



## A FRAMEWORK TO ASSIST COMMISSIONERS IN DEVELOPING STANDARDS FOR YOUTH WORK IN THE YOUTH OFFER

In conjunction with local authority Lead Officers for Positive Activities, the Regional Youth Work Unit at Learning South West has created this guidance document to help local authorities determine the **quantity** of youth work they want to see in their communities. Over the last few years, a more systematic evidence base has been established that shows that regular engagement in structured positive activities, including youth work is a significant factor in building resilience in young people, and keeping them 'on track' (HM Treasury, 2007).

The legislative basis for youth work can be found in Section 507(b) of the Education and Inspections Act 1996, which states that Local Authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient provision of positive activities for young people in their local area. Positive activities are defined as

- a) sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities; and
- b) sufficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities

The legislation also requires that the educational leisure-time activities and associated facilities to which access is to be secured must include sufficient educational leisure-time activities (and facilities for such activities) which are for the improvement of young people's personal and social development. This sub-set of 'educational leisure-time activity' relates to activities which are delivered using youth work methods and approaches.

The concept of 'sufficiency' is left to the local authority's discretion, and this document draws on the experience of local authorities in the South West to identify acceptable. We have used **'the locality'** as the core unit in the document, as most local authorities now organise their services to children and young people in this way. However, definitions of localities range from school clusters, to market towns and their hinterlands, and the size of the youth population in a designated locality can vary considerably. This paper assumes that the youth population (13-19) of a locality is in the region of 5,000.

### INPUTS

This section looks at different elements of youth work provision, and indicates what 'sufficiency' might look like for each element. Some local authorities are likely to exceed these standards in some parts of their areas, and areas of higher social need may require more than the standards identified here. We also recognise that in largely rural areas, the provision of 'full-service' youth facilities may be more challenging. However, we would argue that at market town level, the standards here would be a reasonable expectation.

### **Youth Facilities/Centres**

In each designated locality the local authority should ensure the provision of:

- At least 1 'Full-Service' Youth Facility which provides a varied and attractive range of opportunities for engagement for young people, staffed by appropriately skilled and qualified staff, including at least one professionally qualified youth worker. Bournemouth Council has provided a model that sets out the expectations of a 'full service' youth facility (see Appendix 1). Such facilities should be located in places that are easy to access from across the locality and should be warm, welcoming and well equipped for a variety of activities and interventions. Young people should be the primary users of such facilities, and should be involved in design and decoration.
- Sufficient part-time and shared occupancy youth facilities delivering a more limited range of opportunities in a warm safe place to meet and engage with other young people and appropriately skilled and qualified staff to enable all young people to access such facilities within a safe 20 minute journey from home
- There is strong evidence to show that young people in areas where social deprivation indicators are high gain the greatest benefits from involvement in youth work. Local authorities should ensure that youth facilities actively target young people from socially deprived areas and support them in accessing the range of opportunities available.

### **Detached Youth Work**

Detached youth work, when carried out by skilled and confident practitioners, has been shown to be particularly beneficial in engaging with young people who choose not to get involved in organised youth facilities. These young people can often be perceived to be on the fringes of anti-social and criminal activity, or at risk in other ways. Local authorities should ensure the provision of good quality detached youth work, focused in areas of greatest social need and sufficiently resourced to respond to changing needs of young people in these areas. Detached youth work may not be required in all designated localities.

