

National Youth Sector Advisory Board

Annual Meeting

9th March 2023

Mary Sumner House, Westminster

Summary: actions

Over the last year we have seen the implementation of the National Youth Guarantee and Youth Investment Fund and progress on forthcoming local authority statutory guidance. That supports a diverse range of provision and increased opportunities with young people, to meet their needs and interests.

To secure a youth offer of equitable access for all young people to regular youth work and out of school activities requires stable, dedicated funding and the local infrastructure for investment to increase the capacity of the youth sector, its youth workers and volunteers. This includes tailored or targeted provision to be inclusive of young people with additional needs.

- a) Data work is a priority to build the evidence base for investment, including the national youth sector census, to help 'make the case' too in the run up to the next Spending Review, post-general election, at a time when 'government is listening';
- b) There is a policy focus on the development of local youth partnerships, or similar, and the capacity and resilience of the youth sector;
- c) A sector response is recommended on the cost-of-living, both short term and beyond the immediacy of the current crisis, in particular how we can support youth workers and volunteers, and in ways they support young people and families;
- d) Other policy areas responsive to government included Holiday Activities and Food programme; alongside cross-sector connections and actions in support of:
 - e) Education, to receive a report back on progress of youth work with schools (NYA and UK Youth) and enrichment (DofE and NCS) and office of the Children's Commissioner with DfE and DCMS;
 - f) Justice, to progress work with the Youth Justice Board and connect to Alliance for Youth Justice that supports the diversity of youth provision supports a young person first approach at critical points when the youth sector can connect to the youth justice system and formal services;
 - g) Health, further consideration of social prescribing which meets young people's additional needs to improve mental and physical wellbeing, connecting to (not duplicating) the Youth Social Prescribing Network (Street Games) and working with the National Academy of Social Prescribing;
 - h) For the Advisory Board, we look to greater youth participation working with the British Youth Council and extended networks of member organisations, and a more diverse board to ensure sector representation of the communities we serve;
 - i) This will help better inform government and NYA (as the statutory body for youth work in England), draw on collective insights from across the whole youth sector with the strength of youth voice and grassroots experiences, that in turn will help set and frame areas for future discussion and development to progress the NYSAB ten year strategy.

1. Introduction: annual review

The Chair reflected on the progress made by the NYSAB over the last 12 months, namely:

- New sector resilience
- National Youth Guarantee
- Working across sectors
 - Education
 - Health
 - Justice
 - Local Partnerships

Guided by the 10-year strategy adopted in 2022, progress has been made towards a clear youth offer from consultation and engagement on the DCMS youth priorities (including its National Youth Guarantee) and strengthened statutory guidance in consultation and draft, due for publication by DCMS in 2023. There has been progress and collaboration in support of the National Youth Sector Census (NYA), in its initial stages to establish a baseline of provision and towards a sector data hub.

Putting the sector on surer footing and mobilising youth works and volunteers at a local level for frontline delivery is a priority, with clearer local infrastructure supported by government to help achieve this. The development of local youth partnerships is one way forward the Advisory Board will explore further with DCMS.

NYSAB is the sector forum for policy and practice with government. It includes national organisations and agencies, regional networks, professional bodies, funders, local government and young representatives. In our work, looking forward, for the Advisory Board to have greater:

- Youth participation, working closely with British Youth Council and extended networks
- Diversity on the Board and across sector representation of the communities we serve

The Chair thanked the sustained commitment to the board by its members, the close working relationship with DCMS and support from NYA as secretariat; and in particular thanked Jonathan Hopkins, who steps down from his role in support of the Chair and advisory board organisation since its inception.

2. Priorities with young people

British Youth Council highlighted the priorities with young people including:

- Greater youth voice
- Opportunities for all young people - education, sport, youth clubs
- Better mental health - only £14 per young person spent on mental health
- Cost of living
- Votes at 16, and the voting system in the UK - Voter ID
- Improved media and digital literacy
- Creation of a Youth Minister

3. Reflections

DCMS

- It was a significant achievement, supported by work with NYSAB, to secure the Youth Investment Fund that underpins the National Youth Guarantee and new facilities in priority areas across England.
- The Advisory Board has also contributed in discrete ways to government policy, including Holiday Activities and Food programme and Turing international exchanges, for example.

