

Annex A – Covering Template for Responses

Please complete the attached cover sheet when sending evidence, indicating the set of questions to which a response is being provided and contact details of the person for any follow-up queries.

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Youth Work Convenor/National Editor
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	Community and Youth Workers' Union (CYWU).
Postal address	CYWU, Unit 302, The Argent Centre, 60 Frederick Street, Birmingham, B1 3HS
Telephone number	
Email	

	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	
Review of disabled children	
Strategy for youth services	X
Review of high cost, high harm families	

What is the current distribution of youth services and youth engagement activities available across the country? How is that likely to evolve following the Youth Green Paper?

There are varied levels of Youth Service delivery and youth engagement activities available across the country. These range from superb and comprehensive through to almost non-existent. The levels and range are determined primarily (but not exclusively) by the following factors:

- The level of funding given to each service by the local authority.
- The support for youth work (which includes youth participation work), by politicians and senior council officers.
- The previous levels of investment in the Youth Service.
- The methodology of youth work delivery (the quality and level of provision is higher in authorities with dedicated and clearly defined Youth Services rather than those with unclear or 'generic' delivery as part of wider services).
- The number of professionally qualified and experienced youth workers.
- The availability of suitable 'young people friendly' premises.
- The level of involvement of young people, workers and managers and their commitment to delivering high quality services.
- The organisation and clarity offered, or not, by voluntary sector providers.
- The range of commercial providers of activities and their willingness to be 'young people friendly' as opposed to focussing on the greater spending power of adults.

Currently services are evolving in different ways. The Youth Matters agenda, coupled with Next Steps and the introduction of the Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds, has enabled many local authorities to refocus their commitments to the Youth Service and other provision for young people. Despite this there remains a worrying trend to yet again cut funding to Youth Services by many authorities. Where this happens (for example in Northamptonshire where they have abandoned their historical youth service in pursuit of a purely 'commissioning model') we are seeing services being deemed as ineffective and contributing little to the five outcomes, by inspection regimes such as OFSTED and JAR inspection teams, (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewjar&leaid=928&reporttype=ys&year=2006>).

Some authorities have tried combining the Youth Service with other departments or agencies. This happened in Cumbria a few years ago when they merged their Youth Service with Connexions. It didn't take long before redundancies were issued (so losing a wealth of expertise in working with hard to reach young people), and soon Youth Workers were assuming the roles of Personal Advisers and focussing almost exclusively on NEETS. This left a void in the universal and preventative provision Cumbria Youth Service previously delivered well. Since then Cumbria has taken the Youth Service back within the local authority and has began reinvesting to the benefit of all young people in their communities. Other services were managed well and resourced close to the indicative spend first listed in 'Transforming Youth

Work' can be seen to be making an effective contribution to the five outcomes. Local Authority Youth Services are also increasingly being seen as the appropriate services to more fully engage with the Government's youth engagement/youth participation agendas, with many heading up the authority's Youth Councils, Youth Parliaments and 'Hear By Right' agendas.

Building on the Youth Green Paper, is there more that could be done to improve and sustain the effectiveness in the delivery of existing services and activities?

There are two relatively easy and straightforward actions that would make seed change improvement to the effectiveness of the delivery of existing services and activities. Firstly, local authorities should be instructed to spend all of the funding that central government allocates to youth work on the correct purposes. This would at a stroke increase the level of provision significantly and ensure a consistency of service across the country and reduce the post code lottery for young people. It is our view that only when this consistency of resourcing is established, can equitable comparisons between services and their effectiveness be made.

Secondly, the Youth Service should be given a statutory base to ensure it gets parity of status with the other elements of the new children and young people's services such as education and social care. This would guarantee a consistency of service nationally and prevent certain authorities from cutting or devaluing these services and would ensure that all the positive aspirations of the Youth Matters agenda could be delivered for all young people across the country. In addition an increase in the proportion of skilled and qualified full time youth workers, up to the widely agreed and applauded level of 1 to 400 young people aged 13 to 19 (Resourcing Excellent Youth Services; DFES 2002) would greatly improve the effectiveness of existing services.

Beyond that, many of the agencies and other departments working with and alongside young people are accessible only during daytimes and more often during school holidays. This can in part explain why many Connexions Services and others that provide inflexible opening times and places, often struggle to fully carry out their respective remits. The Youth Service has historically been, and is increasingly providing services for and with young people at times they determine, in venues they shape and develop and through programmes they choose, monitor and evaluate.

