

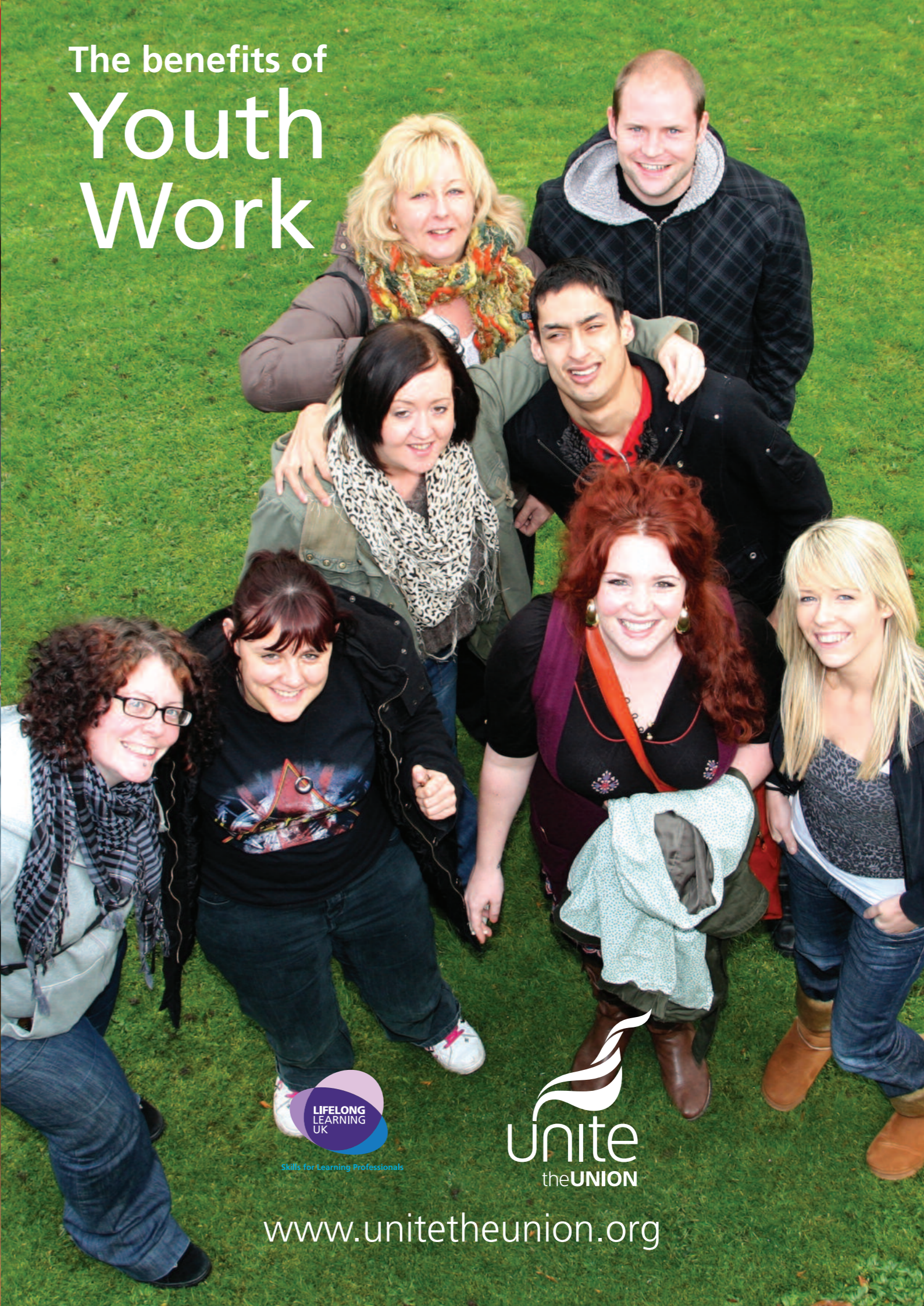


All pictures: Ade Marsh



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The benefits of Youth Work



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“The main objective
of youth work
is to provide opportunities for
young people
to shape
their own futures¹”



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“ Youth work is neither
social care
nor formal
teaching ”



Introduction

Within the broad spectrum of lifelong learning youth work has played a vital part. Its benefits to young people and closeness to their concerns mean that it is a profession often with insufficient public profile. Yet as this report so clearly shows it has a significant impact, is highly valued by young people and is a very cost effective form of delivery.

Youth work is based on dialogue and relationship building. It is a sophisticated method of achieving personal and social development amongst young people. It was within youth work that the first concepts of interagency working were born and the need for greater integration of services was advocated.

It is now essential within the context of integrated services that the role of youth work is fully appreciated and nurtured. It really can make such a difference.

LLUK has worked closely with the field to establish the national occupational standards for youth work and we are confident that these have the full support of youth workers and employers throughout the sector. They provide guidance when planning service delivery, assistance in drawing up job descriptions and in understanding the unique contribution that youth work makes. We hope as local authority and voluntary organisations continue to invest in this vital area of provision for young people that our standards will become increasingly helpful tools alongside this important report which unequivocally sets out why youth work works so well.

David Hunter,
Chief Executive,
Lifelong Learning UK,

March 2010.

Acknowledgements

To Young people, youth workers, youth work organisations and youth services and all those who keep the practice of youth work strong

Written by
Viv Mckee
Carolyn Oldfield
Jo Poultney

Youth work is the longest established profession within the new integrated youth support services and beyond in the many voluntary organisations that care for and seek to educate and empower young people. Originally the Youth Service, a partnership between local authority and voluntary providers described itself as being 'in the service of youth.' An internationally admired profession and service was established throughout the UK.

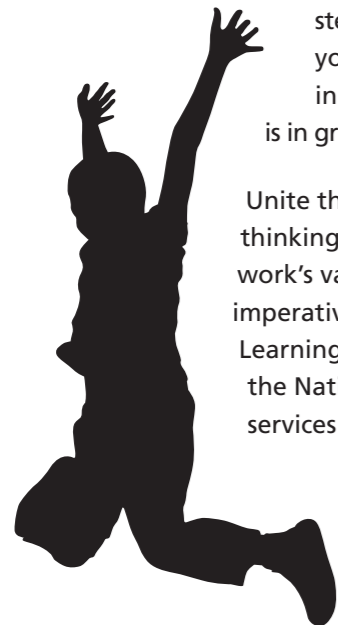
The profession has created clear academic benchmarks for training, robust validation systems over that training, national JNC terms and conditions for all those working full and part time in the field, strong occupational standards, a profound value base and an unparalleled, though, undemonstrative popularity with the public and young people.

From the outset the JNC professional job grading criteria included criteria for interagency working. Youth workers were at the forefront of seeking to create greater interagency collaboration to benefit young people. This still remains a vital element of professional training.

Youth work is neither social care nor formal teaching. It is an intervention that combines elements of both in the context of creating learning and supportive opportunities for young people. It is different also from social pedagogy as practiced in many parts of mainland Europe. It creates opportunities for free association and fun, empowerment and enfranchisement and critical thinking. For hundreds and thousands of young people youth workers are the main trusted adult in their lives outside of their families, for many they are the only trusted adult. Youth workers deserve the utmost respect and support.

With all of the political and professional guarantees that have been given to secure a separate professional specialism of youth work, this is now a critical time to again assert the importance of what youth workers do. Through their voluntary relationship with young people youth workers are able to embark upon journeys in a partnership that has enormous behavioural, academic, psychological and economic benefits. Through group work and steady relationship building over sustained periods of contact, youth work seeks in a unique way to enhance the best that is in every young person. It is a cost effect method and one that is in great demand and which is ignored and underfunded at our peril.

Unite the union was keen to put together some of the latest best thinking on the importance of youth work to demonstrate youth work's value across a wide range of policy initiatives and political imperatives. We are very grateful for the support of Lifelong Learning UK in doing this and the authors of this document at the National Youth Agency. We are equally keen to support local services and voluntary organisations in developing youth work provision. Please do not hesitate to get in contact doug.nicholls@unitetheunion.com.



Section 1

Why youth work?

Young people matter today and are also our future. Never before have they been so high on the public agenda – positively and negatively. Never before has so much space or resource been afforded directly to young people themselves to speak about their concerns, interests and aspirations. There is still, however, more to be done before all young people achieve their full potential. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in considering the latest report from the UK, welcomed progress but made 120 recommendations on vital areas where the UK is still failing to meet international standards on the treatment of children and young people. These included acting in the best interests of children and the negative portrayal of children and young people from disadvantaged groups.² The recession offers an immediate threat: there is little doubt that those young people without skills and qualifications will be most vulnerable in the labour market. Indeed, the latest labour market survey shows that unemployment is growing fastest among 18 to 24 year-olds.³

We want the best for our young people. We want them to have stable homes, caring families, good food on the table. We want them to have access to the best opportunities for learning, personalised to meet their diverse needs, interests and aspirations, so that they:

- succeed in education and continue participating in learning at least until the age of 18;
- take part in activities that develop their resilience and the social and emotional skills they need for life, and enjoy their leisure time;
- make a real contribution to society, using their energy and dynamism to bring about change;
- be emotionally and physically healthy and able to cope with the demands of adolescence and becoming an adult; and
- grow up in a safe and supportive environment.⁴

Young people, however, only spend 15 per cent of their waking hours in formal education.⁵ Some young people spend less, either through not attending school or college or through 'coasting' at the back of the classroom. We want, therefore, a rich source of opportunities to be available in their leisure time also; offering a source of fun, development and support. Youth work is at the heart of this and should be an entitlement for all young people.

Good youth work develops the ability of young people to think for themselves and to act for others. This is its prime purpose. Youth work services focus directly on the needs and interests of the 'whole' young person. They have no other agenda than to support and develop each young person towards a better future of their own choosing. Though youth work may contribute to many social goals, it is not primarily about these goals. It is not a job search service, nor a rehabilitation service for young offenders. It does not seek, as its main goal, to improve the number of young people achieving five A*-C GCSEs or aim to increase the number of voters.

² UNCRC Forty-ninth session report, October 2008

³ Of the 137,000 rise in unemployment in the three months to October 2008, 55,000, or 40 per cent were aged 18 to 24. Labour Market Statistics first release January 2009, Office for National Statistics, 2009

⁴ Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities. HM Treasury/Department for Children, Schools and Families, July 2007, p8.

