 2011 and 2019. It contracts with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) to deliver ICS. VSO is responsible for managing the programme and for delivering 25% of volunteer placements. It sub-contracts the remaining 75% to seven organisations specialising in development activities.

3 The programme has expanded rapidly since it was first established in 2011. A pilot scheme, which ran from March 2011 to November 2012, provided placements for around 1,200 UK volunteers and 720 in-country volunteers. Phase One, which ran from April 2012 to August 2015, provided placements for 7,000 UK and 7,000 in-country volunteers. Phase Two began in September 2015 – the contract ends in February 2019. It has a target to provide placements for 10,000 UK and 10,000 in-country volunteers.

Why we have completed this review

To review the current programme's delivery against its objectives

4 ICS has offered volunteer placements overseas since 2011. When we started our work, the Department was considering whether to proceed with a two-year extension to the contract for Phase Two, and was exploring what form the programme might take as part of that extension. To help inform the Department's decision we examined how:

- much the programme has cost;
- it is delivered; and
- it has performed against its objectives, including diversity targets.

As part of this work, we identified factors that have affected performance.

To inform the Department's consideration of the programme's future.

5 In July 2017, ministers asked the Department to consider new options for youth volunteering overseas. By combining our key findings on the current programme with findings from our wider work, we have identified design, procurement and implementation considerations on which the Department should focus if it develops a new programme for ICS.

The scope of our work

6 We examined the programme's cost, how it is delivered, and how it has performed against its objectives. We did not seek to make an overall judgement about the value for money of ICS. Our approach and methods are set out in Appendix One.

7 Our report is intended to inform both the Department's management of the current contract during its remaining months (paragraphs 8 to 18), and the development of any new work in this area (paragraph 22).

Key findings from our review of the current programme

On costs and benefits

8 Comparisons of the ICS's cost with similar programmes presents a mixed picture. Benchmarking is complicated by differences in design and access to information. Nevertheless, such comparisons can provide useful insights. VSO completed an exercise to benchmark the cost of ICS against the cost of volunteer opportunities provided by five other UK providers. After adjusting for differences in the between the programmes, VSO's analysis showed that it cost 8% less than two of the five and between 5% and 33% more than the other three. In its business cases the Department concluded that ICS was comparable with similar programmes in the US and Germany (paragraphs 1.13 to 1.14).

9 The programme's development impact is unclear. Early evaluations focused on two of the programme's three objectives – the personal and social development of volunteers and their continued interest in being active citizens – and identified evidence for positive achievements. However, these and subsequent evaluations have drawn attention to the difficulties with demonstrating development impact, the programme's third objective. VSO's most recent evaluation (finalised in October 2017) did identify some positive development outcomes linked to ICS. But it also concluded that these outcomes were not consistent across the programme and that it was not possible to assess with confidence that "changes are sustainable or have been sustained" (paragraphs 2.30 to 2.33).

10 The Department took the decision to expand the programme before the results of evaluations were finalised. In February 2012, the Department approved Phase One of the full programme based on evidence from the mid-term review of the pilot. To allow findings from this review to feed into the tender for the full programme, it was undertaken very early on in the pilot. As a consequence, some findings were necessarily predictive rather than evidence based. The Department then approved Phase Two ten months before completing the final evaluation of Phase One (paragraphs 2.25 to 2.26).

On applicants and diversity

11 ICS has met its targets for the number of UK applicants. Since the programme was introduced in 2011, the number of applicants has increased both in absolute terms and relative to the number of places. For Phase One (April 2012 to August 2015) ICS received almost 41,000 applications for 7,000 places – close to six applications for every place. For Phase Two, the target of 40,000 applications by November 2018 was met in August 2016, with two years still to run (paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4).

12 The Department's performance against its diversity targets for applicants is variable. While it has set targets for five characteristics of the applicant population these do not apply to the volunteer population as it considers it could not influence an applicant's ability to match selection criteria.

- **ICS has not met its gender targets.** 37% of applicants for Phase One of the programme were male against a target of 50%. ICS has not yet met the Phase Two target of 40% males (paragraph 2.14).
- **ICS has only met its target for disabled applicants in 2012 and 2017.** The percentage of applicants with disabilities has ranged from a high of 4.0% in 2017 to a low of 1.5% in 2015, against a target of 3%. In late 2016, the questions used to identify applicants with disabilities were changed (paragraph 2.15).
- **ICS has met some of its targets for ethnicity.** ICS has had success in attracting a higher proportion of applicants from Asian, black, mixed race and other groups compared to the UK population of 16- to 24-year-olds, but has consequently missed its target for white applicants (paragraph 2.16).
- **Performance against geographical targets is mixed.** For example, London, is consistently over-represented and East Midlands under-represented. The Department has committed to taking steps to tackle under representation (paragraphs 2.17 to 2.19).
- **ICS has met its targets for socio-economic background of applicants.** For example, in 2016, 33.8% of applicants met two of the five socio-economic criteria set by the Department. The target was 30% (paragraph 2.21).

13 Conversion rates – the proportion of applicants assessed who subsequently start the programme – are falling, and are worse for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In 2012, the conversion rate was 71%; in 2016, it was 60%. VSO is therefore managing larger number of applicants to meet the target number of volunteers. VSO has identified that conversion rates are lower among volunteers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Department has encouraged VSO to finalise its approach to improving conversion rates for this group (paragraphs 2.5 to 2.8).

14 The Department has not achieved its ambition that ICS UK volunteers are broadly representative of the UK population. And the volunteer population is less diverse than the applicant population. For example, in 2016, while 10.1% of applicants were Asian, 7.3% of participants were Asian; and while 1.6% of applicants declared a disability, only 1.2% of participants declared a disability. The Department receives diversity data for participants and is aware of these differences (paragraphs 2.9 to 2.13).

15 Monitoring of socio-economic characteristics of applicants was introduced five years after the programme began and lacks completeness. The Department set targets for the gender, ethnicity, disability and region of applicants over the programme's life at the start of Phase One. In 2016, five years after the programme was piloted, the Department set targets for the socio-economic background of applicants. It has met these targets although this performance should be seen in the light of the low response rates to questions about socio-economic characteristics (paragraphs 2.19 to 2.23).

On operational matters

16 The Department's 2017 annual review of ICS made 12 recommendations for improvement across all stages of the programme. Areas for improvement identified included attrition rates, pre-placement training, the programme's results framework, support for disabled participants and those with mental health issues, security and safeguarding, and value for money and financial management. Not meeting targets for the percentage of early volunteer returns and volunteer satisfaction with pre-placement training resulted in a lower score (paragraphs 2.27 and 2.28).

17 The payments that the Department makes to those delivering the programme are not linked to the achievement of the programme's outcomes. The Department's contract with VSO uses a payment by results mechanism. Each one of four payments is linked to the successful completion by volunteers of a specific milestone. For example, 55% of the total payment for a volunteer is available when a UK volunteer leaves for the host country. The payments are not linked to the achievement of any of the outcomes that the Department set for the programme (paragraph 1.15 and Figure 6).

18 The Department and VSO recognise and look to manage the safeguarding and security risks associated with the programme. Volunteers are based in countries that face a number of challenges, ranging from the risk of petty crime to exposure to endemic diseases. Volunteers have experienced a variety of incidents in 2015 and 2016. VSO served notice under the provisions of its contract with one consortium member and paused the contract of another following security and safeguarding concerns. The Department and consortium members have made a number of changes to their approach to address safeguarding concerns and have established an action plan (paragraphs 2.34 to 2.35).

Conclusion

19 The Department has established and funded a volunteer programme that looks to benefit not only volunteers but also the UK and some of the world's poorest countries. The programme has had some successes – it is over subscribed and it is meeting two of its three objectives. But the Department has missed some of the programme's targets for diversity and has not consistently demonstrated development impact – its third objective for the programme. This means that the Department has expanded ICS without clear evidence of development impact. Since its expansion, more evidence of development impact is starting to become available, which the Department should consider carefully in its future decision-making.

20 With the current contract for ICS ending soon the Department is considering its options for the programme's future. While it does so, it should not lose sight of the need to seek value from the current programme's remaining 15 months.

Considerations for a new programme

21 Based on the issues we have identified above (paragraphs 8 to 18), as well as drawing on findings from our wider work, we suggest the Department should consider the following issues if it develops a new programme.

On design

- **Produce a plan to manage the transition from the current contract to the new contract for ICS.** This is required to make sure the Department continues to get value from the current contract (so that performance does not decline as contractors reach the end of the contract) and that new providers have access to the information required to make an effective transition.
- **Consider, as part of the business case, a range of options for securing development impacts, to help it assess the programme.** Benchmarking a volunteer programme against other options for achieving development impact, including similar interventions, should help the Department to consider the value for money of its planned programme.

On procurement

- **Consider what delivery model would be most likely to secure value for money from the new contract.** The Department should consider a range of delivery approaches – ranging from in-house management to fee for service outsourcing to a payment by results mechanism – for the new contract. The Department should draw on its experience of using a payment by results mechanism for the current ICS contract.

If the Department opts for a payment by results mechanism it should make sure it aligns prices and payment regimes with the programme outcomes and researches the cost of the planned programme to inform the price structure.

- **Collect sufficient information about the market and potential bidders for the contract.** The Department should take action to make sure the procurement process stimulates competition by keeping potential providers up to date with the new programme's development.

On implementation

- **Make sure there is a 'pipeline' of volunteers to go on the programme.** As part of its research into the availability of potential volunteers, the Department should liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify practical challenges in recruitment.
- **Consider how the diversity objective for the current programme will feature in the new programme.** For example, the Department should consider what impact the programme's focus might have on its diversity objective. It should also monitor the diversity of the volunteer population as well as the applicant population.

Part One

Implementation of the International Citizen Service

1.1 This part of the report examines:

- what the International Citizen Service (ICS) is trying to achieve;
- how it works in practice;
- how it is delivered;
- how much it costs; and
- the Department for International Development's (the Department's) plans for the next stage of the programme.

What is ICS looking to achieve?

1.2 In October 2010, the Prime Minister announced the government's intention to launch "an International Citizen Service to give thousands of our young people, who couldn't otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others".

1.3 The ICS is a programme funded by the Department that looks to bring together young people from the UK and developing countries to volunteer in some of the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America (**Figure 1** overleaf).

1.4 **Figure 2** on page 13 shows the desired impact, outcome and outputs of ICS, and how they are measured for the current phase of the programme – Phase Two.

1.5 The five diversity targets for ICS's applicant population are gender, disability, ethnicity, region and socio-economic status. We report on performance against these targets in Part Two (paragraphs 2.9 to 2.23), supplemented by detailed analysis in Appendix Two.

