



Aiming High for Young People in the South West Making it Work!

SW Regional Youth Work Conference

Conference Report

On 11 February 2008, the South West Regional Youth Work Unit held a conference on the Government's 10 year strategy for young people, *Aiming High for young people*. The conference had a focus on young people's participation in decision making.

The aims of the conference were

- To strengthen good practice across the region in the areas outlined by *Aiming High* by allowing an opportunity for projects to learn from each others' successes
- To demonstrate to policy and decision makers in the region the key part youth work organisations can play in delivering the government's policy objectives for integrated youth support services.

The conference had a focus on young people's participation in decision making and the conference workshops will contribute to a report for Participation Works on good practice in this area.

The conference was attended by 112 delegates and participants: 34 from Local Authorities, 62 from Voluntary and Community organisations and 16 other (training agencies, Awarding Bodies, Connexions, Arts Council, and Government Office).

At the start of the conference, delegates were asked to vote on how confident they were that they could show the contribution their work made to the aims of *Aiming High for young people*. 48% said they were confident, 6% said they were not confident and 46% said they were not sure. At the end of the conference, this vote was taken again, and this time 75% said they were confident, 2% said they were not confident, and 23% said they were not sure.

The conference began with presentations from Gill Millar, Regional Youth Work Adviser and Fiona Blacke, Chief Executive, the NYA on *Aiming High* the Government's 10 year strategy for young people. Following this there were presentations from two MYPs on what young people want from youth work.

WORKSHOPS

There was a choice of 5 workshops, each one showcasing a project that exemplified some of the principles of the Government's proposals. Following a short presentation about the project's work, delegates were asked to think about the challenges and opportunities that the 10 year strategy offered to their own project, around three main themes: access, empowerment and quality.

The feedback from these sessions is given in full in an Appendix to this document. Here are some key recommendations made by delegates:

Access

Recommendations

For DSCF...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate adequate resources for young people's travel• Compel statutory fund holders to work in partnership with the VCS as equal service delivery partners
For National Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise and value local, grassroots provision
For Local Authorities....	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the range of activities provided according to the requirements and requests of young people• Make links between youth work and development of 14-19 provision eg area prospectuses• Ensure staff are trained in new technology and IT equipment is available
For Voluntary Youth Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The VCS need to be involved in design and delivery of services• Need to ensure staff are trained in new technology and using it

Empowerment

Recommendations

For DSCF...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise the real cost of effectively empowering young people – to young people themselves and to organisations• Getting young people to events in rural areas is a problem – without transport, difficult to motivate young people to engage. Provision of accessible transport for young people is essential
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For National Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of whole organisations could incorporate more young people especially under 18s • Need to ensure that all young people are involved – not just the most articulate and able
For Local Authorities....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More investment required in making young people aware of how they can influence services
For Voluntary Youth Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure voice and influence groups are representative

Quality

Recommendations

For DSCF...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping a breadth of universal services important to ensure that young people remain interested and engaged in quality work
For National Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a clear understanding of what quality work is • Ensure wider stakeholders understand the value of accreditations for young people and what young people can offer as a result of taking part
For Local Authorities....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is continuity and a common understanding of quality across young people's services • Offer a package of accredited training which is developmental for young people and impacts on service quality
For Voluntary Youth Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure small voluntary sector organisations are supported in this process. Provide support to groups to gain understanding of quality standards and the benefits of working towards them

Workforce Development

Recommendations

For DSCF...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all agencies working with children and young people are involved in IYSS model • Funding for training in the youth sector an issue at all levels
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set criteria for funding to require statutory, social enterprise and voluntary sector to submit joint bids to ensure strategic planning and partnership in implementation
For National Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify what we as youth workers do and strengthen the core youth work skills • Ensure there is a modular qualification for youth work with very simple introductory criteria. These should also reflect existing qualifications
For Local Authorities....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is suitable line management support to youth workers within multi-agency context
For Voluntary Youth Organisations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively involving small organisations to get them involved in the conversations. Then give support to engage

The conference ended with a summing up by Gill Millar, who thanked all those who had taken part.