⁵ Education without failure, Tim Brighouse, RSA, 2008

In consequence policy makers may conclude that youth work is not value for money, as public policy is often immediately concerned with these and other social issues tending, therefore, towards short horizons. Yet, youth work makes a key contribution to the country's vision for young people – that they should enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years that also prepare them well for adult life and enable them to reach their full potential. It therefore sets them on the path to success, representing real value for money.⁶

There is a wealth of evidence from research and evaluation reports about the benefits of youth work. Ofsted inspections of children's and young people's services show that youth work has a distinctive and important role in contributing to successful outcomes for young people.⁷ A broader evidence base highlights the value of youth work in a wide range of contexts, covering both the intrinsic purpose and process of youth work and its impact on outcomes for young people and on the benefits for their communities.

What is youth work?

'You cannot, you dare not, come to a people who are in the gutter of despair and offer them not security but supervised recreation, handicraft classes and character building. But that is what we do, come to them with bats and balls.'

Saul Alinsky⁸

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society, through non-formal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning.

If we are to offer our young people more than 'bats and balls', we need to ensure that the ways of working with them include youth work.

Youth work is a special combination of purposes, methods and values. Three conditions are necessary:

- the purpose of the work must be predominantly that of achieving outcomes related to young people's personal and social development (as distinct from, say, their academic or vocational learning);
- the methods of the work include the extensive use of experiential learning and of small groups (as distinct from, say, a prescribed curriculum and whole-class teaching or individual casework);
- the values of the work include the voluntary engagement of young people with skilled adults. This relationship transforms what is possible for young people.

Youth workers adhere to a statement of ethical conduct⁹ and a clear set of values based on respect, support and challenge for young people.¹⁰ Youth workers are committed to the achievement of social justice for all.

Youth work has its origins in the clubs and projects set up by voluntary organisations in the 19th century, many of which continue to provide services for young people today.¹¹ From its beginnings, statements about the purpose of youth work have consistently focused on its educational as well as recreational dimensions. In particular, they highlight its role in personal and social development and in equipping young people to play a full role in society.

⁶ Increasing the number of children and young people on the path to success is one of the government's Public Service Agreements (PSAs).

See PSA Delivery Agreement 14: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success, HM Treasury, 2008.

⁷ Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills – is responsible for monitoring the quality of children's services and youth services in England. Its Joint Area Reviews (which are often accompanied by youth work inspections) judge the contribution that a local authority and its partners are making to improving outcomes for children and young people.

⁸ Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 1964.

⁹ Statement of Ethical Conduct. The National Youth Agency, 2000.

¹⁰ Transforming Youth Work: resourcing excellent services, DCSF, 2002. See Appendix 2.

¹¹ See Appendix 3 for a brief historical overview of youth work and youth services.

The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review¹² and Aiming High, the government's strategy for positive activities for young people consistently acknowledge the importance of youth work in securing improved outcomes for young people. In particular, they focus on the concept of structure as leading to beneficial outcomes in later life. Aiming High describes the level of 'structure' – defined as activities which have an underlying purpose and goal and are facilitated by a trusted adult or older peers – as critical in determining young people's outcomes. However, it also accepted earlier research findings that relatively unstructured environments may be 'precisely the contexts in which the most challenging and at-risk young people are choosing to engage'¹³ It therefore concluded that the challenge for those working with disadvantaged young people is to introduce 'structure and greater organisation and supervision into the unstructured provision to which they are more likely to be drawn'.¹⁴

This is supported by other research. An evaluation of after-school programmes for urban youth in the USA states that 'fun with friends should be a core foundation of after-school programs because, pragmatically, that is what draws youth to these settings and keeps them there', and that 'the relationships between youth and staff are the heart and soul, the most fundamental strength' of these programmes.¹⁵ A recent Audit Commission report on the role of sport and leisure activities in helping prevent anti-social behaviour by young people concludes that 'a major challenge for providers is to find activities that will attract these [disadvantaged] young people, and then introduce elements of structure and development at the right point'. It stressed that long-term impact would only be achieved by combining sports and leisure activities with 'developmental components supporting young people to improve their personal and social skills and to change their behaviour.'¹⁶

Good youth work equips young people with these skills. It is planned and purposeful. It supports young people to develop structure and direction for themselves.

Youth work settings

Youth work takes place in a range of settings, including youth centres and clubs, schools and colleges, arts venues, libraries and museums, hospitals, parks, streets and shopping precincts – in short, wherever young people are. However, buildings – or 'places to go' – can be described as the 'bedrock' of youth work provision,¹⁷ and the government has made a commitment to improve the quality of 'places to go' for young people. This includes capital investment through the Youth Capital Fund – where spending is determined by young people, the allocation of over £200 million to develop 'world class youth facilities' through the *myplace* programme, plus future unspecified funding for youth provision from dormant bank accounts.

Youth work services are intended to provide opportunities to young people living in rural and urban areas; those who face particular circumstances, such as housing, health or employment difficulties; and those who belong to particular groups and communities, such as disabled



¹² Policy Review of children and young people: a discussion paper. HM Treasury/Department for Education and Skills, January 2007.

¹³ Leon Feinstein, John Bynner and Kathryn Duckworth, *Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes*.

Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2005, p17.

¹⁴ Aiming High, p21-22.

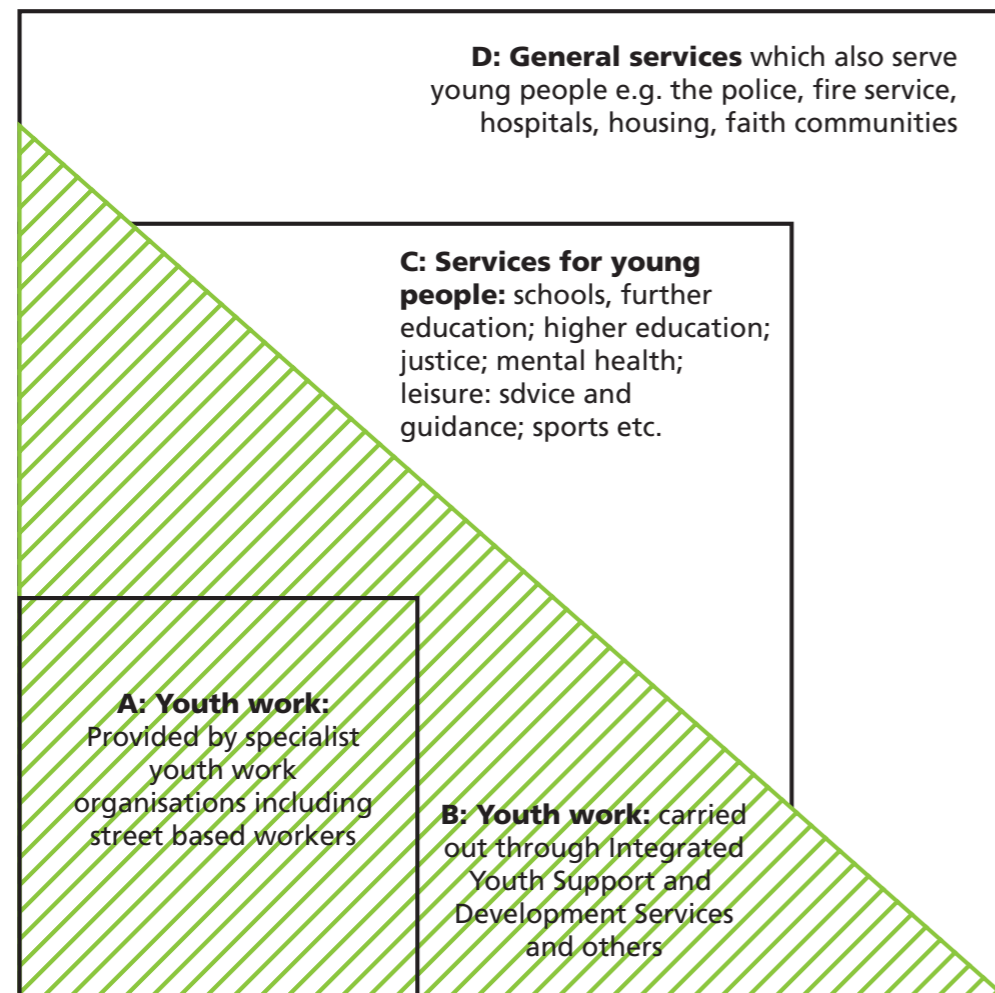
¹⁵ Barton J. Hirsch, *A Place to Call Home: after-school programs for urban youth*. American Psychological Association/Teachers College Press, 2005 p32, 131.

¹⁶ Tired of Hanging Around: using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people. Audit Commission, 2009, p25

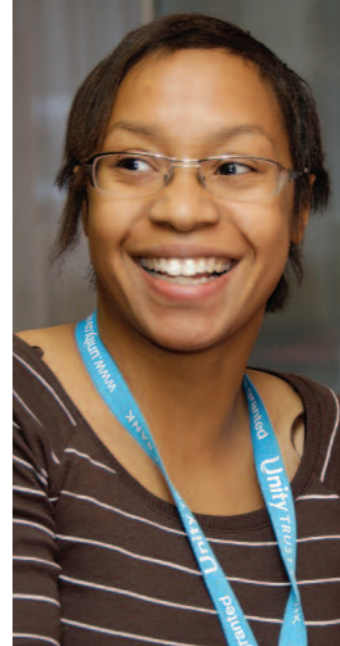
¹⁷ Sue Robertson, *Youth Clubs: association, participation, friendship and fun!* Russell House, 2005, p121.

or black and minority ethnic young people. Youth work provides a combination of universal services, for instance youth centres and clubs open to all young people in the local area, and specialist projects which target particular groups of young people, usually those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded. Youth work is also employed as an approach in more general services for young people.

