



# CREATING THE YOUTH OFFER: A CHECKLIST FOR COMMISSIONERS

## **Background**

In recent months, the Government has produced two important documents relating to positive activities for young people. The first, the Statutory Guidance on Section 507B Education Act 1996 (DCSF, March 2008), set out the new statutory responsibilities for Local Authorities to secure young people's access to positive activities. The second, 'Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities Implementation Plan (DCSF March 2008) elaborated on the evidence base for the benefits of programmes of positive activities for young people in helping them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to make successful transitions to adult life, and outlined the actions to be undertaken by central and local government and partners to ensure the supply and take up of good quality positive activities for all young people, especially those most likely to benefit from participation in them. In addition, the Government has produced PSA 14, which includes as a headline indicator, an increase in the numbers of young people participating in positive activities.

The legislation in Section 507B applies to unitary and county authorities, with primary responsibility for fulfilling the legislation falling within the remit of the Director and Lead Member for Children's Services. For the first time, a single body, working within the context of the Children's Trust, is responsible for *securing* young people's access to positive activities. The legislation also creates new requirements that place young people at the heart of decision making on the positive activity provision available to them. The legislation applies to young people aged 13-19, with flexibility at both ends of the age range for young people with special needs and disabilities. The Government expects local authorities to seek to *improve* the local offer to young people. Minimum standards are set out in the Statutory Guidance.

Local authorities are now required to build in 'contestability' when securing provision, and the guidance states that local authorities should not assume the role of default provider of positive activities, but should identify the most appropriate provider, 'utilising and where appropriate helping to build the capacity of high quality organisations within the third and private sectors'

A key element of the 'offer' is youth work, defined in the statutory guidance as 'sufficient educational leisure time activities and facilities which are for the improvement of young people's personal and social development'. This work should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Empowering young people to bring about change for themselves and for others through a facilitated process of personal and social development based upon the principles of:

the content being negotiated  
 their participation being voluntary and  
 their involvement being without stigma

- Providing and enhancing the flexible and holistic style of youth work intervention which is:

The preparedness to respond to the need to work with young people 'out of hours' and in their own communities  
 The ability to 'mix and match' methods and settings in response to young people's changing needs and interests  
 The ability to engage with and intervene in the on-going dynamic between 'the group' and 'the individual'  
 The ability to manage the balance between targeted and universal provision, thereby developing the much needed 'progressive universalism'

- Emphasising the quality and equality of the relationship between the young person and the youth worker
- Progressing the breadth and range of the developmental curriculum
- Promoting, with young people, their voice and influence – towards them becoming the creators of the services they consume and achieving the realisation of 'co-production' (APYCO/NYA 2007)

The overall 'offer', however, is broader than this, and will also include sports, arts and leisure based activity. The following checklist incorporates these principles across the local offer.

### CHECKLIST FOR COMMISSIONERS

| Features of the Youth Offer              | Elements/Evidence to be considered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The <i>content</i> of the local offer | <p>Two specific elements:</p> <p><i>'sufficient educational leisure time activities which are for the improvement of young people's well being, and sufficient facilities for such activities'</i></p> <p>and:</p> <p><i>'sufficient recreational leisure time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities'</i></p> <p>Some local authorities have decided that activities which are <i>not</i> included in the offer would include:</p> <p><i>Activities which are open to all age groups and do not have a specific 'youth' focus:</i></p> <p><i>Activities in which there is no role for a suitably qualified adult or mentor to assist young people to develop a skill, implement a personal development curriculum or provide support and guidance to young people</i></p> |