FEEDBACK FORMS

The majority of delegates completed feedback forms and these were on the whole very positive about the day. Some typical comments were:

“Very useful. Made good links with other organisations and good to learn about other people’s views and opinions”

“Good to get together. I agreed with one of the final points that the voluntary and statutory sectors need to develop ‘equality of esteem’ “

“I had hoped for more time for discussion with one another”

Most of those who made a comment on the forms said that the best part of the day was a chance to network. This was in many cases even more valued than the formal inputs.

FOLLOW ON

A suggestion was made on one feedback forms for a further regional event to develop understanding of similarities/ differences between different roles in the IYSS offer.

Appendix: Feedback from workshops

1. Access

What opportunities does the strategy offer your organisation and your client group?	What are the challenges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the range of activities we provide according to the requirements and requests of young people • Recognition and acceptance for the sector– an opportunity to develop and grow • Having a structured and positive activity base for young people - a structure that encourages disadvantaged young people to take part would be key • To have the activities which are most relevant to our community recognised and supported • Provides valid and tangible reasons and incentives for young people to engage, participate and exercise their right to influence resourcing • An opportunity to pool funding and resources to increase provision and access for hard to reach groups • Other stakeholders (Community, schools, police) can benefit by engaging in the strategy • The voluntary sector has been identified as a provider of services and that there is a need to make more of this resource • Provide effective voice and representation for the VCS and capacity building • Proactive intervention • Genuine power and influence for young people • Opportunity to link in with 14-19 agenda – particularly opportunities for rural young people • Opportunities to link in with LA’s use of new technology to promote activities for young people eg access points in the street • To pressurise for extra revenue and be honest about shortfall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring long term funding is available to meet the needs of young people • Ensuring that young people are given the opportunities to have an input into what is provided • Engaging with young people who are hard to reach • The VCS need to be involved in design and delivery of services • Travel for young people • In competition with national voluntary sector for local funds. • Rural location means that facilities for activities are limited • Securing initial revenue funding to employ workers who will facilitate the participation process • Recruiting, training and retaining the specialist trainers and tutors to support activity delivery • Providing activities that meet the wide range of needs – at a time and place that is suitable for them • Ensure equal access to services – meeting the needs of diverse groups including those with disabilities/ learning difficulties • Lack of capacity within VCS – likely to mean small groups excluded • Government strategy change • Mindset of officers/ insecurity of other services • Danger of over promising and under delivering • New technology could bring new young people into contact but difficult to build a relationship with them in this way • New technology could put up barriers for those young people with disabilities or who have problems with literacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking people to text you their views will cost them the text fees – this will put some young people off • Age range too restrictive • Keeping workforce up to date with technology
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What suggestions do you have for overcoming the barriers identified above?

- Compel statutory fund holders to work in partnership with the VCS as equal service delivery partners. Recognise the value of localised, grassroots provision using the indigenous role models who will be part of long term process
 - Effective consultation processes
 - More joined up planning/ sharing of resources
 - Aim for a greater understanding of the most disadvantaged or marginalised groups and what their needs are
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- Partnership working
 - ensuring everyone is engaged and the process used is transparent and open
 - Identifying young people and individually working to put a targeted action plan in place
 - Development of skilled workforce needs a vigorous skills audit, that identifies gaps – these gaps need to be bridged with quality training to enable skills to be updated and relevant to the cohort of young people being worked with
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- Need clear understanding of role of VCS infrastructure and resources required to support them
 - Funding to enable an effective process of engaging wider VCS. Without this smaller/ community based groups likely to be left out of process
 - To solve transport problems, could give young people of secondary school age a ‘Roamer’ ticket to use service buses
 - Youth service needs to get more involved at strategic level, especially in relation to IT

2. Empowerment

What are the implications of the strategy for your organisation, and the young people you work with?