- Through the contribution of NYSAB and others, the youth sector is in now a stronger position to guide and support more government departments who are looking to DCMS in work with the youth sector, and further to revised statutory duty guidance.
- Data work is a priority to show need of sector, the number of young people, the number of disadvantaged to sell a collective story.
- This supports the need also for greater clarity by the sector on priorities and ways forward, as part of the National Youth Guarantee and local provision.

NYA

- Data is critical for building the evidence base for investment in the youth sector, with young people, for improved outcomes.
- Increased investment in the sector will only be possible through greater collaboration and in appreciation of the support of Advisory Board members and others for the National Youth Sector Census.
- Support from the DCMS youth policy team and directorate is highly valued and helped make significant progress to promote an understanding of and investment in the youth sector; and as we work together towards the next Spending Review post-2024 general election.

4. Thematic Discussions

The ten-year strategy for the National Youth Sector Advisory Board was adopted late 2021 and has run for a year across 2022. It does not seek to capture all that the youth sector delivers, but to focus on the capacity, quality and investment in youth provision. Our shared aim is to ensure equity of access and a continuum of opportunities and experiences that make a demonstrable difference to young people's lives and life chances.

This informs the basis of regular updates and discussion by the advisory board. Over the previous year we have featured: Education; Health; and Justice. An additional theme emerged for further discussion in relation to the Cost-of-Living crisis. We will also review with DCMS its plans for the Turing scheme, since the ending of participation in Erasmus+.

In advance of the AGM, small groups met online to review the issues covered in 2022 on actions arising, any changes in context, and to identify priority issues or actions to carry forward. This informed the presentations and table discussion on the day: what progress is needed over the next 1-2 years?

- a. Cost of living
- b. Youth justice
- c. Social prescription (health)
- d. Education (schools)

a. Cost of Living

Ongoing crisis – there is uncertainty on how long this will continue as the economy continues to change from global events. The long term impact of the cost of living will severely affect future outcomes. COVID lockdowns showed what the collective youth sector could achieve. A plan could be developed to illustrate how the youth sector could support families, young people, youth organisations, youth workers and volunteers.

- **Collective evidence** – collectively what can we show on young people's needs
- **Effective collaboration** – how can we replicate lockdown collaboration
- **Resources** – what practical resources do youth workers and youth orgs need
- **Youth-led solutions** – listening to young people for solutions, evidence project understanding impact from April onwards (youth workers and young people).

- **Workforce** – harder to retain staff, opportunity for youth employment, opportunity for business to invest in youth work.
- **Direction of funding** – prioritising smaller, vulnerable community organisations
- **Cross-sector collaboration** – education, employment, health, justice, social care.
- **Evidence and messaging** – illustrating how the youth sector can support extension of current programmes e.g. Holiday, Activities and Food programme

Q. Is there a COVID style response and guidance needed to protect and ‘keep open’ youth sector provision (facilities and activities); and how can we support youth workers and volunteers?

- We need to be able to work smarter together to bring together evidence and action on levels of need of youth provision which support young people (and families).
- To secure improved outcomes with young people (and their families), youth sector resilience and staff wellbeing (professionals and volunteers) is a priority.
- Organisations being able to talk to funders:
 - Short term resources put in place can help garner important data
 - How can we use that as a catalyst, to increase resources and as needs develop
 - This needs to be sustained, ‘a rolling offer’ for other funders to come on board
- Where is the navigation part? How do we better inform local councils on signposting, and inform national government (and LGA) as a central resource?
- What potential is there for a navigation toolkit for youth workers to know how to signpost to food banks, navigation to debt organisations, etc?
- **Resources:** There needs to be better guidance and a more collective sharing of resources, like with the youthworksupport.org site in response to the pandemic; and providers connected to each other’s resources, grant funding and data collection linked to the Census.
- **Policy pushes:** The workforce is struggling, with youth workers on a low wage, loss of funding by youth providers, and cost of living crisis impacts on staff and volunteers. Because of inflationary pressures funders are struggling which has a knock-on effect on to youth provision.
- Shorter term: there is an emergency need for youth work as crisis/family support, but what is the exit strategy?
- Longer term: reframe and delineate the different roles of youth provision, for:
 - Crisis situations.
 - Mental and physical wellbeing (fun).
 - Skills for life and work.

