

THE YOUTH SUMMIT

Monday 25th - Tuesday 26th June 2007
New Connaught Rooms, London WC2



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Every Child Matters workshop report

Summaries, newsletters, blogs, resources all available at
<http://live.youthsummit.co.uk>

Youth Summit

At a time when the Government was preparing to launch its ten-year strategy for children and young people, leading into the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007, The NYA's Youth Summit brought together young people, policy-makers and practitioners to gain a better understanding of key issues and concerns facing young people and to develop an agreed action plan to address some of the main challenges.

The two-day event brought together Government Ministers, senior officials, leading policy makers, service providers and a over 100 young people from across England, forging dynamic links between young people, communities and Government. Delegates took an active part in moving from words to action to help ensure improved services and outcomes for young people.

At the heart of the Youth Summit were workshops based on the five Every Child Matters outcome themes. These ran over the two days, supported by a core group of young people, contributing as experts from experience through presentations, film, facilitation and dialogue. Each session was chaired by a national expert, drawing on short inputs from key speakers and facilitated by The NYA. The report below summaries the findings and recommendations from each of the five workshops,

based on the exact questions and responses posed and recorded at the time. One key theme arising from the summary below is the need for integrated action across outcomes, as in young people's lives, they merge and are inter-related. One cannot be tackled separately from another.

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Economic wellbeing

Young Advisors, North Devon

What did we find out about young people's experiences?

The Young Advisors from North Devon told us that 'regeneration' in their town meant luxury housing for the already affluent, not provision for local young people in need. A lack of educational opportunities and entry level jobs in the area was not being addressed. Poor public transport, particularly in rural areas, is a barrier to accessing opportunities. Delegates pointed out that the UK will miss the 2010 target for getting children out of poverty. All this adds up to a cohort of young people with low aspirations.

Why are we falling short?

- Formal education systems are not equipping young people with the skills they need to navigate the labour market
- Poor public transport
- Poor housing provision (and this is the top reason for accessing social services)
- 'New Deal' has failed
- Young people are poorly represented by the media.

What needs to change?

We identified a number of factors that need addressing:

- Better public transport
- Integrate informal and formal education
- Improve access to affordable housing
- Better representation of young people in the media
- Create economic conditions that are fit to foster enterprise
- Foster better financial capability and enterprise skills in young people.

How can we make this happen?

Policy

- There should be a national set of enforceable standards for young people's services, including transport, service entitlement, access to advice and support etc., supported by a national Youth Board.
- It is not clear how Economic Wellbeing will be met by the 14-19 Agenda, which may currently be too driven by the needs of employers and the economy rather than young people.
- Local Authorities should be encouraged to engage fully with the Transport Bill.

Spending

- Fund affordable transport. This might be through giving Local Authorities a ringfenced 'Youth Transport Fund', or a national discount scheme.
- Better targeting of regeneration money (£106).

Changes to practice

- The formal education sector needs to integrate non-formal learning, as a means of equipping young people with the personal and social skills needed to navigate the labour market, fostering enterprise and financial capability.
- Build the capacity of youth workers to run minibus schemes
- Encourage better relationships between young people and local media through positive images.

Campaigning

- Build on the transport campaign run by the UKYP and let's get high profile support – Richard Branson?
- The NYA/Youth Board need to act as a 'rapid response unit' to negative media portrayals.

Staying Safe

Young People Friendly Neighbourhood Group, Corby

What do we know about young people's experiences?

The Corby group indicated young people generally feel judged by adults in a negative manner and their voice is often unheard. They do not feel that politicians or adults generally like them. Young people feel that many of the policies and practices that are put into place both at a local and national level do not consider their needs and many adversely impact upon them. Young people do not feel safe and fear becoming a victim of crime - particularly mobile phone theft. Relations between Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and young people are often difficult due to a lack of respect for one another. When young people need assistance from the police they feel that they get a poorer service than adults.

In what ways are we falling short for children and young people?