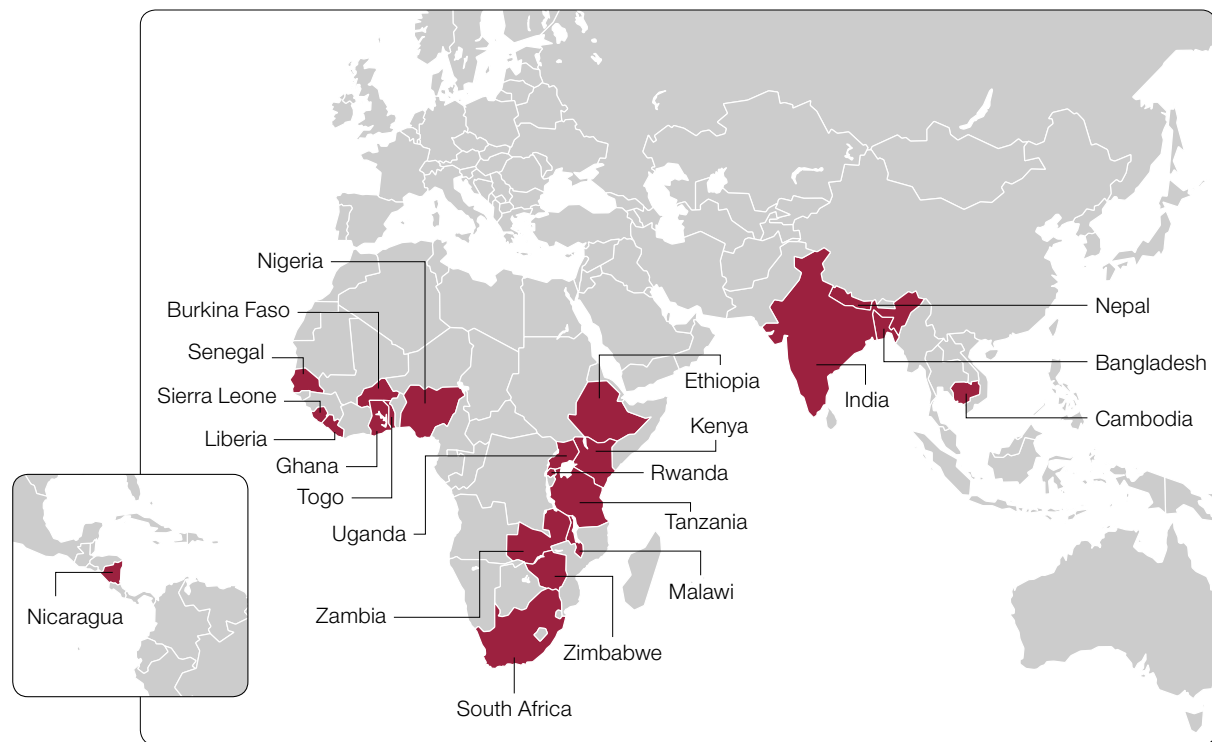
How does ICS work in practice?

1.6 ICS provides placements for two types of volunteer: volunteer placements for 18 to 25 year olds and 'team leader' placements for 23 to 35 year olds.¹ UK volunteers work side by side with volunteers from developing countries, staying with host families in the local community. **Figure 3** on page 14 summarises the programme's stages – from raising awareness through to what happens post-placement.

¹ Approximately 10% of the total number of volunteers are classified as team leaders.

Figure 1

ICS currently runs projects in 21 countries



Source: ICS website: www.volunteersics.org/where-you-could-go

How is ICS delivered?

1.7 ICS is delivered by a consortium of eight organisations that specialise in development activities. **Figure 4** on page 15 shows the type of project each organisation delivers and the countries they operate in.² The consortium is led by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). Each member of the consortium will specialise in one or more development activities, in which volunteers participate. The members work across 21 countries in Africa, Asia and South America. For the period September 2015 to February 2019 (Phase Two of the programme) VSO is responsible for 25% of participants, with the other seven consortium members responsible for 75%.

² See the ICS website for details of the consortium members, their activities and their geographical focus: www.volunteersics.org/our-partners

Figure 2

The performance framework for Phase Two of ICS

Measure**Impact**

The capacity of local communities, young adults from the UK, and people from selected developing countries, to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals and wider social issues is increased.

Indicator**Impact Indicator 1**

Percentage of community members engaged with partners reporting ICS activities positively contributing to sustainable development in the local area.

Impact Indicator 2

Percentage of volunteers experiencing career development as a result of ICS.

Impact Indicator 3

Percentage of volunteers who have become more active as citizens as a result of ICS.

Outcome

10,000 international volunteering placements in selected developing countries involving UK and 'in-country volunteers' deliver positive development impacts with local partners, personal development for the volunteers and increased engagement in social action after placement.

Outcome Indicator 1

Percentage of projects successfully achieving objectives as identified in the project plan.

Outcome Indicator 2

Percentage of volunteers reporting an increase in skills as a key result of their participation in ICS.

Outcome Indicator 3

Percentage of volunteers that, as a result of ICS, have improved knowledge of international development.

Output 1

Sufficient young adults, representing the diversity of the UK and ICS host countries, apply for ICS placements to enable a competitive selection process.

Output 1 Indicators

- 1** Number of young volunteers and team leaders participating in an international volunteer journey.
- 2** Percentage of UK applicants meeting the target for five separate diversity indicators.
- 3** Number of eligible applications received (UK volunteers).

Output 2

20,000 volunteers are selected and trained to fill placements in a transparent, competitive and effective process.

Output 2 Indicators

- 1** Percentage of volunteers reporting that they received relevant pre-placement training.
- 2** Percentage of early returns.

Output 3

20,000 volunteers participate in safe volunteering placements that meet minimum development criteria.

Output 3 Indicators

- 1** Percentage of planned activities run by each team.
- 2** The percentage of project partners reporting that their organisation is better able to bring about positive change in the local area as a result of their work with ICS.
- 3** Percentage of volunteers living in host homes.
- 4** The percentage of crisis incidents that are reported to Voluntary Service Overseas within 24 hours of the agency/country office being aware of the incident.

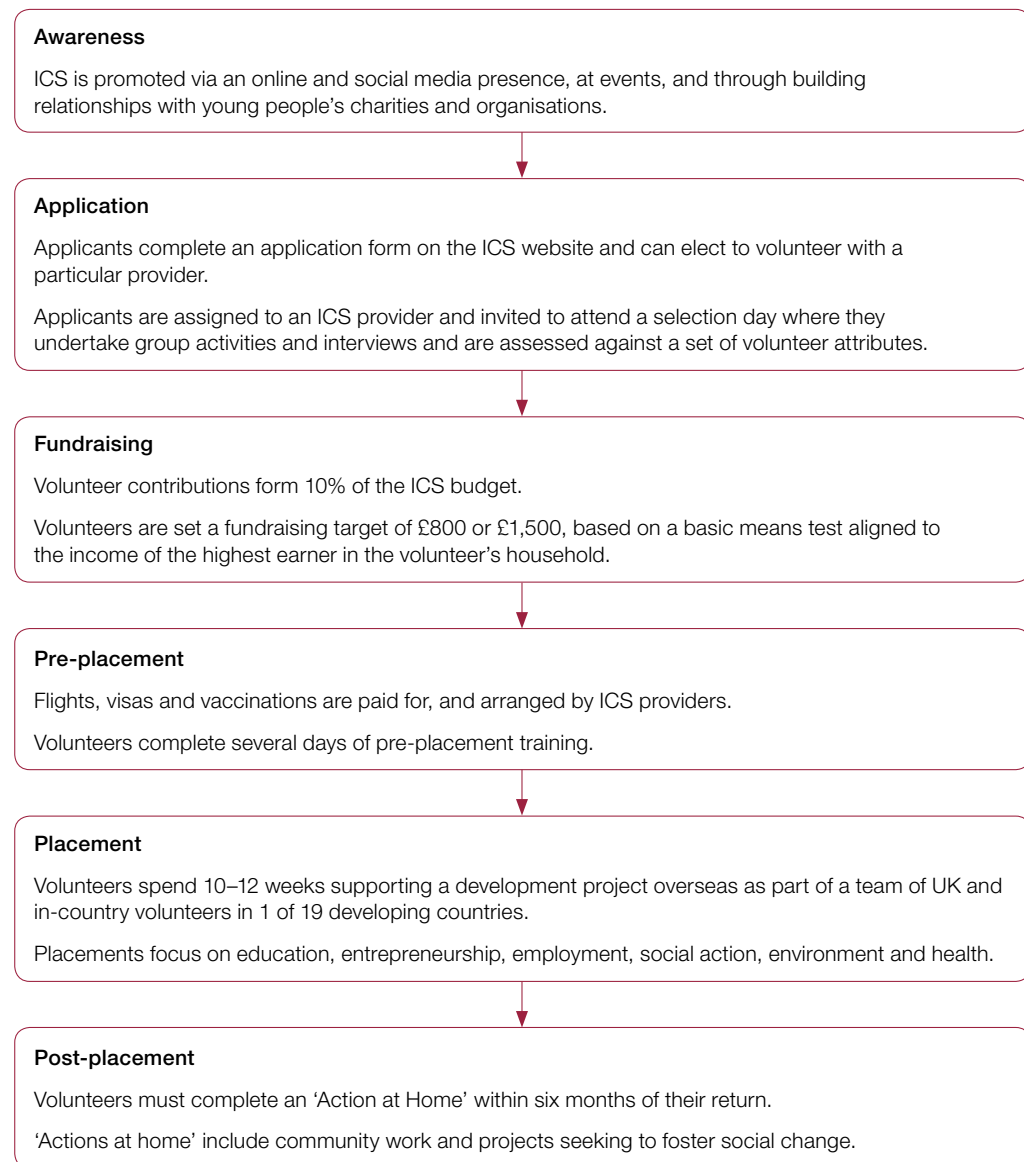
Note

¹ This is the performance framework as at June 2017.

Source: Department for International Development performance framework for ICS Phase Two

Figure 3

The ICS process for UK volunteers – from raising awareness to post-placement review

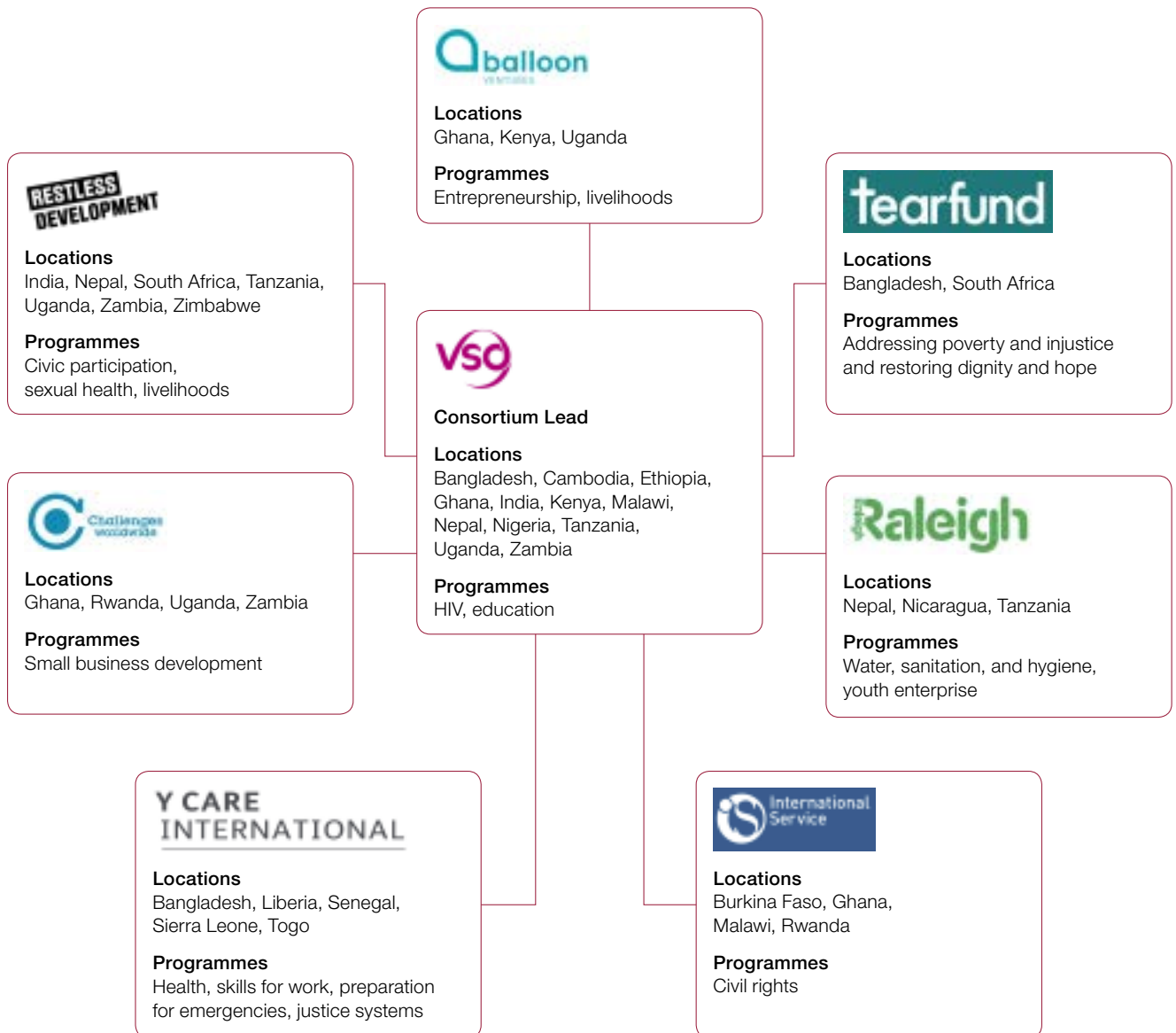
**Note**

1 The process described above is relevant to UK volunteers; the process for in-country volunteers may vary in places (particularly at the application and allocations stages).