Youth work and youth work services must, therefore, be seen in the context of broader provision for young people, as shown in the diagram below.¹⁸ Clearly large aspects of provision for young people, for example justice and schooling, lie outside definitions of youth work and youth work services. However, these services have significant impact on the lives of young people and their effectiveness can be enhanced by the use of youth work approaches. Schools, for example, increasingly focus on promoting young people's general wellbeing as well as their educational achievement,¹⁹ and in some cases offers 'sanctuary' in troubled communities. There is evidence that youth work makes a significant contribution to such 'sanctuary' and wellbeing and through this helps young people be better positioned for educational achievement.²⁰



as adapted from the original model by Tom Wylie, 2006



Section 2

Partnership with young people

Youth work has traditionally been a partnership with young people. From their origins, voluntary youth organisations stressed their role in equipping young people to take on responsibility and develop leadership skills. Clubs were often referred to as a microcosm of a local community, and a range of mechanisms developed to involve young people in helping run them and the activities they provided.²¹ A 2004 survey of children and young people's involvement in public decision-making in England found that voluntary and statutory youth services reported high levels of participation work, and the development of a range of tools and models to support this process.²²

Transforming Youth Work acknowledged that 'youth workers have played a central role in assisting the development of participative and democratic models for young people' and called for 'the involvement of young people themselves in all aspects of the service, including design, delivery and governance'.²³ The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to secure access to sufficient positive activities for young people, including seeking and taking account of their views about provision.²⁴ A recent Audit Commission review of children's trusts recommended that local councils and other agencies should improve mechanisms for involving children, young people and parents in children's trusts, drawing on guidance from 11 Million and the National Youth Agency's *Hear by Right* standards for involving children and young people in shaping local services.²⁵

Youth work also provides a focus for engaging young people in decisions in their local communities, often through structures such as youth councils or forums. Ofsted inspection reports consistently highlight this as a key area for youth services. Its 2006-07 annual report described youth workers' role in developing an effective voice for young people in local areas as 'a very strong feature'.²⁶

More recently, attention has focused on involving young people in decisions about spending on youth provision. The Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds, introduced in 2006 and now extended until 2011, provide revenue and capital budgets for young people – particularly the most disadvantaged – to decide how money should be spent on positive activities and youth facilities in their area. Building on the success of this funding, *Aiming High* includes commitments to devolving budgets further to young people by 2018.²⁷ Approaches to achieve this are currently being piloted.



²¹ Sue Robertson, *Youth Clubs*, pp77-79.

²² Carolyn Oldfield and Clare Fowler, *Mapping Children and Young People's Participation in England*. Department for Education and Skills, 2004.

²³ *Transforming youth work*, Department for Education and Skills, 2001.

²⁴ *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, section 6.

²⁵ *Are We There Yet? Improving governance and resource management in children's trusts*, Audit Commission, 2008

²⁶ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2006-07*. Ofsted, 2007 p62.

²⁷ *Aiming High* p38.

¹⁸ Adapted from a diagram produced by Tom Wylie. *Spending Wisely – young people, youth work and youth services: an introductory guide*, NYA, 2006.

¹⁹ *21st Century Schools: a world-class education for every child*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008, 1.4

²⁰ Barton J. Hirsch, *A Place to Call Home*, p44



Section 3

The process of youth work

The relationships between adult and young person lie at the heart of youth work. The primary role of the youth worker, be they full time qualified worker or skilled volunteer, is to act as a facilitator of learning through conversation and dialogue.²⁸

A recent publication on 'good youth work' identifies the characteristics of the effective youth worker as resourcefulness, resilience and resolve – the very same 'three Rs' that youth work seeks to develop in young people.²⁹ According to one of the workers interviewed for this publication,

'I think the skills I used most are the ability to develop positive relationships... I seek to be approachable, consistent, responsive, can mix and match methods and settings... I try to be honest, non-judgemental, able to challenge in a supportive way'.³⁰

Common components underpin good youth work whatever the setting. The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 identified seven factors which need to be in place to improve outcomes for young people. These are:

- Providing opportunities for young people to gain skills that build their well being;
- Developing young people's personal effectiveness through building their ability to arrive at their own choices and solutions to problems;
- Making links between the different aspects of young people's lives;
- Setting and demonstrating appropriate standards of behaviour;
- Keeping young people safe from physical and mental harm;
- Putting proper supervision in place, through which adults provide clear, appropriate and consistent rules and expectations; and
- Sustaining young people's involvement over time.³¹

Youth work embodies these factors and crucially positions young people to shape and direct their own futures.

“ I try to be honest,
non-judgemental ”

²⁸ Janet R Batsleer, *Informal Learning in Youth Work*. Sage, 2008, p5.

²⁹ Bryan Merton, *Good Youth Work*. The NYA, 2007, p3

³⁰ Bryan Merton, *Good Youth Work*, p32

³¹ Policy review of children and young people, p41.



Section 4

Youth work and outcomes for young people

'[T]he 'Government's view [is] that high quality youth work, delivered by third and statutory sectors, is central to delivering our ambition of increasing the number of young people on the path to success'.³²

Young people themselves provide powerful testimony of the benefits of youth work. Research into the impact of youth work in England included views from over 600 young people using local youth services around the country on the impact they believe youth work has had on them. Two-thirds of the young people reported that youth work had made a considerable difference to their lives. The benefits included increased confidence, learning new skills, making decisions for themselves, and feeling more confident about asking for help and information. Almost three in five (58%) reported that youth work had helped them understand people who are different from themselves, and nearly half (48%) thought that their involvement in youth work activities had improved their prospects of getting work. The report includes case studies and interviews, providing evidence of tangible outcomes – such as re-engaging with education or reducing drug use - which young people and youth workers attributed to youth work.³³

Kids at the Door Revisited, a follow-up study of adults who had attended a youth and community project some 20 years previously, sought to identify its long-term impact on them. The 51 former members interviewed agreed that the project provided them with leisure activities they would otherwise have missed, with friendships, and with relationships with adults they trusted. Some were convinced that the project had steered them away from crime and other anti-social behaviour, while others believed that its influence, values and practice stayed with them into adulthood.³⁴

But in addition to young people's own voices, there is a rich seam of evidence from government sources, research and inspection of practice demonstrating the role of youth work in putting young people on the path to success. The Ofsted report for 2007-08 summed up its findings from the 26 youth services it had inspected during this period:

In the majority of services, young people achieve well and there is good practice in youth work. Youth workers are more likely to exercise their educational skills to good effect in an increasingly wide range of settings, including housing, health and schools. Services continue to engage vulnerable groups well.

Good managers recognise the need to support all young people in their local neighbourhoods through youth clubs and projects. These often provide a valued opportunity for young people to meet their peers and develop new interests. Many contribute to their communities through their active involvement in an imaginative range of youth councils, forums or campaigning groups. They also have access to support and guidance from workers when needed.³⁵

³² Aiming High, p79.

³³ Bryan Merton et al, *An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England*. Department for Education and Skills, 2004, pp6-7.

³⁴ Bob Holman, *Kids at the door revisited*. Russell House, 2000.

³⁵ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 2007-08. Ofsted, 2008, p68.

Youth work is interested in the whole young person and their experiences, and both their present and their future. Eventual outcomes, then, are defined by young people themselves. In addition, in recent years, government policy has been framed in terms of the 'Every Child Matters' framework. This aims for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- be healthy;
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution; and
- achieve economic well being.

This section organises the evidence under these headings and provides support and examples for those charged with taking the work forward in integrated settings. This is inevitably somewhat arbitrary, since much youth work practice works across these outcomes, with outcomes properly defined by young people themselves.

Youth work helps young people be more healthy

A well-resourced youth work environment offers a safe developmental space where young people can explore personal concerns about health development and health risk, from use of drugs to contraception. They can also learn new skills which promote a more healthy lifestyle – anything from cooking a risotto to taking more exercise. Youth workers are skilled professionals who can help young people use information and judgement to make informed decisions for themselves. Youth workers work with other professionals bringing skills, trusted relationships with young people and comfortable environments to 'health' partnerships. This is evident in practice, supported by research and enshrined in policy. The government's strategy for children and young people's health recognises the role of integrated youth support services in providing young people with information, advice, healthy opportunities and support, and the importance of services that 'are offered in a way and with a focus that speaks to their particular needs'.³⁶

Findings:

Both open access and targeted youth work include a range of enjoyable activities intended to promote **healthy lifestyles**. Examples include sports and recreational activities promoting fitness, cooking and healthy eating programmes, and growing vegetables and other produce. It is the combination of youth work approach, non-formal environment and appropriate context which makes the difference. An Ofsted overview of youth services noted that:

The relationships that youth workers develop with young people, and the informal settings in which the work takes place, lend themselves well to promoting healthy lifestyles... In many local areas, the youth work curriculum is increasingly taking account of health promotion, using sport, performing arts and outdoor activities as the medium to underpin youth work.³⁷

Specific examples noted in inspections include Derbyshire's 'Big Blue Bus' which runs sessions for young people on how to prepare cheap and nutritious meals, and Kingston upon Thames youth service's school-based Motivations programme which successfully uses health and fitness activities to support young people at risk of exclusion. (Ofsted 2007, 2006)



In the light of current concerns about obesity, there is evidence that youth work approaches offer an effective way to help young people understand and manage weight problems. SHINE is a healthy lifestyle programme in Sheffield which helps obese young people to lose weight and increase their self-esteem and confidence through a programme that not only focuses on food and eating but promotes a complete change in lifestyles. An 18-month independent evaluation found that participants on SHINE's 12-week programmes lost weight and improved fitness levels. The project's regular assessments of participants' physical and psychological wellbeing showed that improvements were sustained throughout the evaluation period. (The NYA, 2008).³⁸

Youth work plays an important role in helping promote **sexual health, reduce teenage pregnancy and counter drug and alcohol use**, usually in partnership with other agencies. This was recognised in the government's guidance on teenage pregnancy, which identifies 'a well resourced youth service, providing things to do and places to go for young people, with a clear focus on addressing key social issues affecting young people, such as sexual health and substance misuse' as a key factor contributing to the success of local strategies. It cites as an example the work of Gateshead Youth Service where youth workers deliver sex and relationships education (SRE) programmes in schools; support young people at contraceptive and sexual health clinics; and where the youth service is a major contributor of outlets for a condom distribution scheme.³⁹

Other reviews have provided further evidence of the effectiveness of youth work approaches:

- A report into approaches to preventing teenage pregnancy in New Deal for Community areas concluded that the 'training of all youth workers in teenage pregnancy issues is a very successful way of engaging young people with prevention education in an informal environment and may have the added benefit of reaching those who are not attending school'.⁴⁰
- Evaluation of one-stop shop models of sexual health provision found that most young people surveyed said that they preferred to use designated young people's services. The reasons included accessibility, a community setting, informal atmosphere, confidence in staff, absence of an appointment system, local service, and free or reduced price emergency contraception. Clinics based in youth projects were popular because they were informal and some young people described how their friends came to the service and it was quite social. Interviews with staff and stakeholders revealed that many thought youth workers should be trained to offer sexual health advice and signposting.⁴¹
- Bolton Youth Service is a key partner in the work of the Parallel Youth Health Centre, designed for and by young people and described as a 'centre of excellence'. The centre offers a comprehensive range of health and wellbeing services for 11-19-year-olds and is highly regarded by young people. It has also increased the number of hard-to-reach young people using sexual health services – there has been a 5.2 per cent rise in the number of young people from black and minority ethnic communities using sexual health services since the centre opened in 2003. Ofsted praises the centre for its 'open-door, free access policy, with a strong ethos of individual support and respect for the young person's opinions and rights'. (Ofsted, 2007).
- In South Tyneside, the teenage conception rate has fallen faster than the national average 'as the result of successful coordinated working between the youth service, PCT services and schools'. (Ofsted, 2006).

