



Positive for Youth Consultation Discussion Paper Summary

Introduction

Following the Positive for Youth summit on 9th March 2011, the Department for Education has released 16 discussion papers on a range of issues (with 2 more due in the autumn). These papers aim to 'promote a public debate ... in order to help shape a new Government policy statement on young people and services for young people.' The papers discuss issues around the role of young people in society, their needs and the services needed to address those needs, the role of the public, voluntary and private sectors in providing those services, and the involvement of young people and communities in shaping, delivering and monitoring them.

The following pages provide brief summaries of the papers along with the consultation questions that each one includes. Comments and views on these papers are welcome until 15th September 2011 and should be sent to positivefor.youth@education.gsi.gov.uk

The value and the vision

Public perceptions and expectations of young people must also change if we are to achieve this **Positive for Youth** vision. Young people and those who work with them frequently worry about negative perceptions of young people, and the perceived role of the media in damaging how young people are viewed. Of young people aged 11-25, 62% feel the media does not portray young people as they really are, and 76% feel that most attention is given to a minority of trouble makers rather than young people who are making positive contributions to society¹.

Inaccurate media reporting can also distort social norms, for example around levels of early sexual activity or alcohol use, which can put additional pressure on young people to conform with what they think their peers are doing. Media coverage of young people was highlighted as a major point of concern by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2008 Concluding Observations on the UK's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In a free society the Government's ability to influence media coverage is rightly limited. However, the Government wants to gather views on what can be legitimately done in this area – several of the themed discussion papers cover this issue. The Government has a role to play in addressing negative stereotyping and will take all opportunities to celebrate the contribution young people make to society through their education, volunteering, hobbies, skills and ideas, and will challenge unhelpful and misleading stereotypes wherever they appear. The Government will provide support for stronger arrangements for representing the voice of young people in media debates, building on the work of the UK Youth Parliament, Young Advisers Charity and the British Youth Council.

¹ Listen Up Report (2010) Jack Petchey Foundation.

The Vision

A society that is '**Positive for Youth**' has young people with:

Strong ambitions

Young people have the energy and enthusiasm to shape and change the world, and their worlds, in innovative and exciting ways. Our positive vision is for a society in which young people develop their own ambitious and pragmatic goals to:

- succeed in learning and work, and learn what and how they can achieve;
- be confident in their own identity, drawing on but not bound by the experiences of their families, peers and communities, with the confidence and resilience to make good decisions and manage risk; and
- Make a contribution to society, through real and virtual communities, and with public and media recognition of their achievements.

Good opportunities

In a positive society every young person will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. This means:

- providing excellent teaching and high standards of education, courses that are respected by employers and universities, with additional resources supporting the attainment of those who are disadvantaged or would otherwise be excluded;
- encouraging volunteering and other personal and social development opportunities which build young people's skills and confidence to learn, make informed choices, and find work; and
- Allowing young people to express their views and influence public decision-making.

Supportive relationships

At a time when their peers have increasing significance and influence young people need supportive relationships with adults they trust to help them develop good judgment, learn from experience, take responsibility, and manage pressures. A positive society will promote this by:

- recognizing that parents and families remain the most significant influence in the lives of young people by not placing pressure on young people to grow up too quickly, and intervening to protect young people whose family situation puts them at risk;
- investing in excellent teachers and other professionals to inspire and support young people, with particular support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged; and
- Encouraging community activities where young people can develop relationships with trusted adults, experience social mixing with their peers, and enjoy spending time with older people.

A vision for a society that is positive for youth

This paper describes the vision and principles that guide the proposals in the other papers. It focuses around the three key things that they believe all young people need

- Strong ambitions: in regards to education and employment, personal identity, and in contributing to society
- Good opportunities: in regards to education and employment, volunteering and skill building, and influencing decision-making
- Supportive relationships: in particular those with families, teachers, and their communities

Questions

- 1) Is there anything missing from this vision?
- 2) Does this vision capture what it would look like if the whole of society, not just public services, was positive for youth?
- 3) If we achieved our aims would society be positive for all young people? If not, why not?

Young people's role in society

This paper covers how young people engage with their communities and the portrayal of this in the media. It highlights the benefits of youth volunteering and the barriers that prevent young people from doing so. National Citizens Service as well as the work of UK Youth Parliament and British Youth Council are highlighted

as positive ways of taking this forward. There is particular emphasis on societal perceptions of young people, inter-generational cohesion and respect, and youth involvement in decision making

Questions

- 1) Beyond formal decision-making processes, what are effective ways of engaging young people in the life of their communities?
- 2) How can volunteering by young people be effectively encouraged?
- 3) How can young people be involved more directly in the delivery of services?
- 4) What are the most effective ways to counter negative perceptions of young people?
- 5) How can young people best be supported to present their achievements and perspectives themselves?