Young people are not routinely listened to. Where they are consulted there is usually little feedback. Organisations tend to view young people in a stereotypical manner often based on negative perceptions. They are sometimes seen as a threat. Government community safety and criminal justice policies stigmatise young people. Young people do not feel safe due to poor lighting and their displacement due to CCTV, Mosquito devices and Dispersal Orders. They have high levels of fear of crime and are more likely to become a victim of crime than adults. Local authorities and the police are over-reliant on enforcement activities and punitive reactions for dealing with young people hanging around and anti-social behaviour, rather than taking a positive and preventative approach in ensuring support and the provision of things to do and places to go.

Why are we falling short?

Organisations do not listen properly to young people and sometimes agencies over consult with easy to reach young people. They rarely provide feedback and do not deliver anticipated results. Organisational excuses for not engaging with young people and providing the services required include not having enough time and resources. There are substantial variations and gaps in youth provision; some local authority areas have made drastic cuts and some do not provide enough qualified youth work staff. Young people are not routinely involved in the design and delivery of policies affecting young people. Current community safety policy emphasises enforcement measures (CCTV, Dispersal, and Mosquito) all of which displace young people and makes them less safe. Young people feel that there are not enough positive role models and positive images in the media relating to young people.

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What needs to be changed or put in place?

Young people should be involved in the development of local and national strategies, policies and delivery that affect young people. Organisations need to consult more with young people and this should be mainstreamed, particularly in relation to policies and practice that impact on them like CCTV and Mosquito devices. Independent research into the health effects of the Mosquito is required. Mosquito use should be banned as it is age discrimination and against young people's human rights. Youth workers should be routinely consulted on proposed dispersal orders. Good youth work practice and what works in reducing anti social behaviour needs to be widely disseminated and promoted. The role of Detached Youth Workers and diversionary projects requires significant investment. Proposals outlined in Youth Matters need to be implemented and organisations should be striving for excellence in service delivery, not achieving the minimum standards. Police and government targets can be counter productive to the aims of Every Child Matters and should be revisited. Consistency of PCSO performance and training is required across the country.

What are the key messages and priorities for staying safe?

- Communication and consultation with young people and feedback and involvement in the development of policy and practice.
- Mosquito – Mount a campaign to ban the use of this device.
- Police Community Support Officers – generally not respected by young people: young people need to be involved with the training of PCSOs and they need to know how to engage with young people.
- Enforcement Vs Prevention – the balance needs to be redressed towards greater use and investment in preventative measures such as youth work and move away from an over-reliance on Dispersals, Mosquito devices and ASBOs.

How can we make this happen?

Policy (national and local)

- Routinely consult with young people on the development of local and national policies and practice, especially in relation to crime reduction and community safety.
- Stronger and tighter guidelines are needed on the use of Dispersal Orders as these can be counterproductive and cause isolation; consultation with the community and wider organisations over their proposed use should be routine.
- Expand the use of extended school facilities as a community base for diversionary activities and formal and non formal learning and Safer Schools Partnerships.

Spending

- Higher amount must be spent on youth service provision. Reduce the great disparities between local authorities on spend per head, recognising the strong correlation between high spend and good performance and improved outcomes for young people.
- Make use of empty premises and develop more extended schools for preventative work.
- Map existing preventative and diversionary projects and work towards greater integration and partnership working, including pooling resources at a local level.

Practice

- Anti social behaviour: prevention vs. punitive enforcement – redress the balance away from an over-reliance on enforcement measures.
- Provide alternatives - greater use and investment in preventative measures, such as non formal learning and diversionary activities.
- PCSOs – better training for PCSOs with young people providing an input.
- Peer training and mentoring, especially within schools, needs to be promoted.

- Cross boundary work must be encouraged, particularly in areas where boundaries are artificially created for administrative reasons.