³⁶ Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures – the strategy for children and young people's health, Department of Health, 2009, p. 51.

³⁷ Building on the best: overview of local authority youth services 2005/06. Ofsted, 2007, pp4-5.

³⁸ Available at www.nya.org.uk/health

³⁹ Teenage pregnancy next steps: guidance for local authorities and primary care trusts on effective delivery of local strategies, Department for Education and Skills, 2006.

⁴⁰ Teenage pregnancy prevention initiatives in New Deal Communities – Research report 7, NDC/Sheffield Hallam University, 2003, p17.

⁴¹ Evaluation of one-stop shop models of sexual health provision: executive summary, University of Bristol, 2008, p12-13.

- Inspectors cited a sexual health outreach project based at a local youth club in Poole as a ‘good example of multi-agency working’ around health promotion. The project involves a teenage pregnancy reduction co-ordinator, a male sexual health educator, and youth workers. Many young people, including young Travellers, access the drop-in service and take part in activities around alcohol misuse and sexual health. (Ofsted, 2008)
- In Hartlepool, a mobile youth bus delivers ‘well used and highly rated’ drug, alcohol and sex education programmes. (Ofsted, 2007).
- The Maypole Centre in Birmingham is a youth service project that has a strong health approach to its work with young people. Up to 36 young people each term take part in sexual health and substance misuse education programmes and the project also provides condom distribution and smoking cessation classes. An evaluation of sexual health work with young women by ESRC found that the programme had had a substantial impact on the sexual health of participants. (NYA, 2008).

Youth workers also play a role in helping young people access **mental health** services and in ensuring that they are appropriate to young people in different circumstances.

- An evaluation of pilot mental health promotion projects targeted at young men at risk of suicide found that detached and outreach approaches were more acceptable to young men (as they were less threatening to their self-esteem) and less risky (in terms of confidentiality). The evaluation recommended the use of youth centres as the most appropriate locations for health promotion projects, rather than more formal settings such as GP surgeries.⁴²
- North Somerset youth service has been involved in the expansion of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, with youth workers providing support to young people on mental health issues. (Ofsted, 2006).
- In Stockport, Ofsted inspectors found that ‘projects to support young people with mental health problems are well conceived and enable young people to take greater personal responsibility’. (Ofsted, 2006).

Government guidance, as well as evaluation reports, highlights the role of youth work in responding to the **health needs** of young people in particular, often difficult, circumstances.

- A Department of Health guide to supplement the National Service Framework for Renal Services refers to standard 4 of the Children’s NSF which states that ‘All young people have access to age appropriate services which are responsive to their specific needs as they grow into adulthood’, and recommends that the services of a youth worker can be particularly helpful at this time.⁴³
- *Care Matters: Time for Change* stated that the government will give ‘priority status for children in care within local authority youth work’ to promote their health and wellbeing.⁴⁴
- An evaluation of a pilot project to encourage disengaged young fathers to be more involved in bringing up their children stressed the importance of using a ‘youth work rather than a therapeutic model’ to engage young men. It suggests that detached work approaches may be most successful in engaging the youngest fathers, those 16 and under, and concluded that, because of the age of the young fathers, the approaches that were the most immediately successful drew on those of youth workers.⁴⁵
- Nottingham University Hospital Youth Service works with young people aged 10 to 25 with a chronic illness or disability attending hospitals in Nottingham and parts of the Trent Region. It provides regular youth club sessions, one-to-one support, accredited programmes, residential opportunities, transition programmes, youth participation and patient volunteer training programmes. It has won several awards including Action for Sick Children Best Practice Award – Outstanding Achievement in Adolescent Services.



- An analysis of the nature and scale of gang culture in Britain and how best to tackle it recommends ring-fenced funds to base youth workers in hospital emergency departments with high admissions of young people with assault wounds as a way engaging with potentially gang-involved young people and linking them into intervention programmes.⁴⁶

‘I used to smoke loads of cannabis and now I don’t. I offloaded lots of issues and started doing a diary. My general self is better and I’m healthier’. (An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, DES, 2004).

‘I’ve cut down on smoking a lot since I’ve been coming here. The staff help, they’re getting me NHS support.’ (Investment in Youth Facilities, The NYA, 2008)

Youth work helps to keep young people safe

Youth work builds emotional resilience, judgment and decision-making in young people. The process of youth work places the young person firmly in control of their present and their future. It supports young people to manage risk, recognising that adults cannot be there to do this on their behalf as they move into adulthood. Youth work recognises that young people have concerns about their personal safety: about being bullied, about being harassed on the street or in the school toilets or playground. Youth work helps young people consider and make different choices about risky behaviour. Currently there is a nationwide concern about the involvement of young people in violent and gang related crime. Youth work is recognised as a process through which young people can be supported to take a different path.

Findings:

Many projects address issues related to bullying and harassment. In Bradford, the youth service and youth offending team have established an anti-bullying project which offers young people a first line of contact and advice and signposting service. The project is described as ‘an impressive response to a locally identified issue’. (Ofsted, 2008). In Kirklees, the ARK (Anti-Racism Kirklees) project was developed to tackle increasing racial harassment and tension among young people in areas of North and South Kirklees. Youth workers go into schools and help pupils explore issues around racism, prejudice, stereotyping, bullying and intimidation through arts projects. ARK won the National Anti-Bullying Award (part of the Children and Young People Now Awards) in 2007. (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2007).

Youth work is also effective in addressing issues experienced by a minority of young people. Youth services in Oldham, Rotherham and Doncaster all provide successful support for **young people at risk of or involved in prostitution** and sexual exploitation. The Risky Business project in Rotherham was said to have been successful in diverting young people away from prostitution and ‘those interviewed reported specific improvements in their lives in terms of reduced vulnerability, more stability and hope for the future.’ (Ofsted, 2007, 2006, 2006).

A Home Office study into street prostitution also found that youth workers were involved in multi-agency initiatives supporting extremely vulnerable young people. Specific youth work contributions included preventive work through groupwork with girls and young women in Sheffield, and the employment of youth workers to support young women and young men involved in prostitution in Bristol.⁴⁷ The report also highlights a successful initiative in Nottingham, where a youth worker was employed to work with boys and young men (aged ten to 18) involved in or at risk of street prostitution. During the year that the post was

⁴² Evaluation of mental health promotion pilots to reduce suicide amongst young men: final report, Thomas Coram Research Unit, 2006.

⁴³ National service framework for renal services — working for children and young people, Department of Health, 2006, p17.

⁴⁴ Care matters: time for change, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007.

⁴⁵ E Maudant, Young fathers project evaluation report, TSA, 2005, p54, p32, p105.

⁴⁶ Dying to Belong: an in-depth review of street gangs in Britain, The Centre for Social Justice, 2009.

⁴⁷ Tackling street prostitution: towards a holistic approach, Home Office, 2004, p68, p116.

funded, reports were made about 50 boys and young men, with the number dropping from 20 in the first quarter to three in the fourth – a reduction of 88 per cent.⁴⁸

Discussion of **violent crime and gang violence** has also highlighted an important role for youth work, with researchers often calling for greater investment in youth work.

- Runnymede Trust research into preventing racist violence described youth work as 'an undervalued sector of work, extremely draining, and in need of more recognition and financial support.... More support for this sector would make a real change in the long-term effectiveness of those who are working to address young people's racist attitudes, both actual and potential'. Its recommendations include: 'Youth services and local authorities should budget positively to provide adequate resources for youth work that aims to challenge the racist attitudes of potential perpetrators of racist violence'.⁴⁹
- Research into the views of young people on violent extremism found youth work activities succeeded in bringing together young people from different communities and helped to undermine the sense of isolation and disengagement which supports the development of extremism, but noted the lack of youth provision.⁵⁰
- A Home Office working group on preventing violent extremism identified a 'critical' role for youth workers in supporting young Muslims not in university or college and helping them explore sensitive issues.⁵¹
- *Reluctant Gangsters*, a research study into the emergence of violent youth gangs in Waltham Forest, provides evidence of a key role for youth services in working with young people involved with, or affected by, youth gangs, particularly in relation to engaging with gang members and mediation. The Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS), of which Manchester Youth Service is a member, was cited as an example of good practice. The project provides diversionary educational, recreational and vocational activities to young people involved in, or at risk of being involved in, youth gangs. In its first year the project made contact with over 200 young people. Several were re-engaged with education and some gained vocational qualifications. The project was also successful in diverting most young people away from crime, with only 10 per cent of its target group re-offending.⁵²
- A review of evidence and policy on knife crime among young people found that community and educational organisations that include 'former knife carriers, victims of knife offences and experienced youth workers 'have an important role to play' and might have more of an impact than police officers.⁵³

'If I come here, I'm good and stay in and don't get into trouble. If I hang out I smoke weed, go jacking phones, start a fight, pick on shop-keepers...If I come here I stay calm.'
(*An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, DES, 2004*).

Youth work supports learning (and is fun)

For some young people youth work provides their only positive and intended opportunity for learning. The voluntary relationship between youth worker and young person means that for the first time, the young person can often relax sufficiently to think outside the box, to consider alternative options, to take action and to achieve success. This is also an important opportunity for those young people who are already on the pathway to success and who are set to achieve in the mainstream. The youth work setting provides an opportunity for learning which complements that of formal education. Young people learn a new set of skills which will stand them in good stead in the future and, more importantly, gain in understanding about their own strengths, and their relationships with others – a practical approach of personal, social and health education (PSHE).