Source: National Audit Office summary of ICS Phase One interim evaluation

Figure 4

The remit and geographical coverage of each ICS delivery body



Source: ICS website: www.volunteerics.org/where-you-could-go

How much does ICS cost?

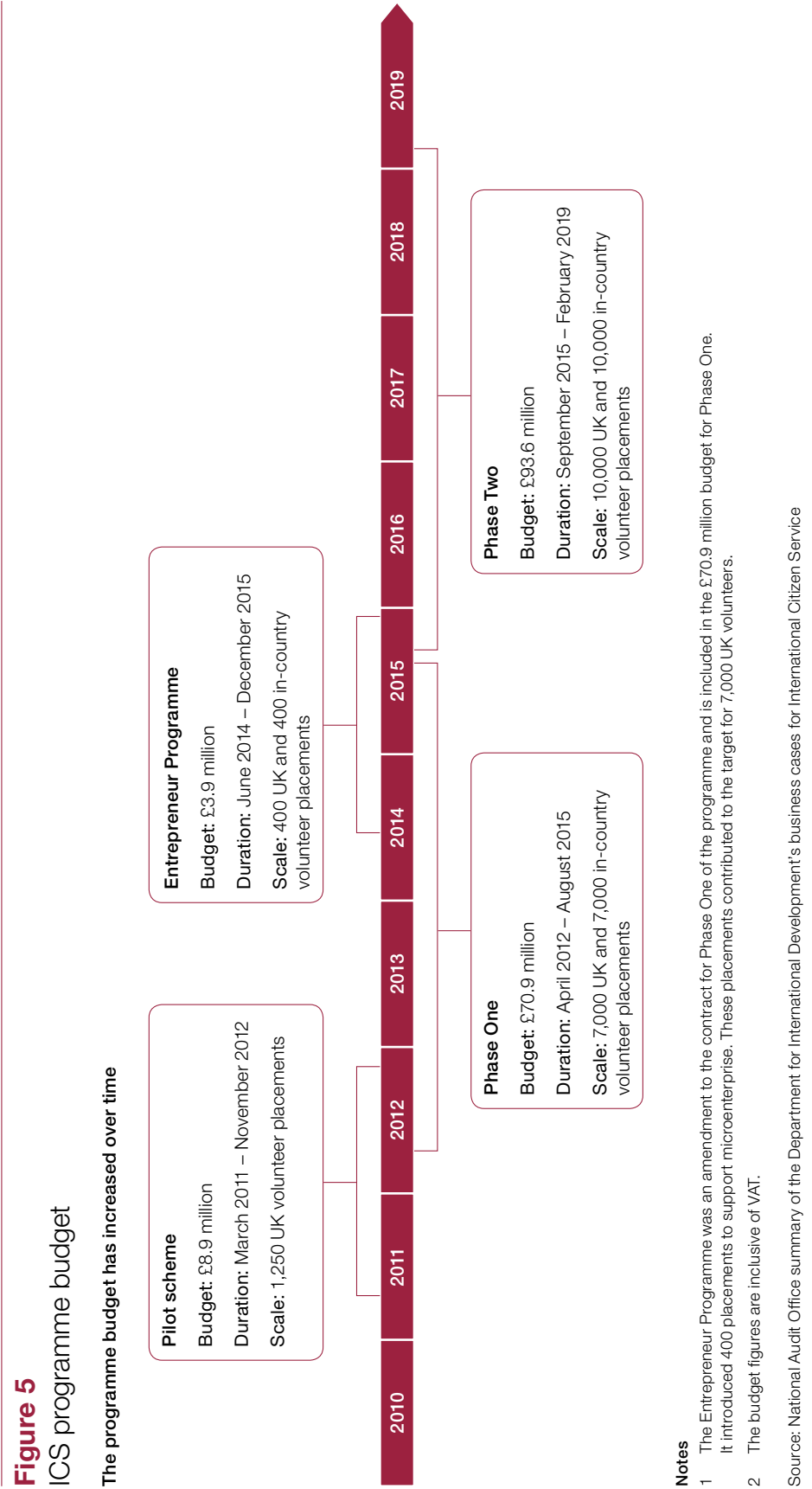
1.8 ICS's total budget is £173 million (this includes VAT; excluding VAT the budget is £145 million), which is made up of three separate budgets for the pilot scheme, Phase One and Phase Two (**Figure 5**). The Department has, to date, spent £148 million. 11% of the programme budget is allocated to VSO to cover its costs as consortium lead, such as its central administrative and monitoring functions. The Phase Two contract includes a £1.4 million contingency fund for unforeseen, unbudgeted, unabsorbable and unavoidable expenditure. Just over half has been spent so far including £657,000 on costs associated with two ex-consortium members (paragraph 2.35).

1.9 The Department funds 90% of ICS costs. The balance is raised by volunteers, who are required to fundraise £800 or £1,500. Volunteers are given the £1,500 target if the highest earner in their household is paying the higher rate of tax. VSO is responsible for making sure information from applicants is reliable. VSO told us that between 10% and 15% of all volunteers who go overseas are allocated this target. ICS provides fundraising support for volunteers.

1.10 The Department pays VSO £7,660 per 12-week placement (consisting of one UK volunteer/team leader and one in-country volunteer/team leader), plus a £542 supplement per team leader. It pays a further £1,564 per team leader who stays more than one cycle.

1.11 These rates have remained constant since April 2012, when the full programme started. VSO has alerted the Department to potential cost increases related to increased security levels, increased engagement with ICS alumni to get more from the investment in volunteers, and extra administration staff to support the increase in volunteer numbers. Additional cost pressures identified by other consortium members are:

- unforeseen depreciation in the pound in 2016 which meant that they had to deliver the programme within lower in-country budgets;
- having to take into account budget implications of development options when prioritising which changes to implement;
- additional costs associated with projects based in urban settings; and
- new costs being pushed onto agencies that were not factored into the original budgeting process.



1.12 Consortium members have identified and implemented ways of making savings to keep within the fixed unit cost. For example, they have centralised the assessment of initial applications and interviews and used host homes to accommodate volunteers. One consortium member expressed concern that doing more with the same financial resources had initially resulted in better value for money, but was now impacting on some areas of the programme because of the need to prioritise.

How does the cost compare with other volunteering programmes?

1.13 Based on the Department's budget for the programme and its expected number of participants, the cost per participant is £4,028. In the 2012 business case for Phase One, the Department stated that ICS was comparable in price to similar government-funded programmes in other countries. It provided two comparators: the German Weltwärts volunteering scheme, with an average cost per volunteer of £11,000 for six to 12 months (equivalent to £2,540 for 12 weeks if the cost is spread over 12 months, and £5,080 if spread over six months); and the US Peace Corps, at a cost of £65,000 for two years (equivalent to £7,500 for 12 weeks). It noted that, as 35% of the overall unit cost for each placement is spent pre-departure, longer schemes can appear relatively cheaper. The Department used this material again in its 2014 business case for Phase Two.

1.14 In 2016, the Department asked VSO to conduct a cost benchmarking exercise against other UK providers of overseas volunteering opportunities. VSO compared the ICS cost of a UK volunteer against five other providers. It took an average base cost for each provider and added the cost of any additional services provided by ICS but not included in the comparators' offering (such as the cost of volunteer assessment and pre-departure training), for a valid comparison. Of the five comparators, two were 8% more expensive than ICS, and the other three were 5%, 17% and 33% cheaper. In the 2014 business case for Phase Two, the Department attributed the higher costs of ICS compared with the costs of some schemes run by commercial providers, to ICS's focus on development impact. This included the investment in in-country volunteers and the ongoing support of volunteers after the placement.

How are consortium members paid?

1.15 The Department's contract with VSO uses a payment by results mechanism. Each of four payments is linked to the successful completion by volunteers of a specific milestone. We have the following observations on the mechanism.

- **Figure 6** on page 20 shows the four payment milestones. These are largely focused on outputs rather than outcomes – for example, departing for the host country. The payments are not explicitly linked to the Department's objectives for ICS (see Figure 2) or to its diversity targets (see paragraphs 2.9 to 2.23). The payment mechanism includes tolerance levels, which allow for an element of non completion without losing payment. For example, a consortium member will receive the final instalment for 100% of volunteers as long as at least 70% of them complete their 'action at home'.

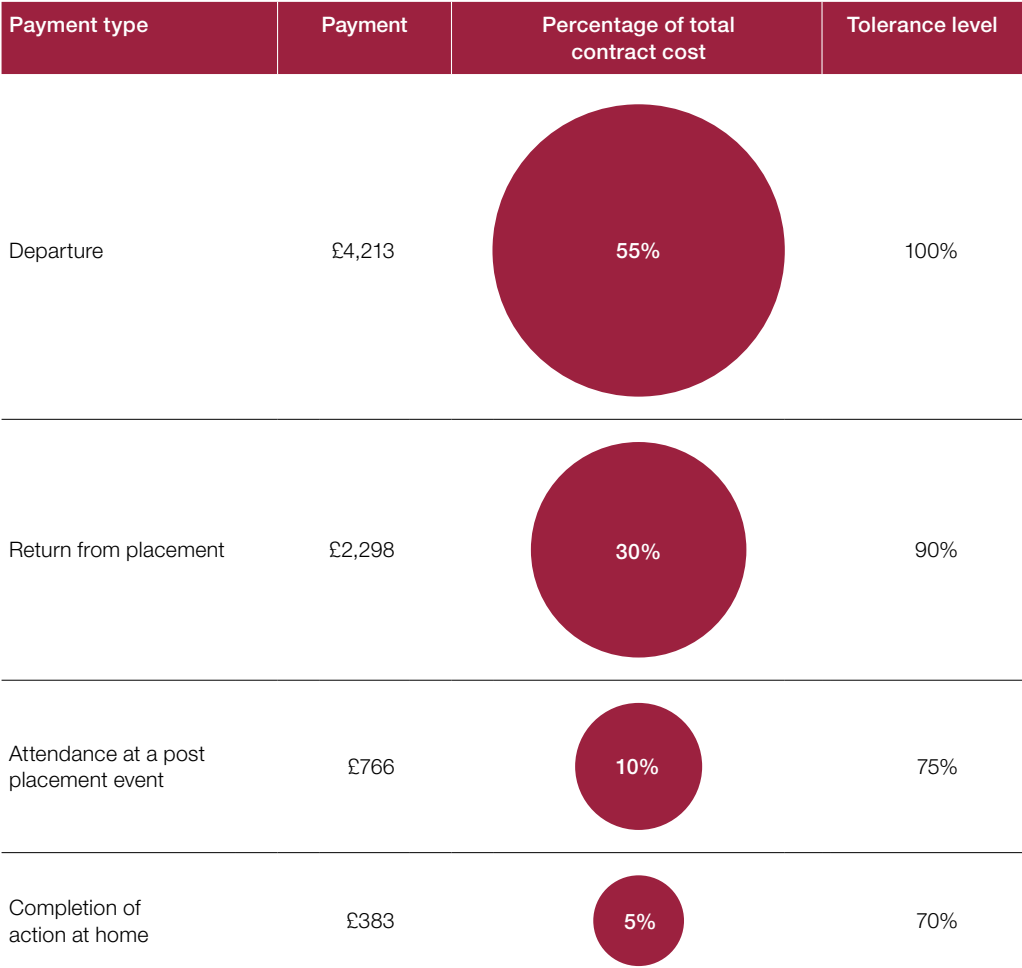
- No payment is made during the recruitment, assessment and selection, and pre-departure training stages. Planning of overseas placements, project design, arranging flights, visas and medicals also have to be completed before the first payment is made. While this structure could provide an incentive to consider applicants in an efficient and effective manner, it may also place a burden on the programme if it is too successful in attracting applicants. In turn, this might reduce the resources available to run other parts of the programme.
- Three consortium members told us they considered that the payment by output mechanism was flawed because it is linked solely to the UK volunteers' journey. For example, the final payment is linked to UK volunteers completing the action at home part of the programme. Therefore, this gets prioritised over support for in-country completion of similar activities.