### **Mobile Youth Work**

Mobile youth work operates on the principle of going out to communities where there are few opportunities for young people and engaging young people in their own settings. Mobiles take many forms, including mini-buses, trailers, converted library vans and specially designed vehicles. They can be a means of taking specialist projects out to communities, or simply testing the likely demand for more permanent youth facilities in an area. They are particularly useful in rural areas, but have also been proved valuable in other locations. The provision of flexible mobile youth provision should be considered by all local authorities

### **Targeted Project Work**

Youth work skills and methods are very effective in small group work in targeted settings, working with young people on issues that interest them. Such project work can often take place in partnership with other agencies, such as schools, libraries, arts organisations. Youth work approaches offer the flexibility to develop bespoke projects with young people as design partners, and can provide a quick response when young people want it. Open access youth facilities often provide excellent 'jumping off' points for more targeted projects, as young people engage on their own volition, and therefore provide a safe space for young people with particular needs to get involved in a project without embarrassing questions from their peers. Youth work facilities need to have sufficient staff resources to be able to develop programmes of targeted project work as demand is identified

### **Young People's Participation in Democracy and Decision Making**

Youth workers play a vital role in supporting young people's involvement in democracy and decision making. In the South West region, UK Youth Parliament has become a highly successful vehicle for young people's participation, having built on existing Youth Forums and local Youth Cabinets and Parliaments. In addition, youth workers co-ordinate the work of panels of young people who are making decisions about funding for youth organisations, have developed successful programmes to engage young people in assessing the services that they use, and work with young people to enable their views to be heard through consultation and representation in policy development. This area of work has expanded significantly in recent years, and is likely to continue to do so, especially as the drive to engage communities in determining services is expected to include young people. Aiming High for Young People (DfES, 2007) contained the expectation that young people will control 25% of the local authority budget for positive activities. Local authorities will need to ensure the provision of sufficient skilled and confident youth workers to support an increased level of young people's involvement in decision making, at both locality and authority wide level.

## **OUTPUTS**

This section indicates the activity and participation resulting from investment in youth work. The numbers and percentages have been left blank, and provide a template for commissioners and providers to use to determine their expectations and to set targets for the offer to young people

This investment in youth work as part of the Youth Offer will produce:

- N (Number) of opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities
- N (number) of young people with additional needs taking part in positive activities
- ?% increase overall in young people taking part in positive activities
- ?% (greater) increase in young people from socially deprived areas taking part in positive activities
- ?% increase in young people achieving accredited outcomes recognised by QCF
- N (number) young people taking part in local and authority wide decision making
- N (number) of young people and adults volunteering in their communities
- N (number) of young people gaining experience of different communities
- N (number) of young people making their first journey abroad (through international exchanges etc)
- N (number) of young people referred for specialist support

## **OUTCOMES**

This section identifies some of the key outcomes for young people as a result of engaging with youth work

The results of investing in sufficient good quality youth facilities include:

- Communities express satisfaction that their young people's needs are being addressed
- Reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour by young people
- Increased engagement of both young people and adults as volunteers and active citizens
- Increased opportunities for young people to participate in decision making in their communities
- Services and facilities have changed as a result of young people's feedback and involvement
- Reduction in NEETs, substance misuse, teenage pregnancies and first time entrants to criminal justice system (PSA 14)
- Increased contact with young people supports C&YP plans and provides pathways for young people seeking support

Through engagement with youth work, ***young people***:

- Feel valued and feel their voice is being heard
- Feel more in control of elements of their lives
- Feel more confident and have higher self esteem
- Are more resilient to problems that affect them
- Can make informed choices
- Have more understanding of and contact with young people from other communities
- Have better relationships with adults in their own community
- Have been challenged to achieve in areas they had not previously considered
- Have higher aspirations in other aspects of their lives

**Communities** have:

- Better relationships between young people and adults, aiding community cohesion
- Increased social capital and resilience
- More opportunities for voluntary activity, paid employment and career opportunities

**CONCLUSION**

We hope that this document provides some assistance as local authorities juggle their resources to meet the competing needs and demands of their communities, and establishes good quality youth work as a core element of the offer to young people and communities. The provision of good quality youth work requires a workforce that is suitably qualified and experienced, including an appropriate mix of professionally qualified youth workers and youth support workers. Commissioners and providers may wish to refer to our 'Guidance for Good Practice' to help them determine specifications for youth work in their areas.