b. Youth Justice

“We know trusted relationships create positive change for young people. Children need adults to believe in them and to see their potential – it helps them to see it too.” (Youth Justice Board)

- Diversity of youth provision supports a young person first approach; rather than services wrapped around the institutions.
- Most of the youth justice system is delivered by statutory services (and professions).
- Much of the community provision is delivered by volunteers within VCS.
- A youth worker is a bridge for young people with statutory services.
- A range of activities and support is needed in prevention pathways for young people on the cusp of, and diversionary activities for those in contact with, the justice system.
- There are critical points when the youth sector can connect to the youth justice system and formal services; with young people involved:
 - On the cusp of the youth justice system, e.g. being expelled from school
 - As an alternative route to custody, e.g. community provision in sentencing
 - In a route out of custody, e.g. as part of resettlement

- To better understand the scale of the challenge:
 - How to secure professional youth work support, sustained over time
 - The capacity (recruitment and skills) of volunteers, as mentors or group activities
- For greater confidence of young people on the cusp of or in contact with the justice system:
 - Near to peer mentors or coaches and role models within the community groups and representation on community panels
 - Professional relationships across statutory services in policing, justice, social services
 - The extent young people are included from their experience, participation and voice in prevention, youth justice and resettlement

Q. How to ensure equitable access to youth work and out of school activities for young people on the cusp of the youth justice system which meets their additional needs?

- Youth and community workers being there for the whole journey, not just part of the journey.
- Youth and community provision instead of custody - intensive programme for young people.
- London VRU & Nottingham VRU are working in the community, relational work to tackle prevention and safeguarding. This can be backed by data on statistics in the areas.
- Cross-sector working to reduce the number of care leavers entering the youth justice system. How do we use data from AP/SAFE Taskforces informing YJB, HO to influence policy?
- Different youth provision based on prevention and intervention e.g. Mary's Centre, Primrose Hill is on call 24/7 and can support young people who think they're in danger.
- Shine a light on the brilliant examples of where the youth sector is already working on this in the sector: early identification and targeted (early) prevention – including before Year 9.
- Raise the profile of a youth sector role as connector 'specialist at this', link worker; and to help ensure greater consistency across the system (shared outcomes, common language).
- DCMS Research targeted longitudinal studies in these areas, there's a structure to collect the evidence that doesn't exist. Create a measure through case studies and identify what current themes are present.
- Local youth partnerships; school social work teams; greater provision in community spaces young people use (sports, sexual health, etc.).
- Greater investment in centre outreach and detached/street-based youth work
- Workforce confidence – professional and volunteer youth work – and inter-professional understanding.
 - Winning hearts and minds of the secure estate for youth work skills and projects
 - Shifting mindset in policing to stop seeing young people together as a threat
 - Facilitate youth voice in the justice system to help the transition out of the secure estate
 - A priority focus on care leaver/young people in care as subgroup

c. Social Prescription

Social prescribing has a role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of the nation by connecting people to their local communities. However, simply cutting and pasting an adult model will not work. Social prescribing is a model for referral, triage with a view to developing a plan and identifying youth services and activities that can support them, mainly voluntary sector.

Social prescribing is not a funding stream; it is more about joint approaches or investment on shared outcomes with young people, enhancing youth sector provision. A challenge for the youth sector is the capacity of current youth provision to include or support young people with additional needs; and the extent there are skilled youth workers/ volunteers to triage or refer to others. There are some guiding principles in connecting the youth sector to social prescribing.

- **Culture** - not just for 18+, the youth sector can meet young people 'where they are at' through youth work approaches and activities.
- **Confidence** - a clear articulation of what 'youth work' does and what 'social prescribing is' for pathways of referral.
- **Care** - focus on personal care and social development; with open-access provision that supports additional needs
- **Connections** – connecting link workers and youth & community workers, for referrals and support; with skills-set or training that can support.
- **Collaboration** - the youth sector supports all needs to improve wellbeing, social prescribing has shared outcomes.

There are critical points when the youth sector can connect to social prescribing:

- A universal youth offer and equitable access to regular activities which support mental and physical wellbeing, complementary to schools and colleges, that reaches all young people
- The capacity to include young people with additional needs (below the threshold of statutory services) or to triage and access other services and support
- Statutory services support young people with more complex needs, for referral to specialist health provision

Q. How to ensure equitable access to youth work and out of school activities for young people which meets their additional needs to improve mental and physical wellbeing?