What is the next stage for ICS?

1.16 The Department is considering options for the programme's future on the basis that the current contract comes to an end in February 2019.

Figure 6
ICS payment by results mechanism

The payment by results mechanism maps payment milestones to outputs rather than outcomes and is frontloaded



Note
1 The payment mechanism includes tolerance levels, which allow for an element of non-completion without losing payment. For example, a consortium member will still receive the final instalment for 100% of volunteers as long as at least 70% of volunteers complete their action at home.

Source: National Audit Office summary of the Department for International Development’s contract with the Voluntary Service Overseas

Part Two

Performance of the International Citizen Service

2.1 This part of the report examines:

- how the International Citizen Service (ICS) has performed against the targets for applicants; and
- operational issues that are having an impact on performance.

ICS has met its targets for applicants

2.2 ICS is currently half-way through Phase Two – a contract covering the period September 2015 to February 2019. Over that period, it has an output target to provide placements for 10,000 UK and 10,000 in-country volunteers, plus interim milestone targets for each calendar year. It achieved 9,705 volunteers against the milestone target of 9,724 volunteers by 30 December 2016.

2.3 The Department for International Development (the Department) set an output target for the number of applicants for each phase of the programme, and milestone targets within each phase. ICS met the targets for the number of overall applicants for the pilot scheme and Phase One. For Phase Two, the Department set a target of 40,000 eligible applicants for 10,000 UK volunteer placements. By August 2016, ICS had already met this target. **Figure 7** overleaf shows that ICS has comfortably exceeded targets for applicants since 2014 by a growing margin each year. In 2016 there were 11 applications for every placement against a target of four to six applications for every placement.

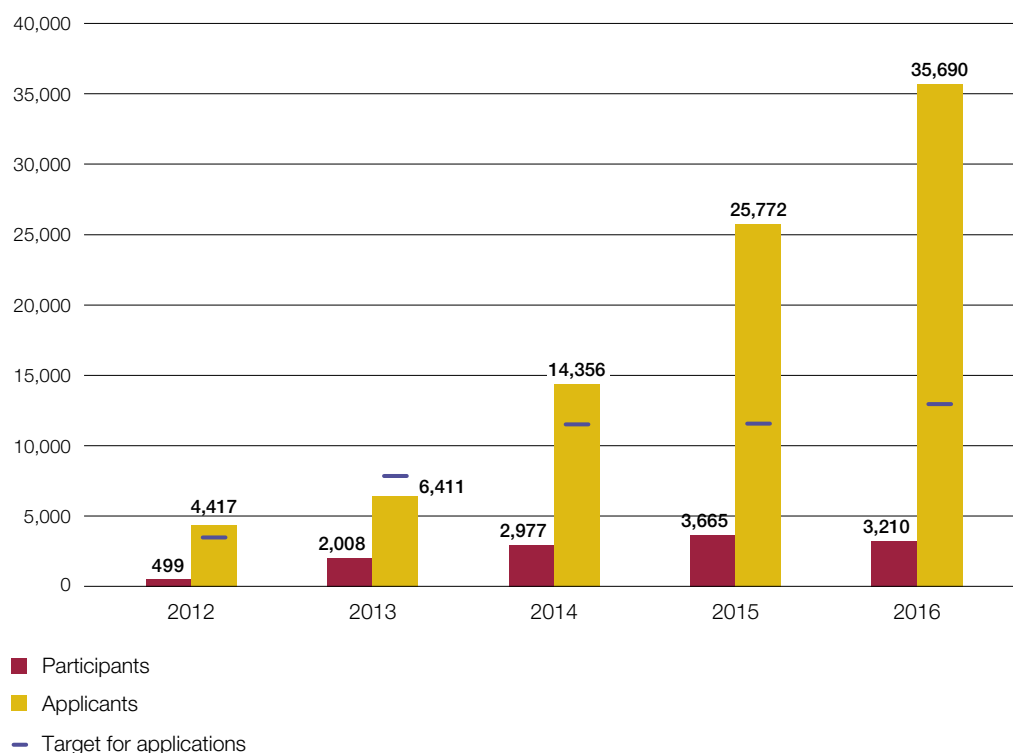
2.4 The annual number of applicants has increased eight-fold from 40,000 in 2012 to 35,690 in 2016. In 2015, there were over 25,000 applicants for 3,240 planned places (with 3,210 participating that year); and in 2016, there were over 35,690 applicants for 1,622 planned places (with 3,665 participating that year).

Figure 7

Applicant and volunteer levels against target

The target for applicants has been exceeded since 2014

Number of applicants/participants

**Notes**

1 Figures for 2012 are only for Phase One and do not include those for the pilot phase.

2 Annual targets have been calculated proportionally as Phase One targets spanned the financial year and Phase Two targets span the calendar year.

Source: Targets taken from the Department for International Development's Phase One and Phase Two performance frameworks

Conversion rates – the proportion of applicants starting the programme – are declining

2.5 While the number of applicants has grown, and generally exceeded annual targets, the number of available places has not. Conversion rates have therefore fallen.³ **Figure 8** shows that in 2012, 71% of applicants who were assessed started a placement abroad; this had fallen to 60% in 2016. It also shows that the largest proportion of applicants who withdraw do so before attending pre-departure training. Consortium members do not receive a payment for an applicant who drops out before departure – conversion rates are factored into the price (paragraph 1.15 describes the payment mechanism in more detail).

3 The proportion of applicants who are assessed and who subsequently start the programme.

Figure 8

Conversion rates from assessed applicants to volunteer: 2012 to 2016

The number of applicants being rejected or withdrawing from ICS during the recruitment process is increasing

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Applicants who have been:					
assessed and rejected	184	371	600	659	597
assessed/selected then withdrew	453	619	1,100	1,395	1,318
trained but then rejected	7	8	18	8	20
trained and then withdrew	38	77	143	166	159
Total withdrawing	682	1,075	1,861	2,228	2,094
Total number of applicants assessed	2,338	3,254	5,348	5,896	5,281
Total withdrawing as percentage of total assessed	29%	33%	35%	38%	40%
Conversion rate	71%	67%	65%	62%	60%

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Voluntary Service Overseas' data

2.6 The two most common reasons recorded for withdrawing after selection are finding a job, internship or apprenticeship, and lack of contact. Both the Department and VSO have completed work to identify the characteristics of those applicants who do not start the programme, and to make the programme more accessible.

- A 2016 VSO review of conversion rates found that younger applicants (aged 18 to 21) were most likely to withdraw, and those with the highest educational attainment were least likely to withdraw.
- Between 2015 and 2017, VSO led the UK strand of the EU funded International Volunteering Opportunities 4 All (IVO4All) programme, aimed at improving access for young people to international volunteering. This identified a number of access barriers, for example limited connections with the voluntary sector, the need for a wide range of additional support needs, and loss of benefit entitlement.⁴
- As part of the IVO4All programme, four ICS consortium members piloted interventions to improve engagement and support for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access international volunteering opportunities. The four interventions tested were a pre-assessment day workshop (effective but expensive), peer mentoring from ICS alumni (limited impact), and adapted pre-placement training and team leader training (effective and inexpensive).

4 International Volunteering Opportunities for All – <http://www.ivo4all.eu/en/>

- VSO has produced (and shared with the consortium) guidance on improving inclusivity and accessibility.
- The Department's 2017 annual review of the ICS programme identified a need to increase conversion rates for applicants from harder to reach groups. It recommended that VSO finalise its strategy to reduce high drop-out rates among UK volunteers from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- In 2017, ICS obtained funding from a private foundation to research how to improve conversion rates in applicants from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

2.7 ICS has a £285,000 Access Fund for removing barriers to participation. £100,000 is assigned to fund mental health research. The remaining £185,000 is used to pay for projects looking at how to make the programme more accessible to disabled participants; and to help consortium members make reasonable adjustments for volunteers who require additional support or who demonstrate significant financial hardship. In 2016-17, the Access Fund spent £4,070 on reasonable adjustments, supporting 29 volunteers by providing interpreter services, health/medical related items and financial support for items such as kit and passports.

2.8 While the Access Fund can be used to support volunteers who face financial hardship, it cannot be used to compensate for loss of benefit entitlement. For example, the 12-week ICS volunteer placement exceeds the four weeks maximum permitted to Universal Credit claimants to be away from the UK. ICS participants therefore lose their benefit payments, which can lead to them defaulting on rental payments, and losing accommodation. Anybody out of the country for more than a month may not be entitled to claim Universal Credit for two years after their return. New claims are likely to take six weeks to be finalised.

The volunteer population is less diverse than the applicant population

2.9 The Department promised that ICS would offer an open and fair recruitment and selection process that was accessible to all, which would make sure that the selected volunteers were broadly representative of the UK population. At the start of Phase One, it established four diversity targets measuring the gender, ethnicity, disability, and regional or national location of applicants; and in 2016 it added a fifth target related to the socio-economic status of ICS applicants.

2.10 Other than the disability target, the original diversity targets were set using 2011 census data, to make sure they reflected the national population. As a result of some adjustments to the targets made at the start of Phase Two of the contract, the targets for gender, white applicants and Asian applicants no longer match the national population:

- the gender target is now skewed towards females (traditionally making up a larger proportion of any volunteer population);
- the ethnicity target for white applicants is below the proportion of the national population; and
- the ethnicity target for Asian applicants is above the proportion for the national population.

2.11 The Department's diversity targets measure the characteristics of ICS applicants, but not of participants – the volunteers. The Department's justification for setting diversity targets for applicants was that it could influence accessibility for applicants through targeted marketing and recruitment strategies. However, it could not influence applicants' ability to satisfy the selection criteria. The selection process consists of an application form, followed by a selection day for those applicants who satisfy the eligibility criteria. Applicants undertake group activities and interviews and are assessed against a set of required volunteer attributes. Figure 8 shows the drop-out rates at different points in the selection process. Analysing the characteristics of both applicants and volunteers might help to identify issues with this process that are acting as barriers to participation, and to improve the programme's transparency.

2.12 Our analysis of data on applicants and participants highlights a contrasting set of characteristics. For example, between 2012 and October 2017:

- 9.2% of applicants were Asian, compared with 6.9% of participants;
- 11.6% of applicants were graduates compared with 31.3% of participants; and
- 11.4% of applicants were from the North West compared with 9.4% of participants.

2.13 The Department has not set diversity targets for participants as it considers it can not influence an applicant's ability to meet selection criteria. It does receive data on participant diversity and is aware of the differences. Appendix Two reports performance against the diversity targets from 2012 to October 2017 and explores the differences between diversity of applicants and diversity of participants in detail. A brief commentary is provided below. In summary, ICS has found the gender and disability targets challenging but has met some of the ethnicity and geographical targets.