- **Putting young people at the centre with voice, influence and financial responsibility**
- **Getting young people to events in rural areas is a problem – without transport, difficult to motivate young people to engage**

- There are good practice examples from all over the region – will need to explore ways of motivating and supporting marginalised young people
- Adults giving up power
- Some work already youth led but structure of whole organisations could incorporate more young people especially under 18s
- Making activities as ‘un-school like’ and informal as possible will encourage young people to engage
- Access to high quality equipment a difficult challenge
- Making work more inclusive – working with more partners/ organisation
- Making sure that the work we do is young people led and they have ownership of the project
- Building up the universal service to enable early intervention and targeted work
- Build integrated working with organisations, encouraging partnership and sharing of resources to provide the most adequate facilities for young people
- Joined up thinking between youth policies and the criteria set by benefits agencies
- Getting more marginalised young people interested in taking part/ accessing the groups eg UKYP is difficult because of the image they have of ‘politics’ or ‘representative groups’. Local councils should spend more time and money making young people aware of how they can influence services
- The creative approach has been proven to promote independence and learning in young people’s lives
- Young people regularly cross local authority boundaries and may choose to work across boundaries – how can local authorities work more in partnership? Will they share or fight over ‘outcomes’? Will they censor / ban a project they have funded if young people want to run it outside of their own local authority?
- The local authority has a lead role regarding help to pull together a range of partners to ensure that young people’s involvement in a range of environments is recognised. Offsetting costs to young people and also other organisations could be an issue although YOF will help a little there.

What suggestions do you have for overcoming any challenges? Have you had experience of overcoming similar problems?

- **Provision of accessible transport**
- Our projects rely on existing local youth work services which are sometimes unable to support young people to see projects through due to lack of resources/ funding/ transport/ peer pressure
- Make activities attractive through organising multi-stranded approach – arts through outdoor activities, or through sports – to appeal to a wide spectrum
- Use of formal structures like youth forums to hang arts activities on
- Funding volunteering/ recognising/ awarding/ accreditation
- Quality training programmes for young people and staff
- Ensuring voice and influence groups are representative
- Young people’s views are not just expressed but acted upon and that the process for this to happen is in place before it is started
- Organisations need to be open with each other in sharing information and resources
- Agreeing partnership protocols with neighbouring LAs

3. Quality

What opportunities does the strategy offer your organisation and your client group?	What are the challenges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation – from a package of accredited training which is developmental for young people and impacts on service quality • Participation plan – credibility for young people eg validation by ASDAN • Could form part of a strategic framework for youth work we could promote – developmental in itself/ quality assurance/ improve participation • Could also be key to development of learner involvement strategy being promoted by DIUS • Our client group needs to be heard and sometimes it is hard to support them to voice their opinions so strategy will help • Continuity and common understanding across young people's services • Hear By Right standards for organisation to aspire to • NCVYS has a role to play in order to facilitate practice • Ensuring young people's views are heard and acted on • Young people at the heart of the community • Create a framework for best practice across services – youth service lead agency in participation • Engage with V to co-ordinate resources and effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: time and capacity • Ensuring youth work values underpin all of the work • Engaging other agencies to come on board and agreeing strategy and standards • Making it attractive to young people • Enable wider stakeholders to understand value of qualification and what services trained young people can then offer • Young people's mental health/ learning difficulties • Acceptance by senior officers/ elected members • Service needs to be pro-active • Going beyond youth work boundaries

What suggestions do you have for overcoming the barriers identified above? Have you had experience of overcoming similar problems?

- Participation Plan: clear aims and objectives, young people involved and young people focused

