

## ~ Case Study ~

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

### *South West Regional Youth Work Conference*

On 11 February 08, 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 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).

### **Presentations**



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 Members of the Youth Parliament on what young people want from youth work. Questions were then put to the panel.

### **Workshops: Young People in the Driving Seat**

Delegates were then offered the opportunity to choose one from a list of five workshops. The workshop choices were:

Workshop 1: Access – Working with young people in a digital world

*Aiming High* aims to widen access to positive activities and engagement for all young people. Learn how Somerset County youth service achieved this with the use of new technology, and hear how electronic voting systems have been used by local authorities and third sector organisations to reach out to new groups.

Led by Somerset County Youth Service and Mi-Voice

#### Workshop 2: Access – young people and sport

*Aiming High* places strong emphasis on reaching out to those young people most at risk of disadvantage to allow them to take part in positive activities. Riverside Youth Project, Bristol, share their experience of engaging young people through sport programmes to kick-start the discussion about how best this can be achieved.

Led by Riverside Youth Project/ Bristol Central Positive Futures

#### Workshop 3: Empowerment – young people and the arts

A discussion on supporting young people to take the lead in planning and running services and activities. Screen Actions is an annual two day young people's film festival run by and for young people from Cornwall, and they will share the lessons they have learned in ensuring effective participation.

Led by Screen Actions Young People's film festival Cornwall

#### Workshop 4: Empowerment – Youth Opportunity Fund

How are services going to rise to the new challenges on extending young people's voice and influence set out in *Aiming High for Young People*? Hear from South Gloucestershire Youth Opportunity Fund on the opportunities offered by the new strategy and think about the implications for your own work.

Led by South Gloucestershire Youth Opportunity Fund

#### Workshop 5: Quality – young assessors and commissioners programme

*Aiming High* sets out a strategy to ensure that all young people will be able to benefit from high quality services. Hear how Young Devon's young assessors and commissioners programme has worked towards this goal, and discuss how this will impact on your own project.

Led by Young Devon

As part of the workshops, delegates were asked to think of examples of current good practice in delivering the objectives of *Aiming High*. Their feedback is below.

#### **Access**

- Clubs for Young People offers a network of training, support and advice for voluntary youth clubs to ensure quality provision for young people – the digital developments are an exciting use of technology that we hope to take advantage of.
- Gloucestershire Youth Service offer 'i' texting where they text all young people and staff about events coming up for young people – youth workers can download all members' phone numbers to send out health information or other bulletins
- Defined VCS infrastructure network in Devon funded by the youth service
- Peer Assessment: Quality provision – assessed by young people on a regular basis to add to the continuous improvement process of Bristol City Council's Youth and Play Services.
- Where the Local Authority facilitates innovative strategic management of available resources eg tasks senior Local Authority officers to build productive relationships with VCS organisations which are sustainably resourced.

## **Empowerment**

- UK Youth Parliament and Youth Opportunities Fund (but can be patchy in different areas)
- Young Leaders project at Terence Higgins Trust
- Global Collective – the national forum for young people to get involved in Global Issues and influence policy at national level
- Access to mentors – Torbay and Cornwall
- Improving access to participatory processes in Cornwall
- Training young people to volunteer in youth clubs through leadership training so that they then can work as youth workers in their own clubs
- Good partnerships working. Services being developed on a multi-agency delivery model, bringing different fields of expertise and pooling resources
- Bristol – media centre and ongoing festivals
- Work with SCAT and Youth Opportunities Funding
- [www.club13.biz](http://www.club13.biz)
- Music Space
- Prisons/ YOI
- YOF Panel Somerset. Mix of young people has meant they've all learnt from each other.

## **Quality/ Workforce development**

- Process of traineeship
- Multi-agency conferences
- Integrated vision of youth matters
- Gloucestershire's budgeting system – LA/ voluntary sector
- [www.awsom.org.uk](http://www.awsom.org.uk)
- Devon's version of 'Checking it Out' – renewable every 2 years in terms of the questions asked
- Offering trainee positions to encourage professional training
- Attempts by the safeguarding board to standardise training
- Forum for equality and diversity in Somerset (FEDS) has the potential to improve information advice and guidance in this area and assist pathways for potential workforce. Racial inclusion project – working across Somerset with children, young people, schools and families
- Skills audit being carried out across the locality to identify skills and gaps
- Training delivered locally to engage volunteers and local workers and engage them in training processes
- Partnership working processes in Bradley Stoke, Bristol
- UWE & Bristol University get students into work placements as part of social work training – offers experience of other sectors
- Bristol – offers grassroots training in development to communities then feed into Level 3 training.

The conference ended with a summing up by Gill Millar, who thanked all those who had taken part, and Participation Works for their support.

## **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.