- Fairfield Music Project in Stockton-on-Tees gives young people from all ages and backgrounds with an interest in music an opportunity to come together, learn and have fun, by offering opportunities to get involved in playing live music, DJing and music technology. As well as giving young people a chance to develop new skills and perform in public, those involved learned about money, responsibility, respect for others and how to learn and enjoy at the same time. The project won an 'Actions Speak Louder' award for the best projects supported by the Youth Opportunity Fund. (NYA, 2007).

For young people who do not achieve within schooling, this can be their only opportunity to learn.

- The Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) was a DfES-funded programme launched in 1999 with the aim of re-engaging hard-to-reach young people with education, employment or training. An evaluation of Phase Two NSF projects⁵⁴ managed by The National Youth Agency found two crucial elements to provision and practice: the 'youth work relationship' between workers and young people; and attention to the personal, social and emotional issues that impact on young people's lives. An evaluation of the whole three year pilot⁵⁵ found that over two-thirds (68%) of young people progressed on to a positive outcome including education, training or employment, and that they also gained basic skills which 'laid the foundations for future progression to mainstream provision'.
- A recent Audit Commission report highlighted the effectiveness of Burnley's Strike for Life project, which targets disadvantaged young people who are unemployed, on benefits, or working part-time or sporadically. It provides sports qualifications, numeracy and literacy sessions, and awareness raising workshops. It also promotes volunteering and provides pathways to further education or employment. Some young people have gained qualifications in sports coaching and many others have gone on to full-time education or employment.⁵⁶

Success, therefore, can be anything from getting up before noon, moving off the street back into accommodation, going hill walking or completing one of the range of award programmes. In some cases success in the youth work setting leads to the young person moving on or back into education and training. Youth workers operating in school settings use the skills and value base of youth work to form relationships with young people who find life difficult in the classroom and to support these young people to develop better links with the mainstream.

Regardless of setting, the youth work intervention helps the young person to develop personally and socially. It promotes a culture of aspiration and achievement. Opportunities are provided for new learning and for extending learning by practical application. Above all, young people enjoy what they are doing and, in some cases for the first time, see themselves as successful on their own terms. If they don't like what is on offer they can walk away. Participation is voluntary. This puts the onus on youth workers to offer appropriate opportunities; young people interviewed for the Audit Commission report into sport and leisure activities stressed that activities should evolve as their needs change and offer some opportunities for progression.⁵⁷

'It's not good enough at our age to palm us off with a kick about. You need to give young people something to help them move forward'. (*Tired of Hanging Around*, Audit Commission, 2009).

⁴⁸ Tackling street prostitution p69-71.

⁴⁹ Isal, Sarah, Preventing Racist Violence: working with actual and potential perpetrators- learning from practice to policy change, Runnymede Trust, 2005, pp47,48.

⁵⁰ Young people and extremism: some reflections from our local studies, Institute of Community Cohesion, 2007.

⁵¹ Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups, Home Office, 2005, p13.

⁵² Reluctant gangsters: youth gangs in Waltham Forest, John Pitts, University of Bedfordshire, 2007.

⁵³ 'Knife crime': ineffective reactions to a distracting problem? A review of evidence and policy, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, 2006, p30.

⁵⁴ 'People with potential, not people with problems' – an evaluation of voluntary sector projects working with disengaged young people, Harrington Young, 2005.

⁵⁵ Supporting the hardest-to-reach young people: the contribution of the Neighbourhood Support Fund, NFER, 2004.

⁵⁶ Tired of Hanging Around, Audit Commission, 2009.

⁵⁷ Tired of Hanging Around. p28.

Findings:

Youth work in schools and colleges serves to **improve and extend opportunities for learning for all students**, as well as providing more specific support for those **young people struggling in formal education**.

- An evaluation of Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs) in England and Wales, which bring together a range of professionals including youth workers, found that youth workers used group work to create a more positive school climate and better classroom atmosphere that was conducive to young people's learning.⁵⁸
- A review of Northern Ireland's Activity Programme concluded that 'the relationship between schools and youth services has been so beneficial in some areas ... that it is now acknowledged that where possible local youth workers should be linked to schools'.⁵⁹
- In Scotland, the Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland are working together to develop partnerships between schools and youth work and ensure that the wider youth sector is able to contribute fully to the development and delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence. The curriculum framework stresses the role of partnerships with youth work services, among other providers, to provide a 'coherent package of learning and support based around the individual learner and in the context of local needs and circumstances'.⁶⁰
- Research into extended schools highlighted the success of youth workers in helping young people with behavioural difficulties improve their educational attainment and reducing the level of disruptive incidents. The research concluded that the relationships between youth workers and young people, which were based on trust and respect for young people's views of their lives, were key to achieving this.⁶¹
- Research into school exclusion and transition into adulthood in African-Caribbean Communities found that youth work approaches make a significant contribution to the strategies that enable young people to make successful transitions following school exclusion, including supplementary schooling, special interest programmes and 'life education'. Its policy recommendations include: 'The Youth Service must be included in re-engaging young people encountering significant problems in education, as a response to preventing or mitigating social exclusion'.⁶²

Other studies have identified the role of youth work in **engaging 'hard to reach' young people**, through a range of programmes and provision.

- A study of detached youth work for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that 'street-based youth work with socially excluded young people does work, not always, not everywhere, but probably more effectively than any other method yet devised for reaching these socially excluded young people'.⁶³
- Research into Positive Futures, a social inclusion programme which uses sport and other activities to address young people's substance misuse, physical activity and offending behaviour, found that the most effective projects employ management teams with appropriate frontline experience of grassroots youth work. Successful projects adopt a youth work style characterised by friendships alongside the setting of clear boundaries to which young people responded well, precisely because of the mix of the two. It also found that young people participating in projects which adopted a more holistic youth work approach had a better sense of what they could do with their lives in terms of jobs or careers. It concluded that it was the use of a personal and social developmental model which 'adds value', with sport acting mostly as a 'hook' to engage young people. Youth service projects using outreach methods were most successful at reaching minority



groups of young people and open access provision was more effective at retaining young people than the more formal referral systems and programmes of activity used by other projects.⁶⁴

- The value of street based approaches was also endorsed by research into the Connexions Service.⁶⁵
- Research into young adults and literacy, language and numeracy concluded that the personal qualities and attributes associated with effective youth work, such as patience and empathy, were considered essential, whereas literacy, language and numeracy training was seen by practitioners as an 'optional extra'. Reaching young adults was seen as the most important element of developing provision, and youth work training and a 'natural empathy with young adults' were seen as a crucial prerequisite for this.⁶⁶

'This is where you gain key skills like teamwork and communication, not from school'. (*Investing in Youth Facilities*, NYA, 2008).

'It's real – teaches you things you need for life. Our worker listened to me and helped me with my writing and spelling and lots of personal stuff'. (*The Next Steps: learning from the NYA/NSF programme*, NYA, 2004).

Youth work promotes a positive contribution

Youth work has from its roots been a partnership with young people. It actively seeks to hear their voices and takes their views into account. It supports them to engage in democratic decision making processes, from local youth forums and youth cabinets to national influence through the British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament. It works with young people in the community context to broker their involvement in local debates. It encourages voluntary action. The results of this work are improved social capital in young people and better services for them. Youth work seeks to strengthen society, to create bridges between interest groups and to reduce destructive behaviours.

Findings:*Participation*

Youth work and youth services have a clear and demonstrable role in helping young people have a voice and influence within their local communities. The final report of the Carnegie Young People Initiative states that from the 1970s onwards, 'successive central and local administrations in the UK began to recognise and acknowledge calls for a stronger voice for young people. It was during this period that youth workers employed by local authorities and voluntary organisations typically played the lead role in supporting youth participation around youth and community concerns'.⁶⁷

This is confirmed by Ofsted inspections which consistently identify a lead role for youth services in enabling young people to have their voices heard, and develop the skills to become effectively involved in decisions about their local community and in improving services. Ofsted inspections highlight numerous instances where youth services have helped young people influence the development of local facilities and services. These include:

- Shaping and evaluating youth services (Durham, Doncaster, Kingston upon Thames, Buckinghamshire, Hounslow, North Tyneside and Hampshire).

⁵⁸ Evaluation of Behaviour and Education Support Teams, NFER, 2005. The initiative supports schools, families and children who have or are at risk of developing emotional, behavioural and/or attendance problems.

⁵⁹ Activities for young people Northern Ireland: preparing for the future - final report to the Big Lottery Fund, SQW Ltd, 2006, p3.

⁶⁰ Curriculum for excellence: building the curriculum 3, a framework for learning and teaching. The Scottish Government, 2008, p3.

⁶¹ Towards the Development of Extended Schools, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2003.

⁶² School exclusion and transition into adulthood in African-Caribbean communities, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005, p67.

⁶³ Reaching Socially Excluded Young People: a national study of street-based youth work, The National Youth Agency, 2004, p70.

⁶⁴ 'Getting to know you': engagement and relationship building, Home Office, 2005. 'In the Boot Room': organisational contexts and partnerships - second interim National Positive Futures case study research report, Home Office, 2006. 'Going the distance': impact, journeys and distance travelled: third interim National Positive Futures case study research report, Substance, 2006. Knowing the score - Positive Futures case study research: final report for the Home Office, Substance, 2006.

⁶⁵ Positive Futures: putting the pieces together? The 2007 annual Positive Futures monitoring and evaluation report, Substance, 2007.

⁶⁶ Understanding the impact of Connexions on young people at risk, Department for Education and Skills, 2004.

⁶⁷ Success factors in informal learning: young adults' experiences of literacy, language and numeracy, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2005, p8, 33.

⁶⁷ Empowering young people: final report of the Carnegie Young People's Initiative, Carnegie UK, 2008, p3

- Improving access to sexual health clinics in youth clubs and securing better lighting in local parks (Barnsley);
- Involving young mothers in a review of sexual health services (Devon);
- Providing training to enable young people to participate effectively in town councils (Wigan);
- Access to cheaper transport (Isle of Wight); and
- Accessing transport and services from rural areas (Cambridgeshire);
- Providing training to enable young people with disabilities to seek the views of other disabled young people (Wolverhampton); and
- Involving young people in the regeneration of local areas (Warrington).