Young people's involvement in decision making

This paper covers decision-making outside of formal education, and focuses largely on how funding should be allocated, particularly around how localism and age should be prioritised. It expresses the wish for youth participation to be integrated into all government activity, enabling funding to be reduced over time. The paper includes examples of successful national programmes and how local and national government can best support youth involvement.

- Nationally: help with 'youth proofing' policy, supporting UK Youth Parliament, promoting positive media coverage, supporting young people to represent the UK at international events, and hosting private sector sponsorship.
- Locally: providing advice and guidance to service providers, and facilitating local youth participation in national consultation

The paper also contains a debate over the appropriate age range that youth policy should apply to

Comments and suggestions are invited about

- 1) the priority needs that should be addressed and the right balance between national and local focus
- 2) the age range to be covered by these arrangements

The outcomes of services for young people and the relationship between universal and targeted services

This paper describes youth services as including providers of: education, positive activities, youth services, IAG provision, targeted services and intensive specialist services. It covers the raising of the participation age in education and training to 18 by 2015 and the funding to extend the provision of level 2 and 3 training to 24 year olds. It states that indicators such as rates of NEET, crime and teenage pregnancies will continue to be used as measures of service success but comments are invited on this. The paper looks at where universal and targeted services are most effective and who should deliver them.

- Universal: delivered mainly through schools working alongside youth workers, other provision not publicly funded
- Targeted: services should support the most disadvantaged or at risk, discussion around how best to identify those most in need.

Questions

- 1) Are these the right outcomes for local services to young people and are these the best indicators of progress?
- 2) What are the practical implications of focusing public funding on targeted support and greater diversity of providers and how these might best be addressed
- 3) How can LA's and central government best enable community organisations to offer positive activities to local young people?
- 4) What local arrangements for identifying young people who need targeted support are likely to be most effective
- 5) How can continuity of support be achieved for young people, particularly in the transition to adult services

- 6) How can the expertise of youth workers and other professional staff and youth work approaches best be utilised
- 7) how can local services best engage with parents and families to prevent poor outcomes for young people
- 8) examples of good practice or innovative delivery of services for young people are invited for possible further dissemination

Commissioning services for young people

This paper states the need for LA's to identify the service needs of young people and then to select the best agencies to deliver these services. It stresses the need for young people and communities to be involved in every stage of this process. It puts emphasis on the need for 'market development' with LAs moving away from service delivery towards defining and increasing service quality. Other topics discussed include the establishment of social enterprises, support for the voluntary sector to bid for work, and multi-agency working and pooling of funding streams.

Questions

- 1) How can we continue to drive up quality and performance in the commissioning of services for young people?
- 2) What are the barriers to a more competitive market for the provision of services for young people and how can they be overcome
- 3) What models of commissioning and local service delivery should commissioners consider to best support partnership, enable integration, release cost savings, and leverage additional funding and resources from communities and the private sector?

Capital infrastructure to support services for young people

This paper explores the different settings and environments that young people choose to spend their free time. It discusses the merits and difficulties of having dedicated facilities for young people and explores the use of other community buildings and facilities. It emphasises the need for ownership of services by the young people who use them. The paper gives support for existing Myplace developments but states that no future funding will be granted to invest in youth facilities. Focus is put on multi-use buildings owned by community organisations, and on extra-curricular activities provided through school. The paper includes three models of good practice.

Questions

- 1) In what circumstances are dedicated youth facilities the best environment to deliver services to young people and how can they be viable and sustainable in the long term?
- 2) What are the benefits and limitations of delivering services to young people through multi-use facilities, and how can more community facilities be made attractive and accessible to young people?
- 3) In what circumstances can facilities on school or college sites offer attractive and sustainable environments for services to young people?

What other examples are there of innovative ways to deliver high quality sustainable facilities for young people?

Growing the role of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations in Services for Young People

This paper focuses on the importance of the work done by charities and the voluntary sector. It believes that VCSOs are well placed to identify and respond to young people's need, particularly in their transition to adulthood, but that they need better support to bid for LA work and funding. National funding will be allocated to support some VCSOs and 'Catalyst' has been set up to support and grow the capacity of the voluntary sector. The Localism Bill and Big Society Bank are given as examples of how communities will have more power and funding to run the services they use and need.

