



YOUNG ADULTS WITH TROUBLED LIVES

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Introduction to the project

This project focuses on the delivery of services aimed at young adults aged 16-25 with complex needs as they make the transition to adulthood. It aims to:

- find out what causes young people to experience problems in their transition to adulthood;
- identify what services are available to support them in that transition;
- assess the effectiveness of these services; and
- agree practical actions to improve these services.

This project forms part of the Social Exclusion Unit's current work programme, which aims to ensure that public services are delivered effectively to the most excluded groups in society.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was aimed at practitioners working with young adults. We have subsequently run focus groups with young adults themselves to ensure a user-focus to our work. The questionnaire was run as an e-questionnaire between 21 October and 15 December 2004. We targeted the questionnaire at over 200 organisations.

The questionnaire formed part of a wider programme of research. This included:

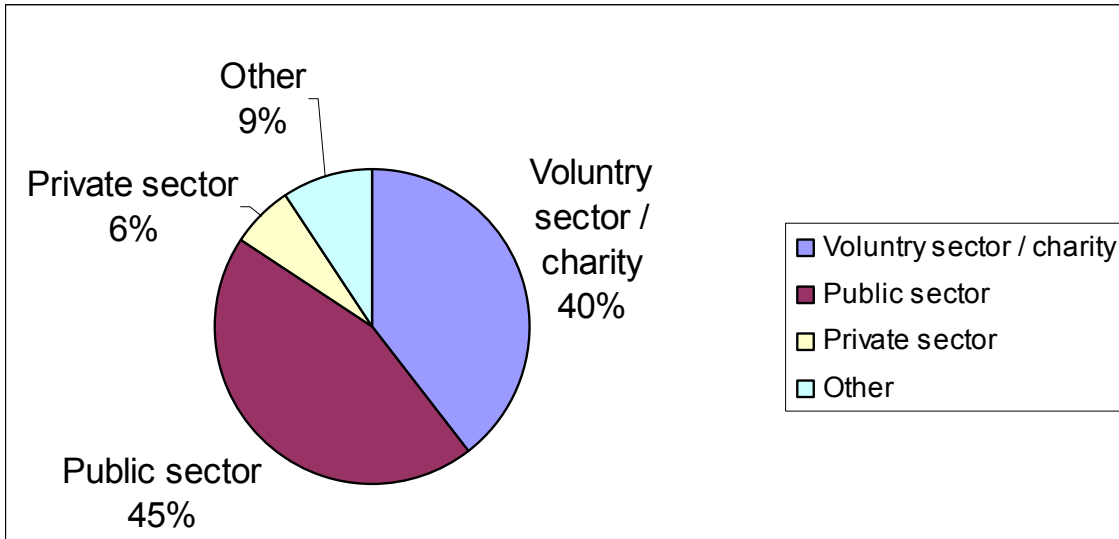
- a literature review on the subject of the *thinking and behaviour* of young adults;
- regional road shows held in Truro, Sheffield, Newcastle, Cambridge, Reading and Stoke during autumn 2004. The Young Adults team held workshops at each of the road shows and the evidence gathered has fed into the report;
- an advisory group of practitioners who work with young adults;
- a cross-governmental officials' steering group.

We will continue to work with people and organisations that have an interest in this project.