- Be clear about what social prescribing is:
 - Clarify routes to access - what is the school link
 - Guidance for teachers and youth workers to have social prescribing skills
- Better connections and signposting to the diverse range of youth provision to meet the needs and interests of young people with additional needs (below the statutory threshold) for their mental and physical wellbeing.
- Where youth workers (and teachers) can provide the link to provision and within the development of local youth partnerships, for example; the role of the youth sector census can also support navigation locally.
- Encourage more young people led social prescribing, and the potential of peer group communities (The Mix is working on this).
- Up-skilling and practice-based specialism for youth workers and volunteers; but avoid duplication with the Youth Social Prescribing Network (Street Games).
- Build on what a youth worker or youth provider already does and delivers, it is as much about the confidence of the youth worker or volunteer and local group in supporting young people with additional needs as it is the confidence of the young person to engage.
- That could be supported, for example, by having a designated health/social prescribing lead just as local groups and organisations require a designated safeguarding lead.
- Social prescribing links to resources which are linked to the Youth Work Curriculum (NYA) and social prescribing outcomes (Street Games), which can connect with the wider work of National Academy of Social Prescribing.

d. Education

A number of partners within the NYSAB are looking at how the youth sector can support young people in and out of school. They have identified patchy youth service and school partnerships across the country – this is happening in some areas, but could be expanded. There is role for the youth sector to support personal and development – skills for life and work, mental and physical wellbeing, and contextual factors effecting young people. A plan could be developed to promote the role that the youth sector can play in supporting young people in and out of school.

- Extra-curricular and enrichment – the youth sector offers a wide range of activities that young people could get involved in.
- Youth workers could support in different ways in and out of school – 1-2-1s, mentoring, lunchtime activities, alternative provision, home visits, online work, group sessions – depending on young people’s needs and potentially the whole school’s needs.
- Youth workers could act a bridge to and between statutory services and the young person.
- It needs education sector support and buy in.
- Therefore a clear definition and recognition of what is the youth offer, what is the role of the youth worker, practitioner or volunteer and how will they work with other professionals.
- Evidence of what is already happening in the sector whilst addressing data gaps, what research project happening (what’s missing) and how can we use this to support signposting and partnership.
- Demonstrating positive impact for investment - influencing national and local government, multi academy trusts and schools of the positive impacts of youth work in and out of school.
- A short presentation followed on emerging findings of the cross-party review of youth work with schools commissioned by NYA and supported by UK Youth:
 - A school’s prime function is education attainment within a safe and caring environment and, crucially, the personal development of its students. Youth work is distinctive but complementary.
 - For youth work, its function is to improve young people’s wellbeing, providing a safe space for young people to socialise and learn new skills, defined as their personal and social development.
 - Brought together with schools, youth work can unlock cost-effective support for young people’s wellbeing and education
 - This includes: youth and community ‘link’ workers; increased learning opportunities in and outside of school, and enrichment activities; alternative provision for enhanced learning (social and emotional development); and early help in outreach and multi agency approaches, including family hubs.
 - Guiding principles:
 - Open access/ universal youth and community provision
 - Safe space in and outside of school
 - Young people’s active role and participation
 - Informed practice, pedagogy and curriculum
 - Elective premium, for extra-curricular
 - On school site and community facilities
 - Quality frameworks and formal guidance
 - Professional development, joint training
 - Tracking: learning journey; life journey
 - Building an evidence base

Further discussion included:

- How a model approach includes employment, skills and career guidance.
- Political literacy and media literacy – as an integral part of personal and social development.
- Use of common language and shared outcomes, between youth work and schools – the user journey of the young person, to better understand how youth workers work with young people and complements formal education.

5. DCMS: a forward view

DCMS led a short presentation and discussion on work carried out in support of youth policies and priority areas for consideration. This includes:

- Issuing new LA Statutory Duty guidance
- Working with the sector to address workforce challenges
- Strengthening the collective data and evidence for youth work

The Statutory Duty revised guidance will have youth engagement and partnership working embedded throughout; asking local authorities:

- What do your young people need?
- What do you have in place already?
- What should you prioritise?
- Plan and publicise the local offer, and review.