Ofsted reports also highlight the role of youth workers in helping young people develop the skills they need to have their voices heard, a view confirmed by other research.

Newham Youth Service played a significant part in the development of the local youth parliament which is described by Ofsted as 'outstanding'. Members of the youth parliament are trained as advocates to ensure the views of young people are fully representative. (Ofsted, 2006). Leicestershire's youth service has 'specialist staff working closely to support young people in setting up town and village youth councils across the county and with district councils to support local youth fora in each district', and Wigan youth service provides training to help young people participate effectively in town councils. (Ofsted, 2006). In North Somerset, 'opportunities are used very effectively to promote young people positively within the local community', an example being a youth summit where young people were able to meet with senior representatives of the local media to exchange views and encourage positive portrayal of young people and their achievements. (Ofsted, 2008).

An evaluation of a post-16 citizenship pilot highlighted youth workers' skills in 'helping to create supportive atmospheres in youth work settings where young people can try out opinions, find information to support a point of view and then listen to the opinions of others with sensitivity and respect'.⁶⁸

JRF research into minority South Asian communities in Bradford described the local youth service as offering an example of good practice in engaging with the voices of the South Asian community. It reports that the service engages with South Asian young people of all backgrounds. The service 'appeared to be very much in touch with a great variety of views and identities, and worked hard to include them all'.⁶⁹

An evaluation of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds found evidence of 'positive outcomes for young people and improvements in the provision of activities'. Young people involved in the decisions about funding had gained skills and confidence, and local authorities were exploring further involvement of young people in decision making.⁷⁰

Voluntary action

Youth workers also have a role in promoting and supporting volunteering and youth action by young people, particularly in encouraging action which stems from young people's own perceptions of their communities.

An evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers programme noted that support staff from a youth service background 'tended to be more comfortable with a youth-led approach' – one of the key principles underpinning the programme.⁷¹ Similarly, the evaluation of Action Pays (a youth led volunteering programme) found that young people stressed the need for supportive youth workers, who encouraged and motivated them to get started.⁷²



More recent research into volunteering and skills development also found that many young people start helping out in organisations where they have been service users as a result of encouragement by youth workers or other practitioners. The report concluded that 'it is clear that the role of youth workers or other "significant adults" in engaging young people in volunteering and helping them identify their learning is critical.... Youth work skills and approaches provide a basis for engaging young people and putting them in position to develop skills through volunteering.'⁷³

The youth service in Leicestershire provides a variety of opportunities for young people to engage in volunteering. Senior members help run activities for other young people; young people volunteer to represent the voice of others on youth councils; and undertake community based volunteering projects as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. (Ofsted, 2006). In North Tyneside, the Millennium Volunteers scheme for young people with disabilities has received national recognition, while an annual 'Celebration of Youth' event organised by Surrey youth service celebrates the achievements and contributions of young volunteers. (Ofsted, 2007).

A report commissioned by youth development organisation Raleigh to examine the long-term impact of overseas youth expeditions – which bring together young people from different backgrounds to work as a group on community projects - on former participants found evidence of continuing impact. Many young people had experienced a range of difficulties, and the research found that involvement in the projects increased participants' aspirations and interest in education and learning. It concluded that overseas experiences have the potential to widen young people's horizons and networks and break away from destructive influences and patterns of behaviour.⁷⁴

Community cohesion

The need for greater involvement of people in their communities and the development of **stronger, more cohesive communities**, has been a key strand in recent government policy. An Evaluation of the Impact of *Youth Work in England* included case studies showing how youth work contributed to social capital, through creating stronger, more sustainable communities where people feel safe, have a sense of belonging and participate as active citizens. It concluded that:

this research has shown that youth work is well positioned to make a sustained impact through the simultaneous development of relationships that connect young people with their communities so they can strengthen them (social capital) and the development of their own personal and social skills (human capital)⁷⁵

This creation of social capital, the report suggested, was a 'legitimate purpose' of youth work.

Discussions of **community cohesion** have repeatedly identified a key role for youth work and youth services, and have highlighted inconsistent levels of provision.⁷⁶ A parliamentary report on social cohesion described the provision of high quality youth services as a 'fundamental requirement for addressing social cohesion', and urged the government to put youth service provision on a statutory basis.⁷⁷ The government's race equality and community cohesion strategy identifies a role for youth services and youth workers, including helping young people from different communities grow up with a sense of common belonging and tackling prejudice among young people. It makes a commitment to working with 'key partners to ensure that youth work that tackles hate and prejudice is properly supported.'⁷⁸

⁷³ Young people's volunteering and skills development: A research project undertaken by The National Youth Agency on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills from October 2006 to March 2007-April 2007, p17-18.

⁷⁴ Rallying Together: A case study of Raleigh's work with disadvantaged young people, IPPR, 2009.

⁷⁵ An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, Department for Education and Skills, 2004.

⁷⁶ Cattle, Ted, Chair, Community Cohesion: a report of the Independent Review team, Community Cohesion Unit, 2003.

⁷⁷ Social cohesion sixth report of session 2003-04. Vol. 1: report, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 2004, p. 22.

⁷⁸ Improving opportunity, strengthening society: the Government's strategy to improve race equality and community cohesion, Home Office 2005.

⁶⁸ An evaluation of the post-16 citizenship pilot 2004/05: a report from Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, Ofsted, 2005, p15.

⁶⁹ Minorities within minorities: beneath the surface of South Asian participation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006, p17-18.

⁷⁰ S Golden et al, Outcomes of the Youth Opportunity Fund/Youth Capital Fund. DCSF, August 2008, pp98-100.

⁷¹ Justin Davis Smith et al, UK-wide Evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers Programme, Institute for Volunteering Research, 2002, p10.

⁷² Does youth action pay? An evaluation of Action Pays, University of Hull, 2002.

More recent reviews have endorsed this role.

- The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's interim statement concludes that youth groups, clubs, societies and voluntary and community sector organisations have a key role to play in providing locally delivered responsive, flexible services that respond to local need.⁷⁹
- The Commission's final report highlights the variability of youth services, and stated: 'Our remit is not to recast Youth Services – however much our visits provided evidence that there was scant provision in many local areas, and that greater investment is needed up-front to deliver longer-term benefits for areas much wider than integration and cohesion. But we can call on Government to take integration and cohesion seriously as they review Youth Services provision'.⁸⁰
- A study in 'what works' in community cohesion investigated policy and practice in six case study areas. It identified six approaches to promoting cohesion with youth work initiatives featuring in five of these. Specific examples included youth services and the police working 'strongly and effectively together' to tackle tensions between different groups of young people in Tower Hamlets; residential and sports projects bringing together from different backgrounds; and developing a network of young leaders to promote cohesion.⁸¹
- Communities and Local Government guidance documents highlight the role of youth work. The *Cohesion delivery framework overview* specifically identifies the 'value to cohesion' of youth work, and authorities should consider the implications of 'decisions which may have a negative impact on cohesion, such as cutting funding for youth workers'.⁸² Guidance on 'meaningful interaction' recommends involving 'people who have relationships with young people' such as youth workers, and highlights youth workers' success in resolving conflict.⁸³

'We have been consulted, we told them what we wanted and we got it!' (Investing in Youth Facilities – *myplace* final report, NYA, 2008).

'Having our voice heard by adults, joining in meetings, discussing and influencing the district plan, helping to decide what goes on in every club, that makes me feel good'.
(An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, DES, 2004).

'We went bowling the other night and I went up to some white people and got chatting. I would never have done that before'. (An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, DES, 2004).

'I didn't think I'd connect with anyone round here. This [project] helps you fit in'.
(Tired of Hanging Around, Audit Commission, 2009).

'I was getting into trouble, but with volunteering I've grown through this. Most of the things I use everyday have come from, or been developed and improved by volunteering.'
(Young people's volunteering and skills development, NYA 2007).

Youth work helps young people strengthen their future economic wellbeing and move on the pathway to their future

Youth work supports young people back into learning and training. It helps young people develop personal and work related skills and confidence. The process of working with young people in groups is particularly helpful in assisting them to build and manage complex relationships so they can make an effective contribution to teams. Youth work provides alternative opportunities to try out new job choices, from street graffiti to budding artist.



Youth work encourages young people to practise life skills in a safe context: managing money in the coffee bar, running the football group; raising money for charity or organising a trip. In addition, programmes of learning in a safe respectful environment allow young people to have a go at acquiring new skills and knowledge, which may have eluded them in school.

'This is why the great connection to be made is between the formal and the non formal. If we are to support our young people on the 'Pathway to Success' we need to link more effectively the offer provided by our educational establishments to that provided by those 500,000 volunteers who work with young people and act as points of light in our different communities. We need to do this paying close attention to the voices and aspirations of young people themselves'.⁸⁴

Findings:

Youth work can provide a **route back into the mainstream** for the most marginalised young people. Research into the life paths of young adults concluded that an unstructured environment offered a point of access acceptable to those young people outside the mainstream. It recommended that a process which helps the young person build structure in their life was important for successful transition to adulthood: 'successful mediation of these risks can bring long term benefits ... where such provision is part of real engagement of the young people in activities with some objective'.⁸⁵

Reaching Socially Excluded Young People provided evidence of the impact of detached youth work on helping reduce social exclusion and re-engaging marginalised young people. It used a 'ten-point social exclusion inventory' to identify the problems addressed by the projects and to chart the progress of young people over time. This found that poor school attendance and temporary exclusion had fallen by almost a third; anti-social behaviour was reduced by over 75 per cent and offending by a quarter; and the proportion of young people excluded from youth provision was reduced to zero. It also found a drop in the numbers of young people unemployed or not in education or training, and an increase in young people regularly attending structured youth activities.⁸⁶

A study into the experiences, needs and service responses to the 290,000 young adult carers in the UK found that many project workers identified the youth service as one of the key organisations that they thought should be working with and supporting young carers aged 16-17. The report cites the example of YCNet, an online, interactive advice, support and information service for young carers up to age 19 in the UK provided by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers. This web-based service is staffed by two youth workers and offers discussion boards for young carers to ask questions, share experiences and find answers; blogs written by young carers; a safe chat room; 'agony aunts' who reply to specific questions either online or privately; and an e-newsletter. The service also has a user group to give ideas on improving the service.⁸⁷

The role of youth work in re-engaging young people with learning, training and employment opportunities has also been well documented through Ofsted inspections.