ICS has not met its gender targets

2.14 The gender target for Phase One was 50% male and 50% female, in line with the 2011 national census data for 18- to 25-year-olds. The proportion of male applicants for Phase One was 37%, which was below target. ICS changed the gender target for Phase Two to 60% female and 40% male, to take account of the challenge in recruiting male volunteers and the traditionally higher proportion of females involved in youth volunteering. To date, it has not met its target.

ICS has only met its targets for disabled applicants twice, in 2012 and 2017

2.15 The disability target of 3% was set lower than the 5% disability rate for the national population, on the basis that the disability rate rises with age and the ICS target population is 18- to 25-year-olds. ICS met the 3% target for disabled applicants in 2012 and 2017, with performance falling from a high of 4.0% in 2017 to a low of 1.5% in 2015. In November 2016, ICS changed the data used to measure disability from a single question in the ICS application form asking applicants if they considered themselves to be a 'disabled person', to a short set of questions known as the Washington Group questions. These ask about a person's ability to carry out everyday activities (walking, seeing, hearing, cognition, self-care and communication). Since implementing these questions, ICS has seen a significant increase in applicants disclosing a disability.

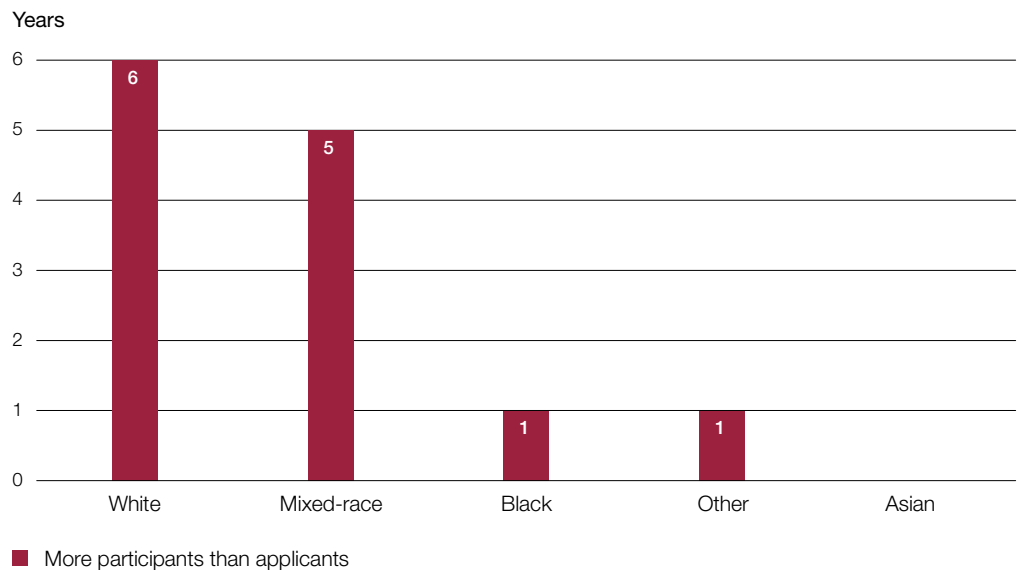
ICS has met some of its ethnicity targets

2.16 ICS has exceeded its targets for applications from ethnic minorities for each year of the programme's life. However, **Figure 9** shows that white and mixed-race ethnic groups have a better conversion rate than Asian, black and other ethnic groups, who represent a larger proportion of the applicant population than the volunteer population.

Figure 9

Number of years where participant share exceeds applicant share, by ethnicity, 2012 to 2017

The percentage of white participants has exceeded the percentage of white applicants every year. The opposite is true for Asian participants and applicants



Source: National Audit Office analysis of VSO applicant and participant data

Performance against geographical targets is mixed

2.17 Performance against geographical targets is mixed. For example, London and the South West are consistently over-represented, while West Midlands, East Midlands and Scotland are regularly under-represented. Between 2012 and October 2017, an average of 19% of the total applicants were from London compared with a target of 12%. **Figure 10** overleaf shows that in 2016, London had the largest variance against target, with 19% of applicants coming from London against a target of 12%, which is one and a half times as many as targeted.

2.18 Consortium members are working to address an imbalance in regional applications. They are tailoring advertising to target specialist organisations or specific locations to help meet diversity targets. For example ICS targets sixth form colleges in Wales to help ensure a proportionate regional spread of UK volunteers.

Figure 10

Performance against applicant targets by region for 2016

London has the greatest variation in performance – 7% points above target

Region	Target (%)	Actual (%)	Difference (%)
South East	13	13	0
London	12	19	+7
North West	11	12	+1
East England	9	9	0
West Midlands	9	8	-1
Yorkshire and the Humber	9	7	-1
East Midlands	8	6	-2
Scotland	8	7	-1
South West	8	9	+1
Wales	5	4	-1
North East	4	4	0
Northern Ireland	3	2	-1

Source: National Audit Office analysis of VSO applicant data, 2016

Monitoring of the socio-economic characteristics of applicants was introduced five years after the programme began and the data is incomplete

2.19 Five years elapsed between the launch of the programme and the introduction of socio-economic targets in January 2016. For Phase One, ICS had targets for gender, ethnicity, disability and UK regions.⁵ The Department and VSO introduced socio-economic targets part-way through Phase Two, following a review of diversity indicators at the end of Phase One.

⁵ Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

2.20 Since January 2016, the Department has measured socio-economic diversity by the percentage of UK applicants who meet two or more of the following five criteria:

- is in receipt of benefits;
- was eligible for free school meals;
- has fewer than five GCSEs at grades A* to C;
- lives in a household where the highest earner receives less than £20,000 a year; or
- attended a school that falls into POLAR 1 or 2 most disadvantaged areas.⁶

2.21 ICS met the socio-economic targets in 2016, with 33.8% of applicants meeting two of the five socio-economic criteria against a 30% target, and 12.3% of applicants meeting three criteria against a 9% target. It also met the targets in 2017. For 2018, the Department has introduced a further target – that 50% of applicants have their highest income earner on less than £20,000 per year.

2.22 However, the response rate to the questions in the application form used to capture socio-economic data is low, which undermines the integrity of the results. Since the socio-economic questions were introduced in January 2016, less than 45% of applicants have completed all five questions. In 2016, 40.3% responded to all five; in the last 10 months of 2017, the response rate was 38.6%.

2.23 The Department has recognised some of the weaknesses in diversity performance described in paragraphs 2.9 to 2.22. Its 2017 annual review recommended that the programme should look to increase the number of people with disabilities who participate; consider targeted support to reduce application attrition rates from low socio-economic groups; and increase the number of participants from geographical regions where participation is low.

The Department took the decision to expand the programme before the results of evaluations were finalised

2.24 ICS has been subject to five evaluations to date. Four were commissioned by the Department from independent evaluators, including an interim and final review of the pilot scheme and of Phase One of the programme. The other was a mid-term evaluation of Phase Two, led by VSO. The evaluations have been generally positive. For example, the final evaluation of the pilot concluded that ICS's delivery was successful and that it achieved value for money. The Phase One interim evaluation found that the ICS programme was being implemented successfully with good progress having been made in all aspects of the scheme. And the Phase One final evaluation concluded that the ICS programme had been delivered successfully, but that follow-up research would be required to assess its longer-term impact.

⁶ The POLAR classification looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education (HE) across the UK and shows how this varies by area. POLAR classifies wards into five groups based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter HE aged 18 or 19. These groups range from quintile 1 areas with the lowest participation (most disadvantaged) up to quintile 5 with the highest rates (most advantaged).

2.25 While these evaluations have identified areas of good performance we identified a number of issues concerning their timing:

- The Department approved the roll-out of Phase One (£71 million over three years for 7,000 placements), seven months before the final evaluation of the pilot had been completed, based on evidence from the mid-term review of the pilot. To allow findings from this review to feed into the tender for Phase One in October 2011, it was undertaken very early on in the pilot, one month after the first cohort of volunteers left the UK and before any volunteers had returned from their placements. While the evaluation concluded that there was clear evidence of positive impacts for volunteers and the communities in which they worked, it also concluded that the timescale for the evaluation had "limited [the evaluator's] assessment of impact and effectiveness", and stated that some findings were predictive rather than clearly evidence based.
- The final evaluation of the pilot was undertaken at an appropriate time in relation to the conclusion of the pilot programme. However, starting the full programme before the pilot had been finalised and evaluated resulted in high staff turnover among the delivery bodies. The evaluators concluded that this made learning from the pilot more challenging.
- The business case for Phase Two acknowledged that while the evaluation of the pilot phase was used to develop and shape the full ICS programme, the overlap between the pilot and the full programme meant that some changes were 'iterative' – changes were being made after the start of the full programme.
- The Department approved the programme's second phase (£94 million over four years for 10,000 placements) in May 2015, ten months before completion of the final evaluation of Phase One.

2.26 The Department has not made the final evaluation of ICS Phase One publicly available (more than two years after Phase One ended) unlike the previous three evaluations. The Department told us it is in the process of “finalising the timeline for external publication”; it did not explain why there had been a delay.

The Department’s 2017 annual review made 12 recommendations for improvement

2.27 As with all of its programmes, the Department has completed annual reviews of ICS.⁷ Annual reviews measure performance against the indicators set out in a programme’s performance framework, including outcome and output indicators. In the five annual reviews between 2013 and 2017, the programme had met or moderately exceeded expectations. However, in 2016, the report identified that a significant amount of work was needed during the year to reduce risks and upgrade safety and security systems. And in 2017, the review reported a drop in volunteers’ satisfaction with pre-placement training, and a rise in the percentage of early returns of UK volunteers, taking this marginally above the target for 2016.⁸

2.28 The 2017 annual review made 12 recommendations for improvement focusing on drop-out rates, pre-placement training, the programme’s results framework, supporting disabled participants and those with mental health issues, security and safeguarding, ‘action at home’, communications, in-country coordination, value for money and financial management.

The programme’s development impact is unclear

2.29 Securing a development impact is a key aim of ICS (Figure 2). The Department’s business case for Phase One acknowledged that there was limited rigorous evidence from independent research on the impact of youth volunteering on development outcomes. The Department’s funding for Phase One therefore included £1.5 million for independent evaluation, to improve the evidence base for the development impact of ICS and other similar volunteering schemes.

2.30 The Phase One interim and final independent evaluations provided evidence for two of the three aims – the personal and social development of the volunteers, and their continued interest in being active citizens. They identified that ICS was delivering a “range of positive changes ... that can provide the preconditions for longer term development impact”. But evidence of such impact was limited and more research in this area was required.

⁷ Annual programme reviews are internal reviews completed by departmental staff, either from within or outside the project team.

⁸ Performance for the first six months has been 8.3%, and therefore is under the target of less than 10%.

2.31 In submissions about the programme's future in March and August 2017, the Department drew ministers' attention to the limited development impact achieved through ICS. The Department reported that there was strong evidence that ICS increased a volunteer's employability; improved the UK's reputation for volunteering overseas; and helped build support for international development in the UK. However, the Department recommended that VSO should focus on identifying what works, in order to streamline the 195 projects; and suggested options for enhancing development impact in the future.

2.32 In October 2017, VSO finalised its internal interim evaluation of Phase Two. The purpose of the evaluation, planned at the beginning of Phase Two, was to understand ICS's development impacts which it described as a "critical evidence gap". This was because previous evaluations had focused on, for example, the personal and professional development of volunteers. We have summarised the evaluation's key findings below.

