

Let's see how you might use these **lines of attack** with the motion we discussed in the last chapter: 'This house would make it compulsory for all 18 year olds to do a year of community service.'

1 The problem addressed by the motion doesn't exist.

Young people already have a great many useful skills, which they have learnt at school and elsewhere, and will continue to learn in further study. Many of them already work with people less fortunate than themselves; most schools have some sort of charity outreach, and the very popular Duke of Edinburgh scheme has a compulsory community service unit. 93% of young people attend non-selective state schools which introduce them to a whole range of people unlike themselves. So compulsory community service would be addressing a problem which doesn't exist.

2 The definition of the problem is wrong.

Young people are not lacking in skills and social solidarity because they don't do community service; it's because schools are too focused on competitive public exams, which teach a narrow set of skills and pit schools and individuals against each other to move up league tables / get university places. The exam system is the source of the problem you have identified.

3 The action proposed by the motion won't lead to a solution of the problem.

It's a good idea for young people to learn new skills and work with people less fortunate than themselves, but most of the community service is likely to be low skill activities like picking up litter or cleaning toilets, which will not teach them anything new or introduce them to the people they are supposed to be helping.

4 The action is impractical.

There are about half a million young people in any given age cohort in the UK. Funding them all to do community service would be vastly expensive; organising them would require paying many more people. What would be done with young people who refused to take part / didn't turn up? Chasing them up / sanctioning them would also be time-consuming and expensive. There simply

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aren't enough community service projects in existence to keep all these people busy; we'd have to create unnecessary work for them. Moreover, more privileged / well connected families would find ways to get their children out of having to do the community service, undermining the purpose of introducing more privileged young people to those less fortunate than themselves.

5 Even if the action works, it is inherently wrong in itself.

While community service is a good thing, it is a serious infringement of human rights to force people into it unwillingly. The government telling people what to do for a whole year of their lives is tyrannical, the sort of thing that only happens in dictatorships. It is a kind of slavery.

6 The action will only cause more problems in the long run.

Making community service compulsory would cause so much resentment amongst young people that they would never want to do any voluntary or charitable work ever again; charities and voluntary organisations would suffer as a result. That resentment would mean that the work done as part of the community service would be done much worse than that done currently by genuine volunteers, and charities and voluntary organisations would suffer from that as well.

7 The solution proposed is inherently wrong in itself.

A society where everyone has to do the same thing between the ages of 18 and 19 is not one we want to live in. It will create a uniformity of thinking and a regimented atmosphere that would be oppressive. Compulsory shared activities, however admirable in themselves, are the hallmark of dictatorships, not democracies.

8 There's a different, more important problem.

There is a problem with divisions in society between those who are less fortunate and more fortunate, and also in the lack of purpose, direction and skills that many young people have. However, this is caused by the unfair economic system, which ensures that

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