- Thurrock Youth Service runs a 25-hour alternative education programme for young people excluded from school or at risk of exclusion, offering opportunities for them to gain basic skills and develop personal confidence. All the young people who took part in the project in 2005-06 were subsequently in training, education or employment by June 2006. (Ofsted, 2007)

⁷⁹ Commission on Integration and Cohesion interim statement, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007.

⁸⁰ Commission on Integration and Cohesion – our shared future, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p6.9.

⁸¹ What works in community cohesion, Communities and Local Government, 2007.

⁸² Cohesion Delivery Framework overview, Communities and Local Government, 2009.

⁸³ Guidance on meaningful interaction: How encouraging positive relationships between people can help build community cohesion. Communities and Local Government, 2009.

⁸⁴ Viv McKee, *Success for All*, 2009.

⁸⁵ Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, *Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes*. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2005, piii.

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Fiona Becker and Saul Becker, *Young adult carers in the UK: experiences, needs and services for carers aged 16-24*, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2008.

- In Kent, youth workers are involved in a partnership between the council and the Rainer Foundation in providing 16+ services for looked after young people and care leavers preparing for independence. The report notes that ‘the work of youth workers is particularly valued’ by young care leavers. Youth workers are also involved with partner agencies in providing ‘high quality, well-integrated support’ to young people excluded from school or at risk of becoming disengaged with learning. (Ofsted, 2008)
- Youth workers in Cornwall engage ‘effectively’ with young people not in education, employment or training through a range of projects and styles of working which includes mentoring in schools and colleges to encourage young people to complete their courses. (Ofsted, 2008).

Evaluation of specific initiatives has shown their importance in helping young people improve their life chances. Introducing a FSA collection of case studies on approaches to helping young adults become financially capable, Trevor Phillips (then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality) stated that: ‘Partnership working with agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureaux is proving successful, and so are initiatives to include financial capability within a wider holistic approach to young people’s needs through youth organisations.’⁸⁸ The report cites an example of a partnership project between South Denbighshire Citizens Advice Bureau and a local youth project that successfully promotes financial literacy to young people via the CAB, youth projects, schools and youth clubs.

In London, Streetwise is a specialist legal advice service for young people that employs young people’s lawyers alongside youth workers, Connexions personal advisers and counsellors. An evaluation of the project found that getting access to expert legal advice made a big difference to young people’s life chances. It identified success factors which included its location in a youth project, strong partnerships with youth workers and a formal network including youth service managers.⁸⁹

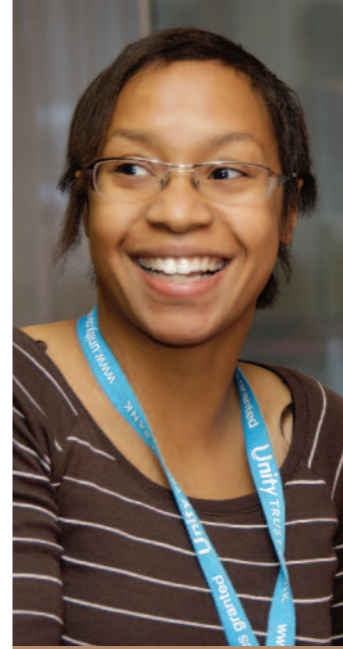
‘There’s so much to do, you don’t get bored. The staff encourage you to do some activities, you’re guaranteed to learn different things each day’. (Investing in Youth Facilities).

‘I’ve got a lot more confidence. Volunteering has changed my life. I was bullied at college, so through coming here and volunteering I’ve gained back the confidence that I lost.’ (*Young People’s Volunteering and Skills Development*).

“ Improve and extend opportunities for learning for all students ”

⁸⁸ Helping young adults become financially capable, Financial Services Authority, 2005, p2.

⁸⁹ Streetwise Community Law Centre impact report, Streetwise, 2003.



Section 5

Youth work in a community context

Various research studies have noted the importance of youth workers being seen as offering credible role models who understand the realities of young people’s lives, as well as how they can be helped to expand their aspirations. *Good Youth Work* notes that the credibility of youth workers in young people’s eyes very often derives from being close to the community.⁹⁰ This also emerged as a strong dimension of the Positive Futures programme.⁹¹ The Cattle report on Community Cohesion noted the value of youth workers of similar ethnic or faith backgrounds to the young people working with them to build trust and broker conversations between groups within and without school settings.⁹²

Youth work is particularly important in building relationships between generations, in drawing on what people of all ages hold in common, as well as recognising differences in their experiences. Young people have much to gain from inter-generational programmes. Relationships with ‘safe’ adults can offer a space to explore adulthood, to try out new ways of being themselves in different guises without being exposed to the ridicule of their friends; to develop new skills and confidence and to belong to a wider community. This is particularly important as the pressures on adolescence increase. There are many examples of successful programmes addressing issues such as digital inclusion, befriending, heritage, dance, and identity.⁹³

‘They treat me like a human. I cannot remember any other person showing so much interest. It makes me feel really good’. (*The Next Steps*, 2004).

“ Youth work is particularly important in building relationships ”

⁹⁰ Bryan Merton, *Good Youth Work*

⁹¹ ‘Getting to know you’, Home Office.

⁹² Ted Cattle, chair, *Community cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team*.

⁹³ See for instance Kerry Harrison and Angela Mulvehill eds., *Youth action and engagement: building intergenerational relationships*, NYA 2008.



Section 6

Costs and Benefits

Aiming High for young people, the current national policy framework in England, describes an offer for ‘positive activities’ including youth work for all young people. The Children’s Plan goes further to talk about this as an entitlement. It is estimated that for just £350 a year per young person, all young people could access this offer (current spending is £100 per head per annum of 13-19 population). More specifically, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned an exercise into the costs of detached youth work. This found that a project providing a full range of services and in contact with 125 young people a week, would cost £75,000 a year, or £16 for each contact. It concluded that for disadvantaged neighbourhoods, ‘a systematic street-based youth service would cost a small fraction of the amount spent on other services targeted at this group.’ – citing, in particular, the then £450 million budget for the Connexions Service⁹⁴

Other research has highlighted the relative costs of the criminal justice system and other forms of intervention, including youth work. *Every Child Matters* Green Paper stated that ‘society as a whole benefits through reduced spending on problems that can be avoided through maximising the contribution to society of all citizens. For instance a child with a conduct disorder at age 10 will cost the public purse around £70,000 by age 28.’ The Audit Commission report into the benefits of sport and leisure activities in preventing anti-social behaviour by young people estimates that a young person in the criminal justice system costs the taxpayer over £200,000 by the age of 16, but one who is given support to stay out costs less than £50,000.⁹⁵

Other comparative costings include: £1,300 per person for an electronically monitored curfew order;⁹⁶ around £35,000 per year to keep one young person in a young offender institution; an annual average of £3,800 for secondary education⁹⁷ and around £9,000 for the average resettlement package per young person after custody.⁹⁸

Against these, £350 per year per young person would be a small price to pay to unlock the rich benefit of community-based provision for all and to provide extra opportunities for personal and social development for those young people, who by virtue of life experience and circumstance, are so disadvantaged they cannot successfully make use of mainstream services.



⁹⁴ The cost of providing street-based youth work in deprived communities. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2004.
⁹⁵ Tired of Hanging Around, Audit Commission, 2009, p3.
⁹⁶ Commons written answer 2/06/08.
⁹⁷ Hansard, 2006.
⁹⁸ The costs and benefits of effective resettlement, RESET, 2007.



Section 7

Youth work and related professions

Youth work has long been acknowledged as an under-recognised and under-valued profession. The Ofsted annual report 2006-07 said it is still viewed as a ‘Cinderella service’. The Social Exclusion Unit identified youth work as an example of a profession requiring a high level of skills, but which has low status. ‘Youth workers, for example, often play a crucial role in engaging young people with a variety of services. This position requires a wide range of skills and knowledge but can be regarded as a low status position, making recruitment more difficult.’⁹⁹

Despite this, youth work methods and skills are increasingly valued by other professionals. The 2007 Ofsted inspection of Lincolnshire Youth Service notes that ‘the skills and imagination of youth workers are valued highly by many of the partner agencies with which they work.’

Some parallel professions, for example youth justice workers, use a youth work approach to make contact and build a negotiated and respectful relationship. In other cases, youth workers work alongside other professionals, for example in schools or in the secure estate. This partnership work will increase with the bedding in of integrated youth support and development services, offering the framework for services to respond to the needs and experiences of the individual young person.

Evidence from Ofsted shows that youth services are valued partners, particularly in multi-agency approaches to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and in promoting health. These include:

- interventions to increase attendance on youth inclusion programmes (Nottinghamshire);
- work with school absentees (Nottinghamshire and Brent);
- using contracts to engage young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour (Cumbria);
- delivering teenage pregnancy strategies (Gateshead, Walsall and South Tyneside);
- providing health support: the SAFE project in Hounslow provides support and counselling on a range of issues including sexual health, drugs awareness and self-injury. In York, ‘the council’s youth services have taken the lead on smoking cessation services for young people’; and
- tackling substance misuse: Youth workers in Warrington are involved in the work of PHAZE, a young people’s substance misuse service. Young people are involved as peer educators to deliver drug awareness programmes and produce publicity materials delivering information to young people across the borough about the impact of substance misuse.

Other studies have highlighted the benefits of youth workers’ partnerships with emergency services, and in helping reduce anti-social behaviour.

- A study exploring the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry on policing found that youth workers have an important role in helping beat officers or community liaison officers build better relationships with minority communities.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Improving services, improving lives, Social Exclusion Unit 2005, p67
¹⁰⁰ Assessing the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, Home Office 2005.

- Youth workers worked with young people and designers in Southampton to design a pavilion for one of the local parks. This became a catalyst for further improvements and resulted in a significant reduction in vandalism. Members of the Freemantle Youth Forum won an award from the Home Office for their hard work.¹⁰¹
- Research into Fire Services' youth training and diversion schemes found that Connexions and Youth Services were consistently involved as partners in these schemes. Youth services provided one of the main forms of partner funding, in sustaining the schemes at local level. Recommendations included the encouragement of 'more widespread links with other local youth provision, in order to provide an effective basis for referring young people to/from the Fire and Rescue Service, and to ensure that any positive outcomes are sustainable.'¹⁰²

'I know I can talk to these guys (youth workers) and together we can do something. They have the ability to access young people – in ways we can't because our uniforms act as a barrier – and translate what they say into adult words acceptable to bureaucrats'.
(Police Officer)

'It benefits us greatly that they are not the same old classroom team. They are young and dynamic and closer to the experience of the real world. They can be on the same level as the kids and they don't preach'. (Deputy Head Teacher)
(An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England, DES, 2004).