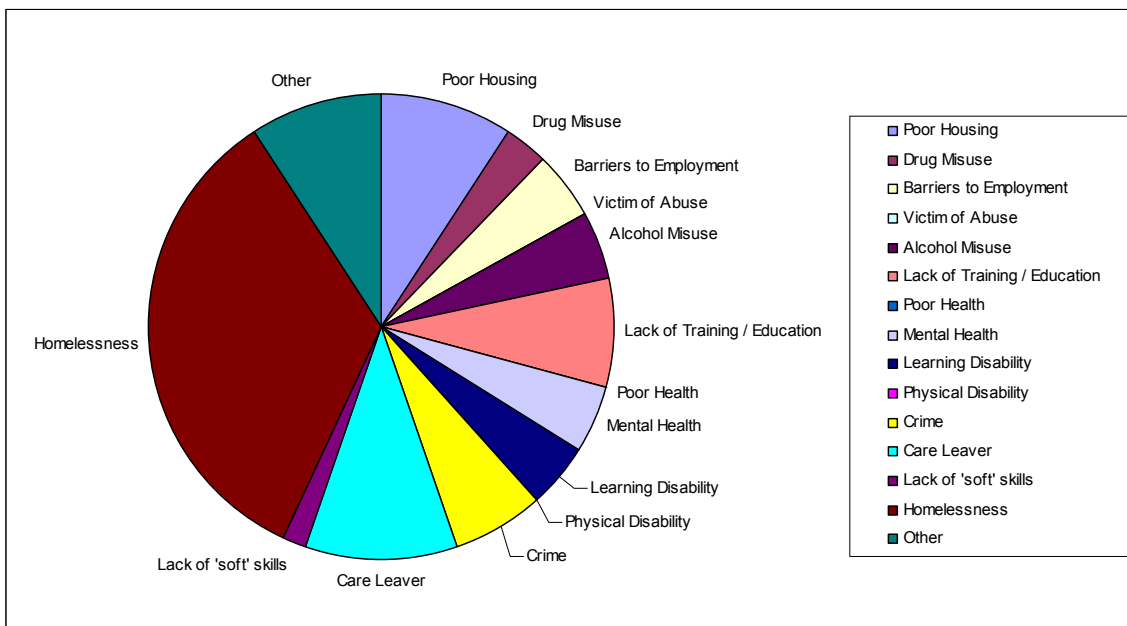
Who responded?

129 completed responses were submitted, either on-line or by post / email.

Respondent profile



Primary reason young adults contact support services



Key findings

The top messages raised were:

- **Multiple needs:** 98 per cent of respondents claimed that the young people accessing their support services had more than one problem or need.
- **Long term support/continuity** – the ability to provide long term programmes and support. Short term schemes were regarded as valuable but not for those with the most complex needs.

- **Building self-esteem and improving soft skills** is just as important as gaining qualifications or meeting rigid milestones.
- **Homelessness/Housing** is a massive problem for young adults - see pie chart on previous page.
 - *“Ultimately, the barriers such as soft skills and the background that a young person has come from, has a strong influence on their chances of success, taking into account social factors such as familial support.”*
 - *“Lack of soft skills is one of the major barriers to employment for our clients - for example they are often not 'alarm clock ready', or take directive orders...”*

Next Steps

Soft Skills

We hope to explore how Government can measure 'distance travelled' on the roads to hard outcomes. We are exploring how soft outcomes can be used to measure success in the forthcoming Activity Agreement pilots. A meeting of practitioners already using such measures in the VCS has been convened to feed in ideas to Department for Education and Skills on this issue.

There is also scope to explore the role of soft outcomes in Department for Work and Pensions policies such as New Deal for Young People or Home Office work with those at risk of offending or drug use.

Multiple Needs

We worked with the Youth Green Paper team on the proposals for an Integrated Youth Support Service to address the needs of the most vulnerable people up to the age of 25 in a holistic way. We intend to continue working with DfES on further guidance on the lead professional role for young people with complex needs, to be published later this year.

Housing issues

We want to focus on the priority issue of housing and the high incidence of multiple needs amongst our client group by using housing/homelessness services as a gateway to other services.

Housing or homelessness may not be the only problem that these young people have to deal with but it would appear to be the one that finally brings them into contact with a support service. Housing/homelessness agencies should be prepared for this - they should have links with other agencies in their area; they should have information about other services; they should help the young person access these services; they should do a needs assessment which can be used/ shared by other agencies. This would help to eliminate one of the key issues which young people have raised with us: that they have to go to a large number of agencies to sort out their problems and that they have to tell their story at each visit.

Long-term support and continuity

Linked to levers and incentives work being undertaken - a unit-wide issue and being developed as part of the Unit-wide report.

The Unit will publish an action plan from this project in 2006, which will reflect the findings of our consultative work.

The report will be part of an integrated series of reports, including reports on excluded older people, disadvantaged adults who move frequently and inclusion through innovation (information and communication technologies).

This autumn the Unit is also publishing an interim report on service delivery for disadvantaged adults which will set out the key themes emerging from the work programme of the Social Exclusion Unit as a whole. Final actions from across Government will be published in 2006.

All reports will be available at www.socialexclusion.gov.uk

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