What are the particular barriers faced by different groups of young people, including disabled young people, in accessing services, and what are the policy issues that arise?

Providing the appropriate access to services whatever their configuration is surely critical to their potential success and effectiveness (see above).

The most potent barriers to young people gaining access to services are availability and awareness. The Youth Service and their partners have been

taking a leading role in enabling young people to gain access to services and in many areas there are participative youth forums for young people with disabilities which have contributed to making all services more accessible.

There are clearly some building access issues; under investment in many youth centres and other premises supposedly designed with young people in mind, has resulted in poor conditions and buildings not being fit for purpose. The Youth Service has prioritised the challenges of SENDA and made continuous improvements but central government and local authorities do need to make further resources available to complete this work.

Another key factor to consider when we analyse why some young people access and others don't is the knowledge, skills and essentially the attitude of the staff they encounter when first using a service. Young people (and particularly young people with complex needs) are more likely to utilise premises and access services where they do not feel pressured by over-riding agendas. Many young people enter Youth Centres and drop in facilities knowing that they can freely associate with their peers, take part in recreational and educational activities they choose, and can seek advice on their wants and needs when they feel it appropriate and with who they choose.

Young people and especially those from some particular groups do sometimes appear to lack an awareness of what services are on offer. The Youth Offer should be a positive development which will assist access to a wider range of services and for a wider range of young people.

What is the national and international evidence on the effectiveness of different types of services and activities in terms of better life outcomes?

Whilst it is difficult to make exact comparisons between different countries in this field, the most useful learning can be drawn from Western European neighbours. Where central and local government has invested in statutory provision, young people have benefited from better life outcomes and have been able to contribute productively to their society.

The United States is certainly not a good exemplar in this field. Much provision is underdeveloped and lacking focus. The British system of youth work and a structured, publicly funded Youth Service is seen as a model of good practice by many Americans involved in youth work and related professions and is indeed, envied by them.

There have been significant changes and improvements to youth work since that time with a far greater emphasis being placed on social education, young people's involvement and challenging and positive outcomes. There is a body of research that endorses this change and improvement – recently the D.f.E.S

commissioned research on the impact of youth work by Merton et al, (Research Report 606), the OfSTED guidance on Effective Youth Work and a plethora of other recent anecdotal works. Youth Matters noted: 'there are many examples of outstanding (youth work) practice across the country making a dramatic difference to young people's lives'. The issue is patently not the effectiveness of high quality youth work but the failure of local authorities to provide a consistency of services across the country. There was even research by Coopers, Lybrand, Deloitte which acknowledged the very good value for money achieved by good quality youth work.

Should we refer to the OFSTED enhanced Youth Service inspections which have taken place alongside JAR inspections over the last year, there is a constant theme linking effective management of good resources with the increasing contribution youth work and Youth Services make to the wider five outcomes.

How can we best combine demand led provision for young people with provision that is planned and structured to have the best impact on outcomes for children and young people?

By carrying out effective needs analysis (either for individuals, groups, or communities) then responding accordingly through a range of methodologies and programmes. The experience of practitioners and managers in this field over many decades shows that there are significant areas of provision and activities that will both respond to young people's expressed needs and meet a structured social educational curriculum.

There are certain activities and curriculum areas that young people will consistently demand – social activity, music and arts activities, information and advice on a wide range of issues (health, housing, relationships, education, employment, etc), sports and recreational activities, involvement in decision making, to name but some. Skilled and experienced youth work practitioners are adept at structuring the curriculum of the youth clubs and projects to both meet these demands and develop a wider effective social educational programme to improve young people's life opportunities. In the same way, skilled and experienced managers are key to the monitoring, evaluation, standard setting and performance of projects and services. The main barriers to this being universally available have been outlined above.

What more can we do to support and enable young people to exert a strong demand side influence on provision? What would we expect in return from young people – their rights and responsibilities?

Where Youth Services and other agencies are managed and resourced effectively, young people actively engage in identifying and assessing their needs – demand side influence on provision, rather than having them predetermined by others through generalisation. The move towards this high quality of service being available across the country will ensure that all young

people can become more involved. The Youth Service is one of few, and the major agency that is able to make contact and build positive relationships with those young people who have lost contact or been failed by other services. Having a totally voluntary engagement, this relationship enables youth workers to build mature and longstanding links which result in young people becoming actively involved in decision making and thus a strong 'demand side influence on provision'. Many young people, through these processes, progress from merely looking at addressing their own needs, to looking at solutions for other young people and other sections of their community.