Campaigning

- Tackle press sensationalism. Positive press reporting needs to be encouraged.
- Positive (black) role models are needed to raise the aspirations of young black males as a part of a wider gang related/ weapon programme/ campaign.
- Reduce the fear of crime amongst young people and improve relations between young black males and the police in an attempt to reduce young people carrying weapons.
- Involve local communities in preventative work.
- Use new technology – txt/msn etc to communicate with young people.

Health**The Maypole Centre, Birmingham****What did we find out about young people's experiences?**

Young people from the Maypole Youth group on an estate in south Birmingham talked about the importance of their links with the staff and facilities at Maypole and the ways in which they have been able to use music, sports, arts (dance) and volunteering to understand and act upon local health issues. The importance of support from staff they trust and respect was also crucial to the raised levels of confidence they needed to do some of the things they did, including mounting a successful lobby of the local council to have a play and sports area installed rather than a heavier, ASBO related Police presence. The group were worried about the lack of control they – and anyone else – appear to have on the proliferation of fast food outlets in their community, which are unhealthy, costly and quickly dilapidated.

Why are we falling short?

- The inflexibility of local services, including GPs
- Short term funding and planning, with not everyone on board and a lack of integrated action and sustainability by services, especially across the statutory/voluntary sector divide
- Demonisation of young people by adults
- Not listening to young people – often by their own communities and service deliverers
- Lack of evidence on youth issues means a failure to prioritise adequately
- Services are not rooted in young people's own communities and are not based on voluntary attendance and equitable relationships
- Youth work training is not as good (as it might be).

What needs to change?

A number of issues were raised consistently by the delegates, including:

- Better communication and information sharing between a variety of groups including young people to young people and between the statutory and voluntary sectors (several requests for guidance)
- Healthy food outlets to compete with commercial outlets and (expensive) fast food franchises and off licences in poor neighbourhoods
- Creating health services based on local young people, with better access to GPs without the need for adult/carer presence and improved access to CAMHS services
- Break down professional barriers and consolidate existing service providers
- A recognition of youth work as a valuable delivery mechanism for health work
- More empowerment for young people to believe in themselves.

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How can we make this happen?

- Less bureaucracy and plans/reports (although the Children and Young People's Plan was seen as central) and leave services alone to plan and deliver with local direction, not national!
- Best practice guidance in the communication and information field
- Constant involvement of young people in development and planning leading to funded change; inclusive youth councils
- Sustainable and clear funding, over longer periods of time (up to 10 years in some cases); this to be agreed cross – party to ensure long term commitment
- A responsible media communicating with young people
- More control over commercial food outlets in communities
- Defined health standards and SRE in national curriculum
- A 10 year strategy with clear outcomes
- Support for parents as well as young people
- Levels of resource to enable more personalised services to young people.

Priorities for action

Spending

- Meeting needs, Contracting, Timescales, Sustainability
- Commissioners not to withdraw money where there has been success
 - Ensure that short term funding initiatives do not keep setting very high expectations for services later withdrawn
 - Examine where care funding is being spent
 - Sustainability of best practice
- More investment in workforce – quality training programmes
- Compulsory PSHE with certified staff members
- Keeping funding at an adequate level and sustain it.
- Enable and encourage schools to spend on community services for young people
- Funding always seems to run until the organisation has been successful than is suddenly stops
- Spend money wisely, not just in high risk areas but for high quality services
- Sustainability. Not only short term project but long term effective funding.

Campaigning

- Encourage local politicians to get involved in the local youth offer
- Convincing schools of the added value of compulsory, comprehensive SRE
- Showing added value for schools to have it (PHSE) as national curriculum. (i.e. improved results and educational attainment)
- Get it on school agenda
- Put more emphasis on substance misuse and involve parents more.
- This is a IYS/TYS agenda. Why is that not a more explicit strand of this conference?
- Good media
- National campaign involving young people to target media about changing the language / image / stereotyping they use to represent young people. Report more good things rather than bad. Good news can sell!

Making a positive contribution

Lewisham Youth A.I.D

What did we find out about young people's experiences?