4. Workforce Development

What do you see as the opportunities for your organisation?	What are the challenges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint training with other agencies, in co-localities • Opportunity to retain the best training and de-commission the worst • Local information sharing around specific issues/ young people • Clarity on what we as youth workers do – strengthening of core youth work skills • Retention • A skilled workforce which can deliver innovative programmes to young people will lead to better understanding of young people and their needs for their future • Developing a flexible multi-skilled workforce • Better recognition of youth work and youth workers • Development/ leadership opportunities for the work force • Chance to encourage more BME workers - make delivery to young people more appropriate to young people from BME communities • Possibility of developing a coherent youth apprenticeship scheme – goes hand in hand with the youth participation agenda • The opportunity to offer traineeships to do the professional JNC recognised qualification • To build on existing integrated approaches • Increased investment for the sector • More graduates are coming into youth work • Develop much needed specialisms • Sharing resources more effectively • Opportunity to build the business case for a high quality (youth) workforce linked to the preventative work done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure of government to define what should make up IYSS - Children’s social services often excluded from IYSS model – We need to ensure all agencies join in • Fitting young people into our Local Strategic Partnership and letting them speak • Could lose core youth work skills • Different agencies working with young people perceive youth work in different ways/ Cultural barriers /Clarity required re the type of ‘salad’ most effective to meet Aiming High eg social care or education basis? • Relationship between voluntary and statutory agencies a problem – stigma attached to vol sector. • Funding for training in the youth sector an issue at all levels (from local VCS to PG Dips in Y&CW) • For Local Authority youth services, pressures towards IYS is taking focus away from traditional links and support for VCS • Ability to recruit a diverse and representational workforce • Dearth of role models from BME communities • Poor pay • How will Apprenticeships work – how does an 18 year old challenge a group of 19 year olds? • How do you fund degree programmes as a mature student? Limited access to traineeship positions • Ensure quality isn’t sacrificed for quantity • It’s hard to get funding for volunteers over age 18 • Attracting people to come into an anti-social working environment • There isn’t a natural progression to become a qualified youth worker • Ensuring available funding reaches the areas that need it the most

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chance for accountability within the workforce • Safety • More involvement of young people in workforce development eg interviewing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing dynamic partnerships that make effective use of new money • Drawing the most effective interventions out of the multi agency approach • Reduction in funding available specifically to support youth work delivery as opposed to other youth and Children and Young People's Trusts workforce development opportunities • Monitoring registered personnel (licensed to practice) • Adequate line management support to youth workers • Support for volunteers • Linking in with small organisation to get them involved in the conversations, there are many who have no concept of the national debates going on • The language and support given to understand the conversations going on – youth work jargon is well understood by the professional element but less well by the voluntary workforce • Time – difficult for part time workers to achieve awards or degrees • Present workforce not reaching the benchmark if new licensing regulations come in • People want to be involved at varying levels eg 2 hours per week, may not want to do extensive training - Don't want to alienate part of the workforce
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What suggestions do you have for overcoming the barriers identified above? Have you had experience of overcoming similar problems?

- Work from the bottom up and provide what is actually required
- Modular qualification with very simple introductory criteria. These should also reflect evidencing qualifications. Accrediting Prior Learning is essential. Continuity in criteria very important – should exist for longer than 3 years.
- To get rid of cultural differences, workers at the base need to work face to face with colleagues.
- Any commissioning arrangements need to address workforce development issue
- Define the curriculum basis of the 'salad' ie is it a youth work/ developmental approach or a social concern approach

- Set criteria for funding to require statutory, social enterprise and voluntary sector to submit joint bids to ensure strategic planning and partnership in implementation
- Community sector organisations need to be key players in the above processes
- Clarify professional basis of other worker within integrated services: Connexions Pas, education and attendance officers, PSAs, Family Advice and Liaison Workers etc and then we can see what the 'salad' looks like. Once we have this we can see what skills gaps are.
- We also need to ensure that form follows function; young people identify what services should look like, professional roles are identified and then staff can be trained and deployed.
- Clear channels of consultation and communication
- Work towards a common agreed vision, ie better outcomes for young people
- Mentor support
- Bursaries for training fees
- Funding for training
- Develop a generic qualification with common elements and optional elements
- Audit existing training and qualifications offered
- Greater awareness of equality issues through training
- Good quality training unit with access to quality training
- Opportunities for coaching/ mentoring new staff
- Good youth worker role models
- Post graduate funding akin to PGCE and formal education and implementation of the placement allowance for Youth Worker Higher Education providers, similar to social work
- Good recognised induction for new staff
- Network and interagency work with CAF, Combined Agency Forum and Multi-Agency team panels
- Look at other LSPs around the country to see if there could be a joint approach