| Features of the Youth Offer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Elements/Evidence to be considered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>2. Leadership and Partnership in determining and delivering the Youth Offer</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>The local authority, through its C&amp;YP structures, has <i>lead responsibility</i> for developing, securing and compiling the Youth Offer, and will need to allocate lead responsibility.</p> <p>Most authorities have identified a Lead Officer from within their Integrated Youth Support &amp; Development framework.</p> <p>Given the scope of the offer, however, it will be necessary to work with other planners and deliverers across sports, arts, volunteering, youth work, extended schools and providers of outdoor education/residential facilities. The voluntary and community sector is likely to have a role in planning the offer. It will also be essential to involve young people in the overall planning process for the youth offer. Some local authorities have established 'Task Groups' to map existing provision and identify gaps in provision and in quality against assessed needs.</p> <p>Many local authorities are moving towards locality and area based decision making on services for young people. It will be necessary to determine the authority wide ambition and strategy for positive activities, and ensure that this is embedded in locality/area planning and delivery.</p> |
| <p>3. Young people are involved in planning, designing, delivery and assessment of the offer</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>The local authority must ascertain and take account of young people's views on current provision, the need for new activities and facilities, and barriers to access. It will be important to draw on existing ways of engaging young people and supplement these by ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User feedback on existing and planned provision is sought and taken into account</li> <li>• Young people are consulted about the content of an appropriate offer in their area</li> <li>• Activities and projects designed and delivered by young people are included as a key feature in the offer</li> <li>• Young people are involved at a strategic level in determining and reviewing the planned ambition.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>4. The Youth Offer is based on identified needs of young people especially those most at risk of negative outcomes.</p> <p><i>The Government expects as a result of this legislation that local authorities will increase participation in positive activities for all young people but in particular, the most disadvantaged</i></p> | <p>Local authorities must document and publish (in the C&amp;YP Plan) its assessment of local needs for positive activities, particularly amongst young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. LAs should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall needs assessment for young people maps availability of positive activities and highlights geographical gaps</li> <li>• Young people most at risk of negative outcomes identified and their locations and interests are mapped against available positive activities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Features of the Youth Offer                                                                              | Elements/Evidence to be considered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans to fill needs based gaps are in place, involving young people in determining what should be provided.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>5. Local definition of 'sufficiency' across the offer, informs the offer and the planned ambition</p> | <p>The LA's duty to secure provision is qualified by the term 'reasonably practical', taking into account the LAs resources, capabilities, and other priorities. It will be for the LA to decide what constitutes 'sufficient' taking into account the needs of young people in the area, including those with special needs or suffering disadvantage.</p> <p>To ensure transparency, the LA should document and publish within the C&amp;YP Plan framework its assessment of local need for positive activities as well as the basis on which it has determined whether actions are, or are not 'reasonably practical'.</p> <p>DCSF has established minimum standards for the youth offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to 2 hours a week sporting activity, provided through national curriculum and leisure time activity</li> <li>Access to 2 hours a week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups and classes (includes hobbies, personal, social and spiritual development, activities encouraging creativity, innovation, enterprise, study support and residential opportunities</li> <li>Volunteering and positive contribution to communities</li> <li>Other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences, safe and enjoyable places to spend time.</li> </ul> <p><i>Failure by a local authority to fulfil their statutory duties under Section 507B could result in intervention by the Secretary of State under sections 496,497 or 497A of the Education Act 1996.</i></p> <p>With regard to sufficiency in the Youth Work element of the offer, the standards set out in 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (DfES 2001) provide helpful guidance to LAs.</p> <p>Some aspects of the Youth Offer will also be subject to requirements from other government departments (e.g. the DCMS 'Cultural Offer').</p> <p>Scrutiny and challenge processes for the Youth Offer should be publicised and accessible to young people.</p> |