Questions

- 1) What is the best way to support local commissioners to diversity of out-of-school youth services and develop their local voluntary and community sector?
- 2) How should VCSOs develop and learn from current and best practice and how can they ensure that commissioners know about their successes?
- 3) How can national action best enable youth VCSOs to access sources of social finance?
- 4) How can we take advantage of the opportunity that NCS presents to strengthen the profile of youth VCSO organisations in delivering services to young people?
- 5) What other examples are there of good or innovative practice leading to a greater role for the VCSO sector in delivering services for young people?

The role of businesses in supporting young people

This paper emphasises the important role that the private sector can (and often does) play in supporting youth services. It suggests that there are benefits of business support to areas such as education, leisure, and wellbeing among others, as well as to youth services. It discusses the benefits of long term investment and partnership between the private and youth sector. It believes that three concepts need to be explored

- Engagement and brokerage; the barriers presented by the size of many youth charities, the promotion of private sector involvement by businesses that are already involved businesses, LAs role of co-ordinating investment/sponsorship
- Volunteering; matching private sector employees' skills with youth sector opportunities
- Changing attitudes; the impact of the negative image of young people on business investment in youth charities

Questions

- 1) What brokerage arrangements are already in place and how can we best build on them to increase significantly the number of businesses involved with out-of-school services for young people?
- 2) What else can be done to support more businesses to get involved, particularly as a local community level, and to influence them to work collaboratively and strategically by area or region?
- 3) What is needed to increase the capacity of VCSOs to work with volunteers and to increase further the level of volunteering by private sector employees and those who have recently retired?
- 4) How can businesses and their employees be encouraged to develop a more positive attitude towards young people?

The relationship between services for young people and the parents of young people

This paper looks at the role of parents in young people's lives and the affects of good and bad parenting on child behaviour and outcomes. It commits to early intervention work and multi-agency family support programmes and suggests that this can decrease rates of crime, anti social behaviour, child maltreatment, school failure and mental health disorders. It introduces 'Health and Wellbeing Boards' to LA's by April 2012 to support these proposals. It also suggests that national programmes like Community budgets can be used for family support. Focus is put on the dissemination of information to parents and enabling them to influence policy

Questions

- 1) How can all services for young people work effectively with those providing services to adults and families to take account of the role of parents and the wider family context?
- 2) How can services for young people contribute to the support provided to families as part of the national programme for families with multiple problems

- 3) Given the evidence above, how can services for young people work with schools and parents of teenagers to encourage them to take advantage of the support available?
- 4) How can services which support parents be better enhanced to meet the needs of parents of teenagers?
- 5) How can service providers involve young people and their parents in the design and delivery of services for young people?
- 6) What other examples are there of good or innovative practice of services for young people engaging with wider family needs?

Adolescent brain development

This paper explains the stages of brain development and highlights puberty and adolescence as the second major development phase after childhood. It links brain development with susceptibility to peer pressure and the consequent higher likelihood of engaging in risky behaviour. It discusses mental health disorders in adolescence, their causes, and the short and long-term impact they have on a young person's outcomes. It recognises that preventative work as well as treatment is needed, along with raising the awareness of parents and practitioners. Finally it emphasises the need for greater support for both young people and professionals about the causes and treatments for mental health disorders.

No specific questions

Equality and Diversity

This paper describes the negative outcomes experienced by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the barriers that prevent them from engaging in mainstream services. It puts particular focus on targeted early intervention for disadvantaged groups, increasing the participation of hard-to-reach groups, and targeting risky behaviour. It also puts a strong focus on community cohesion. The paper suggests three courses of action

- The elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people of different groups
- Fostering good relations between different groups

Questions

- 1) What further action should the Government and other statutory agencies be taking to
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation? Are there examples of good practice which should be shared more widely?
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups? Are there groups that require particular support and whose needs should be prioritised?
 - Foster good relations between people from different groups?
- 1) Are there any gaps in the issues identified and, if so, what can be done to address them?
- 2) Are there any particular opportunities to improve outcomes for disadvantaged young people who should be taken forward?
- 3) Are there examples of good practice in equality and diversity of services to young people which could be further disseminated?

Helping young people to succeed in learning and find a job

This paper looks at education and training and their benefits on 'individuals, the economy and wider society'. Emphasis is put on improving the education system by enabling schools to shape their own curriculum, and promoting more traditional academic subjects through the introduction of the English Baccalaureate. In regards to training and employment, there is a heavy focus on reducing NEET numbers, the raising of the participation age to 18, increasing the numbers of apprenticeships, and creating 'sector-based work academies', as well as providing more support for young people entering work.