Young people from Lewisham YouthA.I.D. told participants how volunteering takes them outside of their comfort zone – going to places, meeting people, involvement in activities and taking on roles that have challenged their assumptions about themselves and about others. Through volunteering they have developed skills that they would not otherwise have the chance to even explore – in groupwork, use of teambuilding exercises, standing up in public, in leadership roles etc:

- “Volunteering has enabled me to do things that I wouldn't have imagined doing two years ago”.
- “Where has it led? Grant-making, public speaking, decision-making... Getting involved in my community has led to involvement in the wider community.”
- “I used to sit on the wall waiting for something to happen. I used to lose track of time. Volunteering keeps you focussed - it takes me to new places all the time”.

In what ways are we falling short?

Young people felt there were not enough incentives to volunteer. Few of their peers saw volunteering in a positive light. Most young people had to be persuaded to get involved – they had to be individually invited / asked / steered / cajoled into volunteering – through an activity that interested them (often a one-off event) before they 'got it'. Many felt there were not enough incremental experiences either:

- “To gain confidence through small steps...gaining the confidence to know where you are going”...
- “Certificates from volunteering can mean far more to some young people than more formal qualifications”.

Why are we falling short?

Participants at the workshop were clear that greater attention needs to be paid to:

- Understanding young people's motivations to volunteer – with an important debate to be had on whether volunteering as an automatic (compulsory?) experience would enable more young people to benefit or undermine the experience for those that choose it...
- Challenging prevailing negative adult perceptions of young people – with most adults underestimating what young people are capable of and how quickly they are capable of learning...
- Improving indifferent local support structures – not enough young people have access to projects like YouthA.I.D.

How can we make this happen?

Volunteers from Lewisham felt that the only way for many young people to benefit from volunteering (the way that they had) would be to make the experience automatic:

- “How can you know what it can do for you unless you experience it”?
- “The opportunity to volunteer should be available to everyone – you have to make it something that everyone has a taste of – if only for a day...”

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- “We have to challenge adult perceptions about young people and how adults behave towards them. Some projects use the technique of getting older people to re-live their memories of being young to enable this generation of young people to be listened to”.

Policy

- Need to change the image of volunteering to enable those that have the most to gain to benefit from involvement
- The compulsion issue needs proper informed national debate
- Need greater recognition of the contribution of young people’s volunteering to social inclusion
- Need high level work to recognise and capture the importance of volunteering as a route to higher education (or as a route back into education for those that have been let down by traditional routes...)
- Need to ensure all government departments are on-message with regard to volunteering – too many barriers remain for people on benefits
- Need to view volunteering as a serious and legitimate learning opportunity post-16 – as valuable as FE / training or an apprenticeship.

Spending

- Need to spend real money on comprehensive local systems, structures and projects that signpost opportunities, motivate and support young people to become involved in volunteering and challenge local barriers
- Need to secure long-term funding for this infrastructure of youth volunteering – organisations have no problem with this demanding a parallel increase in accountability and attention to outcomes
- Need to spend money on making organisations that don’t yet involve young people ‘young people ready’ – making an explicit welcome and offering a range of roles and routes.

Practice

- Need to do more to highlight the benefits of volunteering – the chance to be involved in interesting and challenging activities, to meet new people, to gain recognition...
- Progression and accreditation routes remain hot topics – it is important to get the balance right between informal and formal routes
- The availability of skilled, supportive adults able to work alongside young people to motivate, support and stretch them is essential. Currently there are not enough projects / provision that do this
- We ought to be looking at more opportunities for young people to volunteer in small groups and for activities that involve different generations working on the same themes and activities...
- Would like to see more celebration-style events that involve parents and greater appreciation / celebration of young people’s commitment and achievements in the media
- Should be making more ‘noise’ about how volunteering benefits everyone ‘volunteering works’ – need to raise awareness among politicians (local and national) and the public alike by getting young people to spread the word (recruit a friend campaign?).