Discussion:

- Working with LGA and NYA, there will be a lead person for each local authority, to support quality and a pilot of peer review (which includes young people) between local authorities.
- To encourage local authorities to co-design youth provision with young people, BYC offered support.
- DCMS would welcome a collaborative approach to the next spending review (2024), positioning youth work in different spaces - youth worker and sector who deal in crisis (HO, MoJ) and also the space of the youth worker in skills for life and work.
- DCMS are in talks with Dept for Education, Education Endowment Foundation and Youth Endowment Fund and funding a programme that has a youth worker supporting a young person who is about to be on the cusp of exclusion.
- DCMS has funded some areas where there are 'gaps', including the longitudinal impact of youth work and outcomes with vulnerable young people in particular; while there are challenges, it is evidence that is needed to build the business case for greater investment.

6. Local Youth Partnerships

A youth sector panel discussion led on insights from their experiences of partnership working, to inform local youth partnerships as a focus for policy development.

Young People's Foundation

- It's not about a particular model, but supporting a local area in understanding local needs in the area and improving outcomes for young people.
- Supporting local areas to make the case - – 'why should I fund getting people together'
- Establish a framework of the core conditions that enable good partnerships to happen - locally led, needs based approaches.
 - Demonstrating that the outcomes of the young people have come first before those of the organisation
 - Creating spaces where youth workers can get together - resources and training
 - Empowering local areas and providing the opportunity for local areas to influence

London VRU

- VRU set up in 2018 by the Mayor of London and used to learn the public health approach and now moved to the underlying causes of violence - poverty, racism.
- The whole approach is partnership working.
 - Reducing, stabilising violence in London and placing communities at the heart of those solutions (impossible for us to do this on our own).
 - Working with NHS, VCSEs, health for a prevention angle.

- Considerations when going into a partnerships:
 - What do we bring (expertise, strengths)
 - Are we an enabler for others
 - We have responsibility to listen to young people and communities
- Examples include:
 - Flagship youth leadership programme led by London Youth, 'Rise up'
 - Youth practitioner advisory board - meeting monthly
 - Young People's Action Group
 - Hospital based youth work - youth workers helping to provide crisis support, understanding the complex ways that works.
 - Education work around exclusion looking at inclusion and supporting schools, teachers

British Youth Council

- Mobilisation to give young people the skills to empower other young people and forge those networks.
- Giving young people the space to advocate on their behalf: young people can voice their challenges but can voice their solutions
- BYC memberships model with 200+ members across the UK including LAs and youth organisations.
- This supports young people and also the youth workforce - the power of collaboration, sharing best practice.

Local Government Association

A role for local authorities to secure a youth offer and with local youth partnerships

- Place based working, councils know their local area, partners, the need, the data, the challenges and have rich resources to share with wider groups.
- Councils support a vision, direction for youth services and can facilitate bringing together different partners. They have an important facilitation role to bring together a multitude of organisations e.g. VSCE, faith, health, police, schools.
- Local councils support the capacity, scale and planning of provision, for example:
 - Peer review training - youth work and services are reaching out to as many people as possible.
 - Capturing best practice locally e.g. Westminster mental health support teams in youth club.
- The benefit of partnership working is that councils recognise they are not the experts in everything, and there are different needs within a local area, and across local authorities. Local youth partnerships provide a different way of viewing things, working with young people.

Discussion

- To think beyond sectors and bring in other sectors / skill sets e.g. arts and culture.
- Commissioning and funding models to be longer term to stop competitiveness within the sector.

7. Concluding remarks

DCMS: working with NYSAB the youth sector needs to be specific about what is needed and why, as we look to deliver the National Youth Guarantee and supporting youth policies going forward, ahead of the next Spending Review. The government is listening and Ministers are engaged and supportive.

NYA: data is vital and collaboration is key; it is upon us all to make sure that this collaboration builds and is sustained. The National Youth Sector Advisory Board has an important role to play in its collective insights, shared experiences and collaborative approach working with government, national agencies and our extended networks.

Chair: with thanks to all those attending the day, others who have contributed across the year, the commitment from DCMS in support of the advisory board's work, and the NYA secretariat in all that we do.

A vote of thanks was given for the Chair's unstinting contribution.