- Across areas of focus (such as health and education) and geographies, ICS contributed to some change such as the increase in and access to services. For example, by transferring knowledge, increasing the reach of services, and improving how they operate in the short term. However, the degree of change varied between projects as did the sustainability of those changes. Nor was there sufficient evidence of improvements in technical quality nor the effectiveness of services.
- Projects which focused on education, sexual and reproductive health, and livelihoods demonstrated most elements of the change the Department was seeking to achieve from its investment in ICS. This was not the case for entrepreneurial projects (although other positive outcomes from these projects were identified).
- The evaluation concluded it was not possible at the time "to assess with confidence the extent to which the overall changes [to which ICS contributes] are sustainable or have been sustained." It did find evidence that ICS volunteers working with volunteers and organisations in the community could contribute to sustainable changes. However, it also found that ICS was not supportive of sustainability, with short-term assignments, low-skilled volunteers and inconsistent hand-over between cycles. It suggested that the final evaluation of ICS should look for evidence of its sustainability.

The Department and VSO recognise and look to manage the safeguarding and security risks associated with the programme

2.33 The Department rates ICS as a high-risk programme due to the security and safety issues it and the consortium need to manage. Volunteers live and work in countries where there is a low to medium level of threat environment, where they may be exposed to petty and violent crime, political instability, endemic diseases (such as malaria or gastro-intestinal illness) and natural phenomena that include flooding, tropical storms and earthquakes.⁹ Volunteers are at highest risk of road traffic accidents.

2.34 Since Phase Two of the programme started, 3.75% of participants have been involved in incidents, including 0.24% who were involved in critical incidents and 0.07% in crisis incidents.¹⁰ ICS safeguarding incidents have included death by drowning of two volunteers, sexual assaults, and the detention of volunteers by local police. In 2015, VSO served notice under the provisions of its contract with one consortium member following issues connected with security and safeguarding arrangements for volunteers. And in 2016, it paused the contract of another until it improved its security arrangements.

2.35 The Department and VSO have taken action on safeguarding issues.

- In response to a recommendation in the Department's 2015-16 annual review of ICS, the Department has incorporated a reference to safety in ICS's third output measure: "20,000 volunteers participate in safe volunteering placements that meet minimum development criteria".
- VSO commissioned two external safeguarding, security and safety audits. The Department, VSO and other consortium members have implemented the 21 recommendations from the first audit in August 2015. The March 2017 audit made 64 recommendations for improvement, captured in a security action plan. Of these, 48 are completed, 13 are in the process of being implemented and 3 are outstanding. The Department and VSO meet fortnightly to review progress on the security action plan and to discuss updates to live security incidents.
- The March 2017 audit concluded that VSO and the consortium agencies had made progress in developing a range of safety, security and safeguarding policies, procedures, protocols, guidelines, tools and trainings. For example, each ICS project is required to conduct annual risk assessments on location, host homes, workplaces and training venues; each consortium member is required to have in place a Crisis Management Team at head office level and Incident Management Team at country level; and ICS has developed a Responding to Sexual Violence Toolkit.

⁹ According to International SOS and Control Risks Travel Security Online.

¹⁰ A critical incident is an event that does not require out-of-country intervention; and that if untreated or not managed effectively may escalate into a crisis – for example, any localised event that results in a temporary interruption to operations or services. A crisis is an event that requires external resources and intervention, and that if not managed effectively will have a significant negative impact on ICS

Appendix One

Our audit approach and evidence base

Scope

- 1 The Department for International Development (the Department) funds the International Citizen Service (ICS), a youth volunteering programme for 18- to 25-year-olds from the UK, who are paired with volunteers from a range of low- and middle-income host countries. ICS has expanded rapidly, from a pilot programme of around 1,200 UK volunteers and 720 in-country volunteers in 2011-12, to the current contract with the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), to provide placements for 20,000 volunteers between September 2015 and February 2019. The Department has committed a total of £173 million (including VAT) to ICS to date.
- 2 We examined the implementation and performance of the programme. In particular, we considered the delivery model through a consortium led by VSO, the payment by results mechanism, and the performance management framework, including diversity targets.

Methods

- 3 In examining the issues in paragraph 2, we drew on a variety of evidence sources.
- 4 We interviewed key individuals from the Department and VSO to understand the programme's objectives and delivery mechanisms. We also invited ICS consortium members to comment on the issues we examined.
- 5 We reviewed programme documents including:
 - business cases and submissions to ministers about ICS;
 - the Department's annual reviews of ICS to assess its performance against targets;
 - external evaluations of ICS, carried out by ITAD (pilot phase) and Ecorys (Phase One), and the recent VSO interim evaluation of Phase Two, to understand how the programme has developed over time;
 - security audits and action plans to understand safeguarding issues; and
 - the ICS quality handbook, which sets out the quality and contracting principles, and associated protocols, for delivering the programme.

6 We analysed VSO's data bank containing information about applicant and volunteer diversity and socio-economic status to understand if the programme succeeded in its stated aim to *"give thousands of people, who couldn't otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others"*. We compared this data with census data so we could understand how closely ICS diversity characteristics matched those of 18- to 25-year-olds across the UK.

7 We held two focus groups with small groups of former ICS volunteers and team leaders. One group contained UK volunteers and the second, who we met via conference call, contained international volunteers. VSO organised the focus groups on our behalf and selected the participants from across the consortium. These focus groups were helpful in building our understanding of ICS.

Appendix Two

Diversity: targets and performance

1 The Department for International Development (the Department) established the International Citizen Service (ICS) as a programme that would “give thousands of our young people, who couldn’t otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others”. The Department interprets this aspiration as making sure that the profile of the population applying to ICS reflects the population for the UK as whole (for the eligible age group). This is reflected in one of three output targets for ICS:

“Sufficient young adults, representing the diversity of the UK and host countries, apply for ICS placements to enable a competitive selection process.”

2 This target is for Phase Two, and is measured through three output indicators:

- the number of young volunteers and team leaders participating in an international volunteer journey – UK volunteers only (target 10,000);
- the number of eligible applications received – UK volunteers only (target 40,000); and
- the percentage of UK applicants meeting a composite target of 90% across five separate diversity targets; the five diversity indicators are: disability, ethnicity, gender, region and socio-economic background.¹¹

3 This appendix sets out the following information for each of the five individual diversity targets:

- a description of the target and how it was set;
- whether and how the target has changed over the life of the ICS; and
- performance against the target – for applicants to and then for participants on the programme.

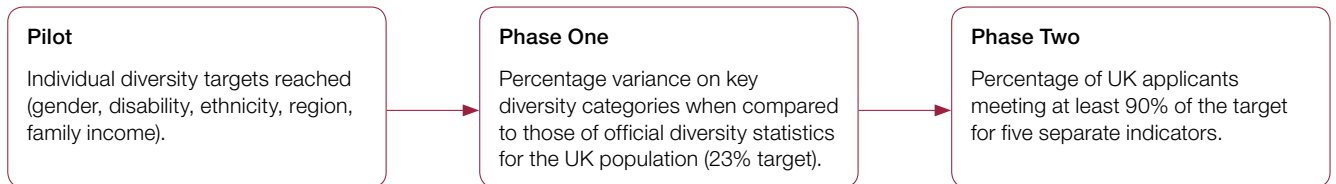
4 **Figure 11** sets out how diversity measures and targets have changed over time.

¹¹ Percentage of UK applicants meeting at least 90% of the target for five separate indicators.

Figure 11

The development of diversity measures over the life of ICS

This figure shows how performance against diversity targets is measured. Measurement has become more complex as the programme has progressed



Source: National Audit Office summary of diversity targets contained in ICS logical frameworks for each phase

A Disability

What is the target?

5 The Department identified that approximately 5% of the UK population of a working age have some form of disability. The target is that at least 3% of the applicants declare a disability. The Department set a lower target because ICS volunteers are younger than the general population, and also to account for the fact that some applicants may not disclose their disability. The declaration is voluntary.

How has the target changed over time?

6 The Department's target for the proportion of applicants declaring a disability has remained unchanged since the start of the programme. However, the tolerance levels for meeting the target changed from 20% (i.e. at least 2.4%) in 2012 to 2015 to 10% (at least 2.7%) in 2016.

7 While the target has not changed, the data used to measure disability changed in November 2016, from a single question in the ICS application form asking applicants if they considered themselves to be a 'disabled person', to a short set of questions known as the Washington Group questions. These ask about a person's ability to carry out everyday activities (walking, seeing, hearing, cognition, self-care and communication). Since implementing these questions, ICS has seen a significant increase in applicants disclosing a disability.

Performance against target

8 **Figure 12** shows that:

- ICS met the target (i.e. 2.4% of applicants declared a disability) in 2012 and 2017 but not in the intervening years;
- while not targeted, the percentage of participants declaring a disability has also been below 3%; and
- the percentage of participants declaring a disability has been lower than the percentage of applicants for five out of six years but was 0.1% points greater in 2013.

B Ethnicity

What is the target?

9 The Department set percentage targets for applicants from a number of ethnic groups. The current targets are 83% white, 10% Asian, 3% black, 3% mixed-race and 1% from 'other' backgrounds.

10 Individuals report their ethnicity by choosing the ethnic group that they identify themselves as belonging to in their application form. The declaration is voluntary.

How has the target changed over time?

11 The Department used 2011 census data for 16- to 24-year-olds to set Phase One targets. The Phase One targets (April 2012 to August 2015) were 86% white, 7% Asian, 3% black, 2% mixed-race and 1% from other backgrounds. These were set part-way through the phase as the data were not published at the time the phase launched.

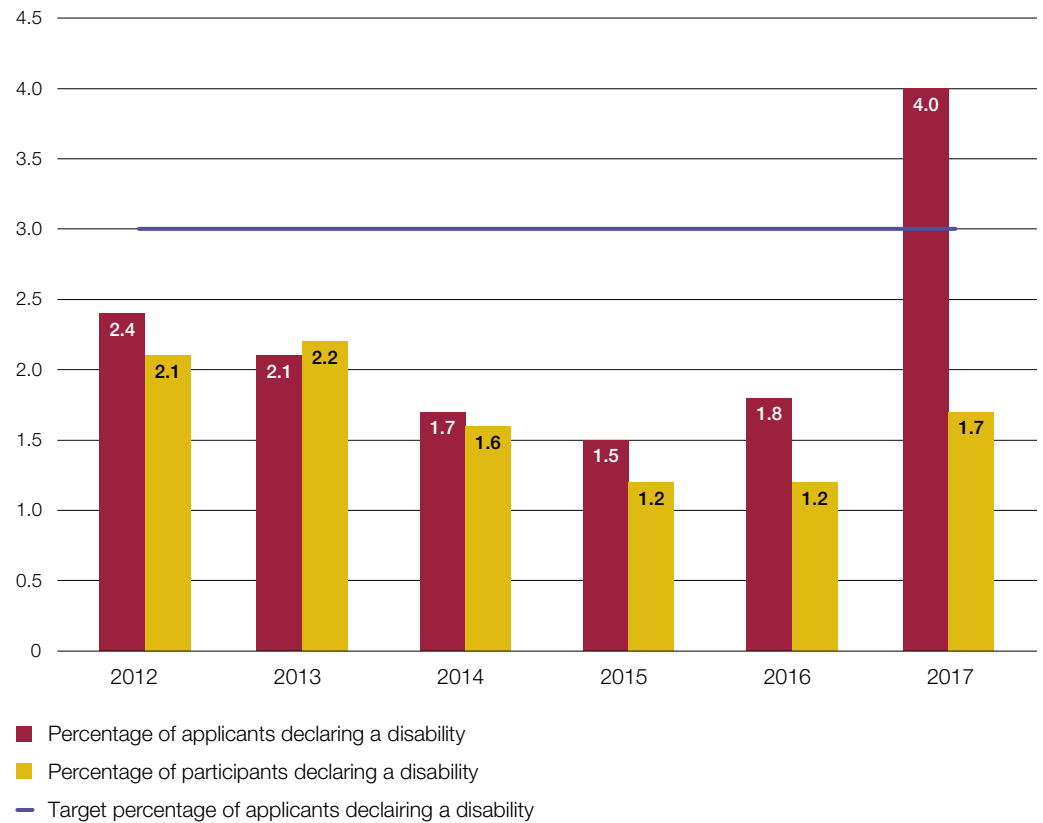
12 For Phase Two, the Department changed targets for applications from white, Asian, and mixed-race backgrounds to 83%, 10%, and 3% respectively, to more accurately reflect the 16- to 24-year-old population. The target for black and 'other' ethnic groups remained unchanged.