The infrastructure for services for young people is going through transformation in the move to integrated structures and systems with young people at their heart. The accompanying workforce strategy should harness youth work competence and methodology, and place these centre stage in their strategy to move towards the 'youth professional'. This represents a real opportunity for young people to continue to benefit from youth work.

“ Young and dynamic ”



Section 8

Youth work in the current context

Integrating services

Services are currently going through an enormous change process to reconfigure themselves around the needs, interests and aspirations of young people. This journey will be worth it when young people have a better deal as a result of service transformation. Change brings risks. The pace of change, therefore, needs to fit with the scale of our intention, so we continue to manage the risks and to optimise the benefits. A ten year strategy is to be welcomed.

Integrated youth support and development services, focusing on the needs and experiences of the individual young person, are the framework in which future youth work will be located. These changes are opening a wider range of opportunities for young people, driven locally by needs assessment; and at times supported nationally, for example through programmes such as the Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds and *myplace*.

The shared vision is to put young people at the heart of their services and to secure for them the best possible opportunities. To take the words of David Miliband, 'the aim for our country is simple: to extend to all the life-chances of the most fortunate'.¹⁰³ All young people should access a direct youth work offer. In addition, youth work methodology used by other professions, and youth workers working alongside other professionals can provide a more comprehensive and relevant set of services overall, in which different skills will complement each other.

'Maybe we have started to use expressions like children's professionals too early ... What I mean by children's professional is I value your specialism, whether it's youth work, social work, teacher or midwife and I would not dream of asking to give up that professionalism. I am asking you to work in the same place as or in a team with other professions, so families and children don't have to tell their stories 15 times, just once, and communities don't have to knock on more than one door.'
(Maggie Atkinson, president, Association of Directors of Children's Services, CYPN 09 April 2008).

The youth work workforce

It is not the structure but the practice of those who work directly with young people that transforms their outcomes. The Children's Workforce Strategy has set out action to be taken to retain the skills and method of work with young people and to transform the youth workforce so that all who come into contact with the young are best equipped to do so.¹⁰⁴ The reform programme is ambitious. It focuses on increasing the number of high quality staff; improving progression; strengthening integrated approaches; and promoting leadership and management. It intends that by 2018 a skilled and confident workforce will commission and deliver the most effective practice, known to improve young people's outcomes.

¹⁰¹ Involving young people in the design and care of urban spaces: what would you do with this space? Cabe Space, 2004.

¹⁰² Research into the effectiveness of youth training and diversion schemes: a final report to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006.

¹⁰³ Speech at Guardian Public Services Summit, 2004.

¹⁰⁴ 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy, DCSF, 2008.

There are already well established and widely respected systems and processes to secure the quality of youth work, including JNC (the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers) and national arrangements for the independent professional validation of youth work training. These provide a good basis for workforce transformation. Similarly it is important that youth workers gain the benefits already available to related professionals if sufficient high quality staff are to be retained to work in difficult circumstances with the most troubled young people. Inequalities in the statutory entitlement to education, training and qualification across the whole children and young people's workforce need to be addressed if the government's ambition is to be realised.

The move towards a graduate profession should be complemented by clear and comprehensive progression routes for youth support workers and appropriate support for the 500,000 volunteers who work with young people. The contribution of community members, young people, mentors and volunteers has been and always will be an essential feature of the youth work workforce. A Licence to Practise and Registration Scheme which recognises the plurality of the workforce should be introduced to protect the title of 'youth worker' and secure the best people to work with young people. The youth work workforce should benefit in full from the workforce reform programme currently in hand. Further consideration to renegotiating terms and conditions of service will assist with retention of staff, as will a defined pattern of post-qualifying training and development.

Internationally, there is an increased interest in the methodology and benefits of youth work. Research conducted over a four-year period in six boys and girls clubs located in low income, predominantly minority, US urban neighbourhoods, shows that the culture of the after-school centre meets the needs of the young people by drawing upon and replicating positive features in their familial environment and peer group. Staff engage with young people and move them towards positive identities through recreational activities and wide-ranging mentoring relationships. The author observed that these club environments are repeatedly referred to as a 'second home' by participating young people who seem to thrive even though formal psycho-educational programmes had often failed to help them to reach their full potential. This study also contains an extensive review of other US research literature on various youth development programmes and interventions.¹⁰⁵

European research studies also provide evidence of the benefits of non-formal learning (the term often used to encompass youth work on continental Europe).¹⁰⁶ These demonstrate the contribution of non-formal provision to broader European youth policy objectives, which focus on increasing understanding of youth needs and issues among policy makers; improve information available to young people; increase young people's active citizenships; and promote voluntary activities among young people.¹⁰⁷



¹⁰⁵ Barton J. Hirsch, A Place to Call Home

¹⁰⁶ Report from Luxembourg conference on non-formal learning, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ White Paper on youth, European Commission, 2001.



Section 9

What Next?

The new world is currently framed by Every Child Matters, the aspirations of *Aiming High* and the developments in the 14–19 agenda. The level of turbulence in the system is high as services go through major transformational change. If young people are to continue to access the benefits of youth work, change processes need to build on the existing strengths of youth work practice, and enable practitioners, organisations and services to secure these in the future.¹⁰⁸

Success will depend on:

- Understanding and valuing youth work within the agenda for positive activities and integrated youth services¹⁰⁹
- Ensuring an entitlement for all young people to youth work within the offer of positive activities and the opportunities presented through 14–19 developments.
- Firm partnership with young people based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Hear by Right.
- Sustainable and sustained resources to fund a youth work process geared to a timescale determined by the young person's needs and experiences – no quick fixes here!
- A change process which builds upon current strengths and focuses always on the positive experiences of young people

And, above all

- Building a strong, confident, skilled and supported workforce across sectors, services and organisations.

How will we know?

If we achieve the above we will secure and sustain the practice of direct work with young people.¹¹⁰ We also need to know whether our approaches are working, not only locally but nationally. In this way, learning from success and failure can support future improvements. Reflective practice is part of the youth work tradition; reflective policy and strategy are equally important:

- A national report card showing the progress of young people on the pathway to success, the contribution of youth work and the voices of young people themselves.
- A longitudinal study on young people and the contribution of youth work within the youth offer.
- Research on specific aspects of the work, for example, youth work and Raising the Age of Participation in Education (RPA).
- Countries in the UK to engage in a youth policy review as part of the Council of Europe programme to help identify strengths, comparable practice in other European countries, and areas for development.
- Agreement at national level, in partnership with the sector serving children and young people, about the key requirements to sustain youth work practice for the current and future benefit of young people, backed by an implementation plan.

We know what needs to be done. Let's just do it.

¹⁰⁸ Viv McKee, We want the best for our young people, NYA, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Bernard Davies and Bryan Merton, Squaring the Circle? Findings of a 'modest inquiry' into the state of youth work practice in a changing policy environment, De Montfort University, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Engaging young people: local authority youth work 2005-08, Ofsted, 2009.

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Appendix 2

Youth work values

- Young people choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends and have fun;
- The work starts where young people are – with their view of the world and their interests;
- It seeks to go beyond where young people start, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them and supporting their exploration of new ideas, interests and creative ability;
- It takes place because young people are young people, not because they have been labelled or categorised as deviant;
- It recognises, respects and is actively responsive to the wider networks of peers, communities and cultures which are important to young people;
- Through these networks it seeks to help young people achieve stronger relationships and collective identities – for example, as black people, women, men, disabled people, gay men or lesbians – and through the promotion of inclusivity, particularly for minority ethnic communities;
- It is concerned with facilitating and empowering the voice of young people;
- It is concerned with ensuring young people can influence the environment within which they live;
- It respects and values individual differences by supporting and strengthening young people's belief in themselves and their capacity to grow and change;
- It works with other agencies which contribute to young people's personal and social development; and
- It complements and supports school and college-based education by encouraging and providing other opportunities for young people to achieve and fulfil their potential.

Appendix 3

An historical overview ¹¹¹

Youth work has its origins in the clubs and projects set up by voluntary organisations – often with a religious intent – in the 19th century. Many of these early voluntary organisations, such as the YMCA and YWCA, the Scout Association and GirlGuiding UK continue to provide services for young people today.

State recognition for youth work dates from 1939, with the publication of Circular 1486 The Service of Youth, which urged all local education authorities to establish youth committees and to seek the co-operation of voluntary organisations in providing a comprehensive service. In so doing, the government acknowledged youth work as a part of local authority education provision and established what is now commonly known as the youth service. The partnership between different sectors remains key to the youth service, which has been described as a 'complex network of providers, community groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities'.¹¹²

From its inception, statements about the purpose of youth work have consistently focused on its educational, as well as recreational, dimensions. In particular, they highlight its role in personal and social development and in equipping young people to play a full role in society. The 19th century clubs provided opportunities for both association and instruction for young working men and women. (Smith, 1988; Davies, 1999). In the 20th century, a number of reviews of youth services were initiated by government. The Albemarle Report described the youth service as:

an integral part of the education system, since it provides for the continued social and informal education of young people in terms most likely to bring them to maturity, those of responsible personal choice.¹¹³

The Thompson Report¹¹⁴ reaffirmed that the 'fundamental purpose' of the youth service is 'to provide programmes of personal development comprising in shorthand terms, social and political education'.¹¹⁵ More recently, the national occupational standards for youth work define its key purpose as

enabling young people to 'develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'.¹¹⁶



¹¹¹ Spending Wisely: young people, youth work and youth services, NYA, 2006.

¹¹² Transforming Youth Work. DfEE, 2001.

¹¹³ The Youth Service in England and Wales: report of the committee appointed by the Ministry of Education in November 1958, HMSO, 1960: para 351.

¹¹⁴ Experience and Participation. HMSO 1982.

¹¹⁵ (HMSO, 1982: para 7.3).

¹¹⁶ Youth Work National Occupational Standards. Lifelong Learning UK, Feb 2008.