It is our view that there has been widespread confusion over recent years between determining what young people 'want' and what they 'need'. Merely asking young people what they need, will more often than not be met with responses stating what they desire. If a young person is approached and asked "How would you like to chat about why you get into so much trouble in the village", most workers would be sent packing. By providing what young people want and are attracted to, and combining that with good youth work staff who build positive yet challenging, relationships on a continuing basis, the worker(s) will often find themselves after a few weeks or months, listening to the young person sharing the information voluntarily and on the basis of trust. It is at that point the worker(s) can begin to look at creative ways of addressing the needs, whatever they may be. Merely providing the attractive activity without the skilled staff engaged in needs assessment will certainly have a less beneficial effect in the medium and long term.

The tensions between provision of high quality, social educational , life improving services and the short term superficial attractions of commercially led trends will need to be resolved sensibly. If the commitment is made by service providers to involve young people, and the knowledge, skills and attitude of organisations and their staff are available, young people will take their responsibilities very seriously.

What principles and priorities should guide the allocation of current and future resources? And who do we need to target?

As previously stated, a major principle should be that those resources identified and allocated for work with young people should be spent on this purpose. Whilst it is always important to target appropriate levels of resourcing to work specifically with those young people with most complex needs, if funding streams are diverted away from universal, open access generic provision, then the numbers of young people who will develop more complex and costly needs, due to a lack of suitable preventative interventions, will inevitably rise. We see this on a micro scale in many communities where our members work. Where there is a well skilled and resourced Youth Service working in partnership with a *flexible, responsive and suitably skilled* Connexions Service, Youth Offending Team, Social Services or Third Sector provision, then young people have their needs met far more comprehensively and indeed, earlier than in many similar areas where the youth work provision

is poor or non-existent, and where the other agencies employ an inflexible approach or don't intervene appropriately or early enough.

Whilst some young people have need of intensive Youth Service support throughout their adolescence, others may only need short-term specific interventions (often as crucial to them and their social development at the stage they have need of it). There should therefore be enough funding available to provide a universally accessible service that all young people can take advantage of when they choose to (recent research has shown that, even with the patchy and inconsistent level of provision by some local authorities, over 70% of young people do have contact with the Youth Service at some stage during their adolescence).

In addition to this, there should be both funding and skilled staffing available to meet the needs of specifically targeted groups. It should however also be noted that many youth workers and all Youth Services already work with both universal groups and targeted groups as part of their regular work. It is also the case that young people, in need of additional support, regularly come to the Youth Service initially as a social opportunity and then seek, or are identified as in need of this extra intervention. If there is no, or a much-reduced, universal service these young people may well not get the services they need and deserve.

What measures and milestones need to be in place to ensure that performance can be assessed and delivery monitored at a local level.

There are already effective monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance processes in place in most local authorities both for their own services and those that are delivered by the voluntary sector on their behalf. The best of these could easily be disseminated, shared and adapted as required as the demands of the work alter over time. These processes will only ever be as effective as the management regimes that oversee them and the working terms and conditions that recognise the diversity of delivery. With accurate needs analysis, clear planning tools, realistic project or management plans, objective assessment and self-assessment mechanisms, all services will be able to deliver to the quality needed. That is so long as the quality of new staff with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude is not compromised or diluted.

We are confident that with appropriate resourcing coupled with clarity of management with appropriate terms and conditions for the workforce; we will not only see an improvement in young people's services, but a continuous improvement in those services.

Supplementary questions posed as part of the 'call for evidence':

- **What are the barriers and enablers of effective Third Sector provision, including statutory commissioning capability?**

There needs to be a balance between the involvement of the Third Sector and that of local authorities in service delivery. Just commissioning out significant parts of the local authority service to the Third Sector has been shown not to work (Cumbria, Northamptonshire, Walsall, Bromley etc). Past experiences have shown the damage this causes and the enormous costs involved in rectifying and repairing the damage. To enable effective involvement, the Third Sector should have the capacity to deliver and be prepared to operate to the appropriate standards and to good and equal employment practices. This includes employing staff on the correct terms and conditions and with the skills and experience necessary to deliver the best possible service to young people. Whilst The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services sits on the employers' side of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth Workers, not enough Third Sector youth organisations demand that their staff are suitably qualified or paid for the work they are employed to do. Many local authorities are addressing this by insisting that grant aid is conditional on suitably qualified staff delivering the work and that the necessary policies and working practices are in place within those organisations. This is resulting in more consistent delivery in parts of that sector and therefore better outcomes for the young people they engage with. The relationship between the Third Sector and local authorities needs to be one of partnership and not competition.