Figure 12

Disability: performance against target, 2012 to 2017

Taking into account tolerance levels, ICS has met its target for the number of applicants declaring a disability in 2012 and for the first 10 months of 2017.

Percentage of applicants/participants

**Notes**

- 1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months to October 2017.
- 2 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or chose the option "Prefer not to say".

Source: National Audit Office analysis of applicant and participant data

Performance against target

13 Figures 13 to 17 show that:

- ICS has succeeded in attracting large proportions of applicants from Asian, black, mixed-race and other ethnic groups in relation to the UK population of 16- to 24-year-olds.
- ICS has exceeded the targets for black, mixed-race, and other ethnic groups in every year of the programme. It has exceeded the target for Asian applicants in four of six years. ICS has not met the target for white applicants by between 5.6% points and 9.6% points.
- Since 2013, the percentages of white and mixed-race participants has been higher than that of applicants. This means that applicants from other ethnic groups are less likely to make it through the recruitment process and pre-placement part of the programme.

14 **Figure 13** shows that:

- ICS is yet to reach its targets for white applicants, falling short by between 5.6% points and 9.6% points each year.
- Since 2012 the percentage of white participants has been between 0.6% points and 3.9% points higher than the percentage of white applicants. This means that white applicants have a higher chance of making it through the recruitment process and pre-placement part of the programme than non-white applicants.

Figure 13

Ethnicity: white – performance against target, 2012 to 2017

ICS has never reached its target for white applicants. However the percentage of white participants has been higher than white applicants every year.

Year	Target	Applicants	Applicants versus target ²	Participants	Percentage of white participants compared with white applicants
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
2012	86.0	77.0	●	77.6	Higher
2013	86.0	79.1	●	81.5	Higher
2014	86.0	76.4	●	80.3	Higher
2015	83.0	77.4	●	80.1	Higher
2016	83.0	75.8	●	79.3	Higher
2017 ¹	83.0	77.1	●	78.0	Higher

Notes

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

2 Green rating = target met or exceeded; red rating = below target.

3 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option "Prefer not to say".

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

15 Figure 14 overleaf shows that:

- ICS has reached its target for Asian applicants in four out of six years, despite the increase in target from 7% to 10% in 2015. There has been variance of between minus 1.5% points and plus 2.1% points from the target.
- The percentage of Asian participants has been 0.7% points to 2.7% points lower than the percentage of applicants for every year of ICS. This means they are less likely to make it through the recruitment process and pre-placement part of the programme.

Figure 14

Ethnicity: Asian – performance against target, 2012 to 2017

ICS has met targets for Asian applicants in the three years when the target was 7%, but has missed the target in two of the three years since the target was increased to 10%.

Year	Target	Applicants	Applicants versus target ²	Participants	Percentage of Asian participants compared with Asian applicants
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
2012	7	7.6	●	6.6	Lower
2013	7	7.6	●	6.3	Lower
2014	7	9.1	●	6.7	Lower
2015	10	8.5	●	7.2	Lower
2016	10	10.1	●	7.4	Lower
2017 ¹	10	9.5	●	8.8	Lower

Notes

1 Data for 2017 are for the five months from January to May 2017.

2 Green rating = target met or exceeded; red rating = below target.

3 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option “Prefer not to say”.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

16 Figure 15 shows that:

- ICS has consistently exceeded its targets for black applicants by 3.5% points to 5.1% points in every year of the programme.
- The percentage of black participants has been 0.4% points to 1.4% points lower than the percentage of applicants in every year since 2013. This means that they are generally less likely to make it through the application process.

Figure 15

Ethnicity: black – performance against target, 2012 to 2017

The percentage of black applicants has been more than double the 3% target each year.

Year	Target	Applicants	Applicants versus target ²	Participants	Percentage of black participants compared with black applicants
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
2012	3	7.6	●	7.7	Higher
2013	3	6.5	●	5.1	Lower
2014	3	8.1	●	6.7	Lower
2015	3	7.9	●	6.6	Lower
2016	3	7.6	●	7.0	Lower
2017 ¹	3	7.4	●	7.0	Lower

Notes

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

2 Green rating = target met or exceeded; red rating = below target.

3 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option "Prefer not to say".

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

17 Figure 16 overleaf shows that:

- ICS has consistently exceeded its targets for mixed-race applicants by 1.8% points to 3.1% points in every year of the programme.
- The percentage of mixed-race participants has been 0.4% points to 0.8% points higher than the percentage of applicants in every year since 2013. This means that they are generally more likely to make it through the application process.

18 Figure 17 overleaf shows that:

- ICS has consistently exceeded its targets for applicants from 'other' ethnic groups by 0.1% points to 2.9% points in every year of the programme.
- Apart from 2012, the percentage of participants from 'other' ethnic groups has been 0.1% points to 0.7% points lower than the number of applicants. This means that they are generally less likely to make it through the application process.

Figure 16

Ethnicity: mixed-race – performance against target, 2012 to 2017

ICS has exceeded the targets for mixed-race applicants every year.

Year	Target	Applicants	Applicants versus target ²	Participants	Percentage of mixed-race participants compared with mixed-race applicants
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
2012	2	3.9	●	3.8	Lower
2013	2	4.9	●	5.3	Higher
2014	2	5.1	●	5.7	Higher
2015	3	5.0	●	5.5	Higher
2016	3	5.2	●	5.9	Higher
2017 ¹	3	4.8	●	5.6	Higher

Notes

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

2 Green rating = target met or exceeded; red rating = below target.

3 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option “Prefer not to say”.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

Figure 17

Ethnicity: ‘other’ ethnic groups – performance against target, 2012 to 2017

ICS has met the targets for applicants from ‘other’ ethnic groups every year.

Year	Target	Applicants	Applicants versus target ²	Participants	Percentage of other participants compared with other applicants
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
2012	1	3.9	●	4.4	Higher
2013	1	1.9	●	1.8	Lower
2014	1	1.3	●	0.6	Lower
2015	1	1.2	●	0.7	Lower
2016	1	1.1	●	0.4	Lower
2017 ¹	1	1.2	●	0.6	Lower

Notes

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

2 Green rating = target met or exceeded; red rating = below target.

3 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option “Prefer not to say”.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

C Gender

What is the target?

19 The gender target for Phase Two of ICS is 40% male applicants and 60% female applicants.

How has the target changed over time?

20 ICS was set a target of 49% male and 51% female applicants for the pilot phase and Phase One. These targets reflected 2011 census data for 16- to 24-year-olds.

21 The current target (outlined above) was set following an external review of ICS's diversity targets in October 2015. At that time, the ratio of male:female youth volunteers in the UK volunteering sector was 35:65. The target was adjusted to set a challenging but realistic goal that reflected this trend.

Performance against target

22 **Figure 18** overleaf shows that ICS has not reached its target for male applicants during any programme year. The programme has met or exceeded the actual proportion of male participants (35%) in the overseas volunteering sector three times since 2012.

23 The low proportion of male UK volunteers also has an impact on the gender of in-country volunteers, as they are matched by gender to UK volunteers, so increasing the impact of disparity of UK volunteers.

24 The proportion of male participants against applicants has decreased each year since 2013 by between 0.1% points and 1.6% points. This means that male applicants are less likely than females to make it through the application process.

D Region

What is the target?

25 The Department set targets for the proportion of applicants from each region of the UK. These are based on census data collected in 2011 that reflect the distribution of the 16- to 24-year-old age group around the UK. The targets range from 3% for Northern Ireland to 13% for the South East.

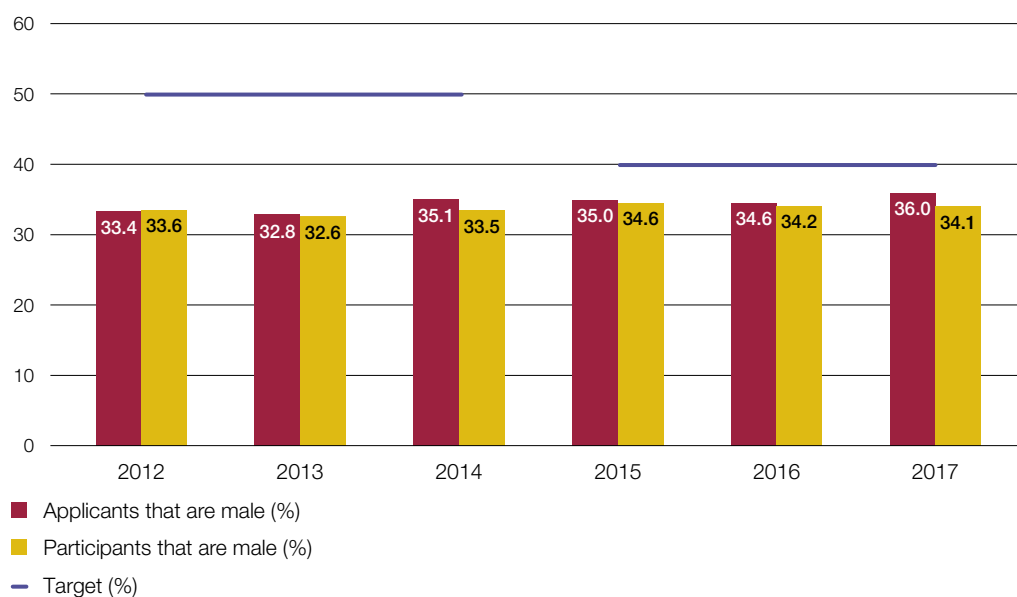
26 Data for this target are collated from postcodes given by applicants on their application form. This may be the address of their parental home, their temporary address while attending higher education or the address at which they are living permanently.

Figure 18

Gender: male performance against target, 2012 to 2017

ICS has never met the target for male applicants

ICS participants that are male (%)

**Notes**

- 1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.
- 2 Our analysis excludes respondents who did not answer or who chose the option "Prefer not to say".

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

How has the target changed over time?

27 The target for each region has stayed the same throughout Phase One and Phase Two, other than disaggregating the target for London & the South East for Phase Two.

28 In Phase One, London and the South East was classified as one region (London & South East) owing to their close relationship. It had a target of 27%. The region was split into two for Phase Two, with London set a target of 13% and the South East set a target of 12%. The rationale for the change was to match the format of the census and other data where the two regions are typically separated out.

Performance against target

29 **Figure 19** overleaf shows that:

- ICS received the highest level of applications from individuals from London and the South East. Between 2012 and 2017, an average of 19% of the total applicants were from London (17% to 21%) compared with a target of 13%. Applications from South East England represented the second-largest group with an average of 14% (13% to 15%).
- The regions with the poorest performance against target were West Midlands, East Midlands, and Scotland.

30 **Figure 20** on page 49 shows that applicants from the South West and South East of England are more likely to make it through the recruitment process and pre-placement part of the programme than those from other regions.

E Socio-economic background

What is the target?

31 There are two targets for the socio-economic diversity of applicants. These are that 9% of applicants should meet three or more of five socio-economic criteria, and that 30% of applicants should meet two or more of those five criteria.

32 The five criteria are:

- the highest household earner's income is less than £20,000;
- the applicant is in receipt of benefits;
- the applicant has been eligible for free school meals at any point;
- the applicant has fewer than five GCSEs at grades A* to C ; and
- the applicant attended schools that fall into the quintile areas for POLAR¹² 1 or 2 classification.

How has the target changed over time?