| <b>Features of the Youth Offer</b>                                              | <b>Elements/Evidence to be considered</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6. How and who will deliver the offer? Are the means of delivery 'contestable'? | <p>The LA must be able to demonstrate that the decisions it takes as to how the youth offer is delivered and by whom have been tested against other delivery options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LA should identify the outcomes sought before commissioning</li> <li>• LAs should 'use the provider that offers the best possible combination of skills and experience to deliver services of the highest possible quality and for the most economical cost'</li> <li>• LAs are required to consider whether positive activity provision can be improved by commissioning the service, or elements of it through an alternative provider</li> <li>• The LA needs to satisfy itself that it has assessed the merits of different delivery options, either by competitive tendering or by other transparent means</li> <li>• Criteria for consideration might include: cost to the service user and the LA; quality; timing; location; access to target groups &amp; individuals; sustainability, and whether alternative providers could better respond to young people's needs.</li> </ul> |
| 7. The local authority's role in 'market development'                           | <p>Government sponsored research has shown that the market for providers of positive activities is underdeveloped. DCSF wants LAs to play a role in developing the local market, particularly in the VCS. The Audit Commission (2007) has highlighted the potential of VCS organisations to build 'social capital' in disadvantaged areas. LAs will want to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scope, scale and quality of positive activities provision through the VCS in their area</li> <li>• The extent and nature of investment required to improve the capacity of the VCS to deliver positive activities</li> <li>• Commissioning provision in ways that encourage local VCS organisations to tender (e.g. by commissioning packages of a scale that match the capacity of local providers).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 8. Is the youth offer/ planned ambition accessible to young people?             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local barriers to access are identified, and plans are established to remove them</li> <li>• Young people are involved in determining key barriers and developing strategies to address them</li> <li>• Specific barriers around transport, rurality, equalities issues and bullying are identified and addressed</li> <li>• Young people's participation in extended school activity should be taken into account in the LA's school transport strategy.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| <b>Features of the Youth Offer</b>                                                                  | <b>Elements/Evidence to be considered</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9. How are charges for positive activities determined?                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local charging policy based on established principles is determined, in consultation with young people and providers</li> <li>• Income from charging is reinvested in positive activities, or is used to support the engagement of disadvantaged young people</li> <li>• Young people in care should have free access to council-run services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 10. Information on the offer is accessible and available to all young people, parents and carers    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Format for the presentation of the offer is determined, with young people's involvement</li> <li>• Regular updating system is in place</li> <li>• Access points for the offer are well publicised in ways that engage young people</li> <li>• Promotion of the offer is linked to the local 14-19 prospectus and other local information sites</li> <li>• IAG agencies have knowledge and understanding of the positive activities offer</li> <li>• Information for parents and carers on the youth offer is included in the LA's overall strategy for information to parents and carers</li> <li>• Annual updates on progress on delivering the youth offer are produced and accessible to young people</li> <li>• Opportunities exist for regular feedback from young people on projects included in the offer.</li> </ul> |
| 11. Safety, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and safeguarding procedures should be in place and monitored in provision run or commissioned by the LA</li> <li>• Local performance measures agreed with key stakeholders are in place and reported on</li> <li>• MI systems are in place in all providers to collect agreed performance measurement data</li> <li>• Agreed quality standards for all elements of the youth offer are in place and draw on relevant national frameworks and standards</li> <li>• Complaints procedure is agreed and in place, and included in information to young people and parents/carers about the offer</li> <li>• The LA should not promote activities or facilities which they believe to be inappropriate or unsafe.</li> </ul>                                                                                              |
| 12. Celebrating and recognising young people's learning and achievement through positive activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers support young people to achieve a range of relevant recorded outcomes and accredited awards</li> <li>• Providers are encouraged to seek positive publicity for young people's achievements</li> <li>• Annual celebration of young people's achievements is organised through the authority and is supported and well publicised.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| Features of the Youth Offer | Elements/Evidence to be considered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13. Measuring Progress      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LA should provide young people and communities with information on improvements to the local offer</li> <li>• LAs should consider establishing standards, performance indicators or targets relating to its plans for the local offer</li> <li>• LAs should seek to collect accurate baseline data on the level of participation by young people, and update this annually to review progress</li> <li>• Participation in positive activities should be a feature of the local Children &amp; Young People's Plan.</li> </ul> |

**Gill Millar**  
**Regional Youth Work Adviser**

July 2008