Crucial to achieving the desire to provide consistent services of high quality to young people, is the need for consistent inspection regimes for whoever provides the service. This clearly is not in place at the moment. Some of our members report that they are never subject to inspection regimes.

- **What can be done to improve the ability of universal provision to identify and provide a service to those with greater needs?**

Where there is an effective and well resourced universal service staff are able to identify those young people with greater needs and work with more specialist agencies in meeting them, as outlined above. However, flexibility and accessibility are key factors as stated above, when referring to other agencies. Young people's services need to move away from their often historic and staff-friendly working times, if they are to be successful in responding more quickly to young people's needs. A youth worker identifying significant and complex needs at a Friday evening youth centre or street based youth work session, may often have to wait till the following week for responses from others. In the meantime the young person remains vulnerable. We should build on the best practice. Youth workers are very effective at multi agency and partnership working in young people's best interests, despite being seen by many as of lower status. The central involvement of the Youth Service in the developing Youth Matters agenda (rather than a peripheral role) would ensure improvements in this aspect of the work.

- **Which projects and programmes in the last five years have had a proven and sustained impact and brought innovation to delivery of services for young people?**

Many of the projects our members work in have proved innovative and made a sustained impact to young people, schools and the wider community. Many of these have been recognised by various Government departments over recent years. Youth workers and young people working around racism have received the Philip Lawrence award. Youth workers managing and delivering a full time alternative school education programme for those at risk of exclusion, for a consortium of schools in Devon (the Chances Educational Support Service) have received praise from the DFES. Many of our workers have enabled Connexions companies and others to engage with young people in the formation and development of their services.

Much of this work when costed provides society with substantial savings by preventing young people with clearly identified needs, with solutions and interventions before their behaviour escalates and requires more costly intervention.

The processes by which the Youth Service has enabled young people to implement the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital funds have also been heralded as best practice in many localities, by Government Offices and others.

Should you wish to receive more examples of innovative and sustained work please contact us and we shall ask our membership to provide the evidence.

All these projects have as common factors high quality youth work practice delivered by skilled youth workers, the active involvement of young people in decision making and positive outcomes that have enhanced their lives.

- **What encourages young people to try new and different kinds of activities from those they already do?**

Trust, solid relationships with key staff and feeling safe. The enthusiasm and encouragement of skilled, trained staff whose starting point is the young person as a person rather than the young person with a problem. A workforce that recognises that all young people are not the same. The availability of accessible information and publicity in a format that is 'young people friendly' is also helpful.

- **What evidence is there of the benefits that arise from young people's involvement in design and provision of their activities? What evidence is there of how outcomes have improved as a result?**

Being asked to contribute to the design, delivery and evaluation of services (using appropriate language) has time and time again raised young people's self esteem. Offering them positions of responsibility gives them confidence, as does trusting them to achieve and stretching them. Young people tell us this directly. A range of research shows that young people benefit considerably from involvement in the design and provision of their activities. This involvement leads both to them achieving better outcomes and contributes to their greater participation in their wider communities in adult life.

- **What attracts people to the youth work workforce? What is less attractive about membership of this workforce?**

Many are attracted to become youth workers for the following key reasons:

- An opportunity to contribute positively to improving young people's lives and to effect real change.
- A philosophical commitment to the values and processes of youth work.
- A desire to 'put something back' into society; often the case with former youth centre/project users who start volunteering then engage in training, eventually become professional youth workers themselves.
- A desire for an enjoyable, rewarding, varied and even life changing career.

Less attractive features include:

- The work can be stressful, often taking place during unsocial hours.
- Youth work is seemingly not valued as highly as other comparable professions.
- The work is poorly paid in relation to other comparable professions.
- The service appears open to political whims in terms of funding and support.
- Youth workers have to constantly act as advocates for young people in a society that neither values nor supports them.