33 ICS has collated data for participant household income and educational attainment since the programme began in 2012. The data were used for means testing to set the level for volunteers' fundraising contributions. The programme did not start measuring against the broader range of socio-economic indicators it now uses until January 2016, when ICS introduced the two targets for the socio-economic diversity of applicants outlined above.

¹² The POLAR classification looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher (HE) across the UK and shows how this varies by area. POLAR classifies wards into five groups based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter higher education aged 18 or 19. These groups range from quintile 1 areas with the lowest participation (most disadvantaged) up to quintile 5 with the highest rates (most advantaged).

Figure 19

Regional diversity: performance against targets, 2012 to 2017

ICS consistently exceeds its target for the percentage of total applicants from London and the South West. This means that targets for applicants from other regions are often not met

Regions	Target (%)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
South East	13	14 ●	15 ●	14 ●	14 ●	13 ●	14 ●
London	12	21 ●	21 ●	20 ●	18 ●	19 ●	17 ●
North West	11	10 ●	11 ●	11 ●	11 ●	12 ●	12 ●
East of England	9	8 ●	9 ●	8 ●	8 ●	9 ●	9 ●
West Midlands	9	7 ●	7 ●	8 ●	8 ●	8 ●	8 ●
Yorkshire and the Humber	9	9 ●	7 ●	7 ●	7 ●	7 ●	8 ●
East Midlands	8	7 ●	6 ●	6 ●	6 ●	6 ●	6 ●
Scotland	8	6 ●	6 ●	7 ●	7 ●	7 ●	7 ●
South West	8	9 ●	10 ●	9 ●	9 ●	9 ●	8 ●
Wales	5	4 ●	3 ●	4 ●	5 ●	4 ●	5 ●
North East	4	3 ●	3 ●	4 ●	3 ●	4 ●	4 ●
Northern Ireland	3	2 ●	2 ●	2 ●	3 ●	2 ●	2 ●

● Met or exceeded target

● Did not meet target

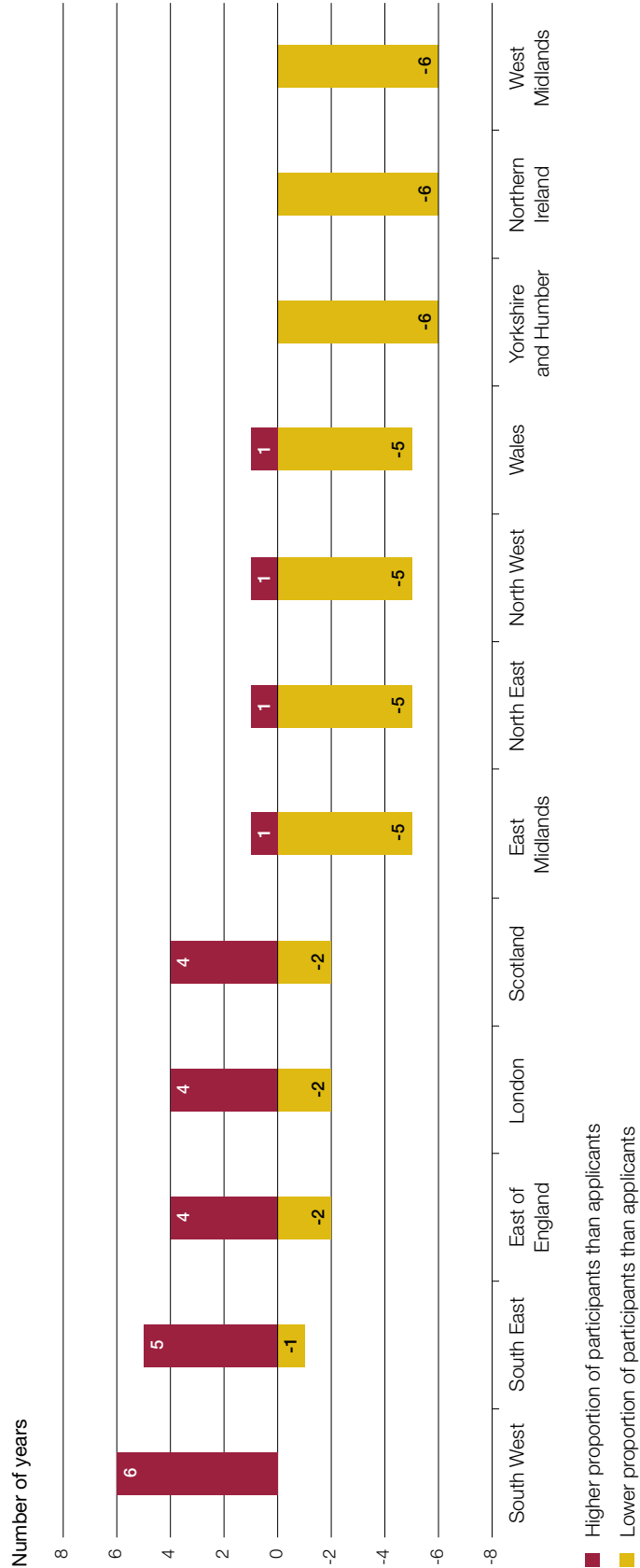
Note

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant and participant data

Figure 20
Regional diversity of participants compared with applicants, 2012 to 2017

There is a wide variation in the conversion of applicants to participants between regions



Note

1 Data for 2017 are for the five months from January to May 2017.

Source: National Audit Office analysis based on data provided by the International Citizen Service

Performance against target

34 **Figure 21** on page 51 shows that ICS has been successful in reaching its socio-economic targets.

- It met the target for 9% of applicants to fulfil three or more of the criteria in 2016 and 2017 (12.3% and 11.6% respectively).
- It met the target for 30% of applicants to fulfil two or more of the criteria in 2016 and 2017 (33.8% and 33.3% respectively).

35 **Figure 22** on page 52 shows that:

- Of the five criteria, the most common indicator met was for the annual income of the highest household earner being under £20,000 (48.9% in 2016 and 42.0% in 2017).
- Just over a quarter of applicants who responded received free school meals at sometime; and just over a quarter attended a school at age 16 fell into a POLAR 1 or 2 category (signifying a reduced likelihood of them completing higher education).
- Under 12% of applicants received state benefits or had fewer than five GCSEs at grades A* to C.

36 The socio-economic dataset used for monitoring performance is incomplete:

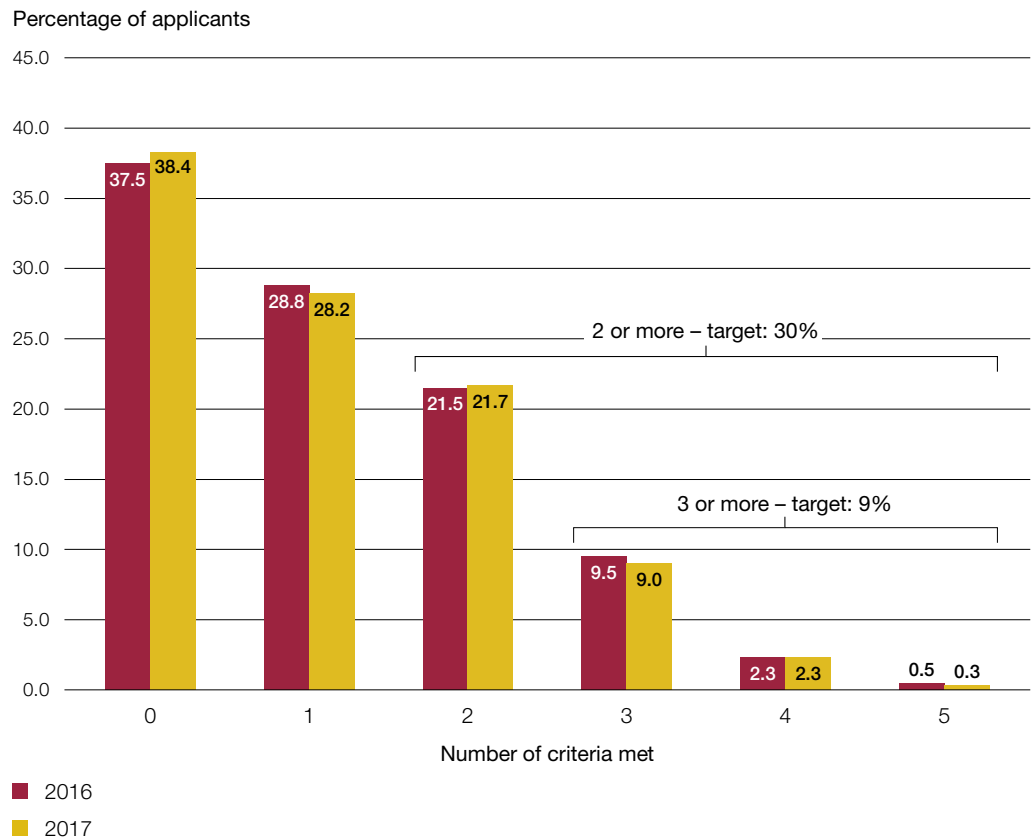
- In 2016, ICS captured complete socio-economic data for 40.3% of applicants.
- In 2017 to October, ICS has complete socio-economic data for 38.6% of applicants.

37 The low percentage of applicants completing all five socio-economic questions reduces the quality of these data.

Figure 21

Socio-economic targets: percentage of applicants meeting between none and five socio-economic criteria, 2016 and 2017

In 2017, 11.6% of applicants met three or more criteria against a target of 9%

**Note**

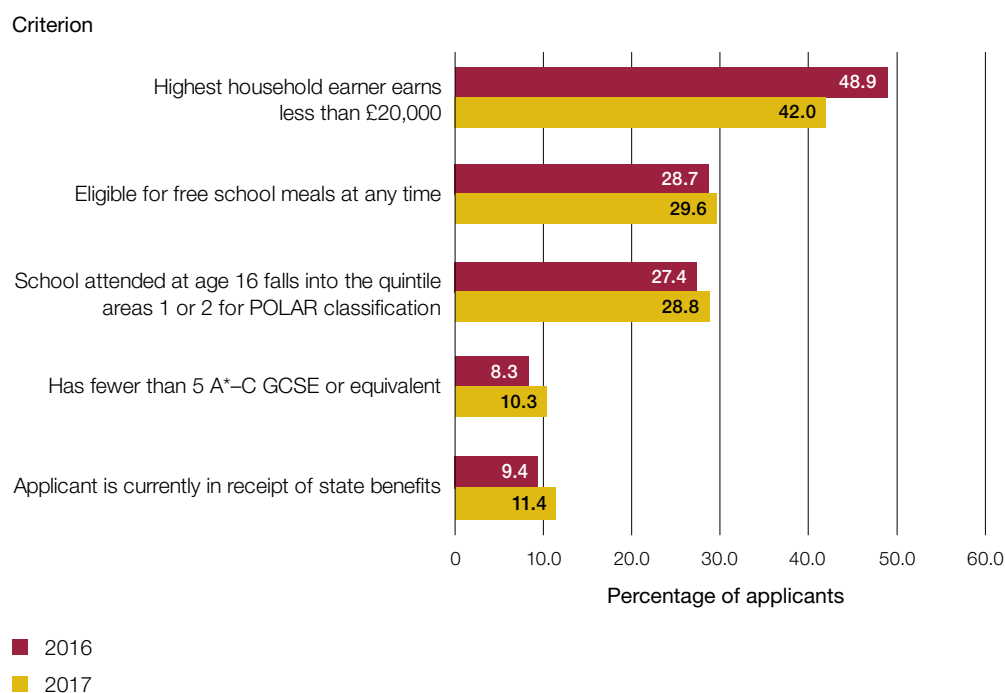
1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant data

Figure 22

Socio-economic targets: percentage of 2016 and 2017 applicants meeting individual indicators

The most common indicator that applicants declared was that the highest household earner earns less than £20,000 per year

**Note**

1 Data for 2017 are for the ten months from January to October 2017.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of International Citizen Service applicant data

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