



## **NYA Sufficiency Statement**

### **A base-line for youth services**

#### **Introduction**

Youth workers create conditions where young people can thrive. A good sustained youth work intervention can also reduce the likelihood of a young person needing high cost, more interventionist services later on. It supports an investment in young services, where its value and savings are long term and not necessarily seen as a return on investment by those providing the services and support. Therefore, youth work is best viewed as a form of education, supporting young people in the present and ambitious for their future. It needs to be a universal service for young people to access from their local communities, with clear pathways to targeted or specialist provision for some young people.

There is a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient youth services in their area. However, this has proved difficult to define and enforce. The Government is currently reviewing the statutory guidance<sup>1</sup>. This must be supported by a clear statement from government on the importance of providing a sufficient offer to young people.

As the national body for youth work the NYA is going to publish minimum levels of sufficiency expectation. It should be for councils and communities to determine how they will deliver this; but for government to hold local authorities to account on their ability to provide an overall offer of sufficient quality and intervene where services are not functioning to those standards.

#### **Current statutory guidance**

“Every local authority in England must, ‘so far as reasonably practicable’, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority’s area access to:

- 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.”<sup>2</sup>

Currently it is for each local authority to decide what constitutes ‘sufficient’; taking into account the needs of young people in its area (where ‘sufficient’ is judged in terms of quantity). The term ‘reasonably practicable’ is described as “depending on the specific circumstances of the local authority” including “its resources, capabilities and other priorities”. This has left youth services vulnerable to cuts in council run provision and funding, in turn undermining the support and community fabric on which voluntary sector provision can thrive. Many elected representatives, supported by the Local Government Association, are keen to see the guidance strengthened and to secure resources for greater levels of youth service provision.

NYA believes that just as local authorities are accountable to secure sufficient school places in their area, they need to be resourced to ensure access to quality youth services. A national census of current provision, statutory and voluntary, is required to establish a clear baseline of youth work provision and to secure core funding for local youth services and the involvement of young people in decision-making.

#### **Local youth partnerships**

Both the Government and Opposition parties support the development of local youth partnerships. Such partnerships would bring greater coherence to end the disparity of services across the country, to secure access to high quality youth services and sufficient youth work provision. For local authorities to have the ability to oversee and coordinate, with the support of all levels of local government, is invaluable. They

retain the statutory responsibility and will set the direction of local youth services, including young people in the location, design and running of activities. The local youth partnership will bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sector to make the most effective use of all available funding and assets alongside young people themselves.

They should look to actively build capacity within their boundaries for all types of providers which encourages high quality provision, and beyond core funding. This will ensure that planning is not undertaken in isolation. It must include consideration of existing youth work provision and the development of a shared ambition for the local youth services.

### **Core principles**

In determining what is a sufficient minimum level of provision there are some guiding principles of approach:

- a) Local authorities, in partnership with voluntary sector organisations, should determine how best to use resources to achieve the desired outcomes<sup>3</sup>.
- b) This must include active involvement of young people in the co-production of services, and are accessible to young people.
- c) Services should be easily available via universal settings with clear pathways to targeted or specialist provision, in order to increase uptake and minimise stigma.
- d) There needs to be a requirement to jointly publish an annual plan with clear statements of who was setting out to achieve what, set against a statement of the use of both Government and voluntary resources.

To secure access to quality youth services there further needs to be clear recognition and consistent application of standards for qualifications, training and skills for the professional and volunteer youth workforce. To run youth provision and extend the reach to all young people – from detached youth work to running youth clubs and facilitating youth councils – requires skilled youth workers<sup>4</sup>.

### **Recommendation**

National Youth Agency: At least two professional youth workers<sup>5</sup> and a team of youth support workers and trained volunteers are required for each secondary school catchment area.

This supports access to local youth services in a geographically defined area that is already the basis of local authority planning to secure sufficient school places, and by which other determinant factors can be calculated by households and population, including levels of deprivation and need. It aligns closely to wider provision and interventions, linked to schools, health services and council wards, for example, with youth work contributing to the development of multi-agency working and partnerships with community groups including out-of-school provision.

It provides the core baseline for guaranteed access to quality youth work, facilities, staffing ratios, training and employment to open up career pathways and volunteering opportunities across a diverse range of providers for an eco-system of community-based youth work to flourish.

*NYA is the national body for youth work and Professional Statutory Regulatory Body responsible for the validation and standard-setting for qualifications in youth work in England, led by NYA's Education & Training Standards Sub-Committee (ETS), through our alignment with the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth & Community Workers (JNC).*

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**References:**

<sup>1</sup> DCMS Consultation, from 3rd October 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/statutory-guidance-review-for-local-youth-services-have-your-say>

<sup>2</sup> Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being  
This is statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education under Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

<sup>3</sup> NYA recommends alignment to the Outcomes Framework published by Local Government Association and Centre for Youth Impact

[https://www.youthimpact.uk/uploads/1/1/4/1/114154335/a\\_framework\\_of\\_outcomes\\_for\\_young\\_people\\_2.0\\_-\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](https://www.youthimpact.uk/uploads/1/1/4/1/114154335/a_framework_of_outcomes_for_young_people_2.0_-_executive_summary.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> NYA is reviewing the curriculum, qualifications and opening up career pathways and volunteering opportunities from 2020 (as at October 2019)

<sup>5</sup> This refers to professional qualifications in youth work which are recognised by JNC (Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth & Community Workers)