Enjoy and Achieve workshop outcomes

Young people from NACRO Newcastle

What do we know about young people's experiences?

Young people from Nacro Newcastle were in strong agreement with participants that “not enough” is known about young people's experiences of enjoying and achieving. In particular, it was felt that there is not enough face to face contact between young people and decision makers and that this is often due to an unwillingness to reach out to young people through dialogue. The young people in the workshop did not have positive experiences of mainstream education and these memories shaped their perceptions and ambitions for the learning they now engaged in. However, the young people taking part in the workshops were clear that they and their peers want to learn and want to work towards qualifications and accreditation that help them progress. Despite this focus on qualifications in the longer term, the young people greatly valued and were highly aware of, the progress they have made in confidence, people skills and team working. These changes were evident for them on a daily basis and the young people could see where and how these skills impacted on other areas of their lives. This, for them, was evidence of the wider benefits of enjoying and achieving, extending far beyond the classroom.

Where and why are we falling short?

- A failure to invest in young people
- A lack of commissioning of quality services – “commissioning for convenience”
- Non-recognition of so-called “soft outcomes”
- Opportunities to develop emotional literacy are not offered
- Schools are failing to “grab attention”
- An unwillingness to “go the extra mile” to consult with young people
- Too much time is dedicated to securing funding, and not enough is spent with young people
- Cross-agency working is not engaging effectively with schools
- Initiatives are short-term and unsustainable.

What needs to change?

- We need to see greater cross-government engagement
- Provision for young people needs to be effectively evaluated
- Sustainable funding to enable longer term provision and planning is needed
- We must focus on breaking down gender stereotypes and opening up opportunities
- Development of national frameworks to avoid “postcode lotteries”, and regional strategies to bring people and organisations together

How can we make this happen?

- Focus on “fun” in learning – too greater a focus on achievement can detract from enjoying
- Effective consultation with young people
- Support young people to make choices about their learning, and to “dip in and out” of learning opportunities locally available
- Raise awareness about the contribution of informal and non-formal learning to (re)engaging and motivating young people
- Focus on the quality of relationships with young people – maintaining the “human touch”, respecting young people and their experiences, and not pressurising young people to achieve
- Allow young people and schools to take risks – empowering them to explore learning and support
- Develop spending with foresight and forethought, with better investment for learning outside school

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- Involve young people in spending priorities and decisions
- Recognise achievement – but not just through qualifications

Priorities for action

Practice

- Human touch
- Respect
- Less pressure
- Young people being heard
- Opportunities to try learning options before committing
- Better partnerships with a focus on organisations who offer support to young people – bring in schools.
- Allowing young people and schools to take risks – empowered to explore learning and support

Spending:

- Longer term
- Sustained
- With foresight and forethought
- Better investment especially for learning outside school
- Recognition of achievement – not just qualifications
- Involve young people in spending priorities / decisions

In his concluding remarks, the Chair of The NYA, Bishop Roger Sainsbury, offered these pledges to improve policy and practice with and for young people:

YOUTH SUMMIT TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Do not demonize or use young people as scapegoats for the social ills of society.
2. Do not be afraid of speaking out about the value of good youth work.
3. Establish entitlement for all young people to good quality youth services.
4. Involve young people in decision making at every level and give respect to their views.
5. Campaign both locally and nationally for sustained and sufficient investment in services for young people.
6. Create youth centres / hubs in each community with access in respect of transport, physical access, equality and diversity.
7. Work together with other public services to encourage young people to choose health.
8. Campaign for a defined programme of continuing professional development to increase the skills of all who work with young people and promote better multi-disciplinary working.
9. Recognize the right of all young people to locally accessible, free, confidential and impartial information, advice, counselling and support.
10. Encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies based on human rights, diversity and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding.

BISHOP ROGER SAINSBURY

CHAIR – THE NATIONAL YOUTH AGENCY

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