Questions

- 1) How well do services to support young people into learning and work fit together on the ground? We would be interested in any examples of good practice and areas of challenge, including on issues around referral mechanisms and information sharing
- 2) Are there overlaps and gaps between services, particularly for those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET? How best can these be addressed?
- 3) We want to ensure that services and support fit together for 18 year olds as they make the transition from young people's to adult services. How can roles and responsibilities be best aligned to support young people at this crucial stage?

Young People's Health and Wellbeing

This paper considers the causes of health issues including risky behaviour, and highlights a number of existing health policies and the gaps between child and adult services which young people often fall through. It makes recommendations for service improvement around access, availability, and being young people friendly and it promotes the existing 'You're Welcome' scheme. It states that health needs should be addressed in a wider context and not purely by the NHS. Mental and sexual health, teenage pregnancy and risky behaviour all feature highly in the paper

Key areas to give feedback on

- 1) How and when young people want to access services and how professionals should treat them.
- 2) Examples of really good PSHE/SRE in schools and/or colleges
- 3) How young people's voices can be heard in the design, commissioning, delivery and assessment of services.
- 4) Workforce training programmes, to raise the expertise of non-health professionals
- 5) Peer support schemes in schools, colleges or other youth settings
- 6) Mental health work including that which addresses stigma, involve schools, colleges and the voluntary sector, and bridges the gap between children's and adults services.
- 7) Work to reduce young people's risky behaviours
- 8) Central government's role in improving young people's health and wellbeing.

Preventing youth crime and substance misuse

This paper considers the problems the UK faces in regards to youth crime and drug use. It highlights the high rates of cannabis use and binge drinking, and the high re-offending levels of young people committing serious crimes. It discusses the problems of simultaneously tackling problems and improving society's perception of young people. It states a need for more specific measures of anti social behaviour needed, and that joined-up working is needed to tackle crime, substance misuse and the other issues they often link with. Other issues highlighted include better strategies for delivering appropriate information to young people and monitoring advertising and marketing, and work around crime prevention and personal safety to prevent young people from becoming victims of crime

Questions

- 1) How can national government best support local areas to commission integrated services?
- 2) What is the key learning from previous national or local programmes that needs to be preserved?
- 3) What other roles does national government need to play in this policy area?
- 4) How do we best support schools to work more effectively with local substance misuse and crime prevention agencies?

National Citizen Service

This paper describes National Citizen Service as 'a 6-8 week personal development programme for every 16 year old to undertake at the end of year 11' which aims to give young people the skills they need to become active and responsible citizens. The paper provides detail on what the programme hopes to achieve and how it will be rolled out.

Questions

- 1) How can NCS be developed to best achieve the intended benefits for young people?
- 2) What are the mechanisms for ensuring all young people are able to participate in NCS, including those least likely to participate?
- 3) How can NCS best engage volunteers, businesses and wider society to contribute to enhance the NCS experience for young people?
- 4) How can we best capacity build the skill sets needed to deliver NCS including delivery of personal and social development programmes to social mixed groups?

The development of the young people's workforce

This paper considers both the role of the future workforce and the skills that employees will need. It defines the workforce as anyone who works with 13 to 19 year olds outside of school, who isn't a teacher or a social worker. This includes volunteers, part and full time workers doing both one to one and group work. It suggests that young people should be seen in the context of their families. The paper describes the role of government-funded workers as

- helping young people acquire skills for working and adult life
- engaging those at risk of under-achieving
- reducing risky behaviour

Professional youth workers, (those qualified to degree level), should provide targeted support, lead and manage services, and provide support to the wider workforce. The paper states that workforce development will be the responsibility of the employer and that an Institute of Youth Work may be created.

Questions

- 1) Do these public policy objectives provide a clear and helpful context for workforce development?
- 2) Are these the key changes in service delivery which will impact on workforce development?
- 3) Is there any evidence of existing and emerging priority skills gaps and how can these needs be met?
- 4) Are there other implications for the training and development of the youth workforce?
- 5) What examples are there of providers and local areas adapting their own workforce development plans to address these changes and enhance their services?
- 6) Do you have views on what arrangements the sector needs to put in place collectively to support workforce development for the youth workforce?

References

Department for Education, (2011), Positive for Youth discussion papers, <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople>