

Message from the YOUTH SUMMIT

Youth Summit, June 2007

In anticipation of the Government's ten-year strategy for children and young people and the Comprehensive Spending Review, The National Youth Agency's two day Youth Summit brought together Government Ministers, senior officials, leading policy makers, service providers and about 100 young people from across England. Forging dynamic links between young people, communities and Government, delegates gained a better understanding of key issues and concerns facing young people and took an active part in moving from words to action to help ensure improved services and outcomes for young people.

Aiming high for young people sets out Government's ten year strategy for positive activities, with three central strands of Empowerment, Access and Quality. The NYA values the positive tone and aspirations for young people in the strategy, the attention to disadvantaged young people, the emphasis on empowering young people in decision making, design and delivery of services and in budget decision.

Voices from the Summit

(The full report can be accessed at <http://live.youthsummit.co.uk>.)

Quality

The NYA calls for greater attention to coordinated strategies to respond to young people's issues, as isolated services and responses often fall short. Joined up approaches need to include specific services for young people in the statutory and voluntary sector as well as affordable and accessible transport, training, jobs and housing.

Young Advisors from North Devon said 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 were not being addressed. Poor public transport, particularly in rural areas, is a barrier to accessing opportunities.

Key pointers from the Youth Summit for effective change:

- better public transport;
- integrate informal and formal education;
- improve access to affordable housing;
- better representation of young people in the media;
- improved economic conditions that are fit to foster enterprise among young people; and
- better financial capability and enterprise skills in young people.

Empowerment

The NYA calls for the active inclusion of marginal groups in decision making to help make where they live a better place and the **banning of Mosquito**



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devices which harm and stigmatise young people in breach of their human rights.

Young people from Corby said they generally felt judged by adults 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 often do not feel safe and fear becoming a victim of crime. When young people need assistance from the police they feel that they get a poorer service than adults.

Key pointers from the Youth Summit for effective change:

- banning Mosquito devices as arbitrary, inhuman and unnecessary;
- the active involvement of young people at risk in working with and training police and community support officers to establish better understanding and cooperation;
- the participation of young people as key community members in the development of Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies;
- community consultation and stricter guidelines before the imposing of Dispersal Orders against young people;
- more attention to preventative provision, including extended schools, of things to do and places to go rather than over-reliance on punitive measures and sanctions; and
- a concerted and sustained campaign for better and fairer representation of young people in the local and national media.

Access

The NYA calls for sustainable funding for successful youth provision rather than short term funding streams that haemorrhage good practice, staff and outcomes for young people.

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.



Making change happen

Key pointers from the Youth Summit for effective change:

- the need for flexible and accessible local services, including GPs and CAMHs;
- longer term funding and planning, with effective partnership working across services in the statutory and voluntary sector;
- services which are rooted in young people's own communities, based on voluntary attendance and equitable relationships;
- a recognition of youth work as a valuable delivery mechanism and more investment in youth work training; and
- more empowerment for young people to believe in themselves.

Young people's empowerment to take an active part in local and national decision needs to be matched by an emphasis and recording of what changes as a result for them through their voice and influence. The Youth Summit was inspired and motivated through hearing three stories of making change happen. In each case children and young people had a clear vision of what they wanted, showed huge commitment toward achieving their goal and energy and determination to see it through to make a difference.

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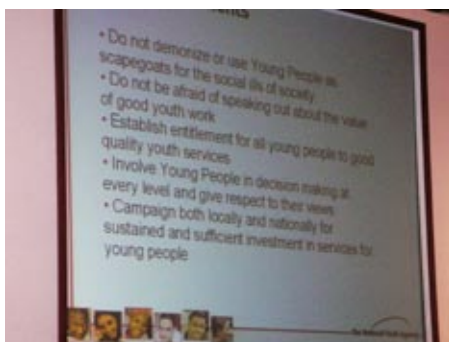
YOUTH SUMMIT TEN COMMANDMENTS

At the Maypole Centre in Birmingham, young people undertook surveys in the community about what young people wanted. They then found funding and negotiated with local decision makers to develop a new park, games area, football pitch and other resources.

In **Barnet the Rolling Base project** explored local concerns which included anti social behaviour, under age drinking, lack of money, feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood and not enough things to do. They wanted somewhere that was easy to get to, cheap, safe, and that would provide them with things to do. They lobbied for and got a mobile youth centre which young people can use.

In Walsall, young people were struck by the devastation in Sri Lanka caused by the Tsunami. They wanted to make a difference and so formed a group called MAD. They raised money through organising three talent shows across the city. In order to follow through the project and find out how the money was being used, MAD raised further funds to go on a visit this summer to Sri Lanka.

1. **Do not** demonise 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. **Recognise** 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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Reflections on the summit



“I have never been to an event that felt young people were so involved.”

“The event was fabulous. We were really proud of the young people, whose confidence grew enormously. People were really listening to the young people. We were close before but now we really work together.”

“A very informative and valuable event which is forward thinking and engaging with delegates and young people alike.”

“Challenging, innovative and enjoyable.”

“Very thought provoking and insightful.”

Purpose of the Conference

- Hear the Government's commitment to young people for the next ten years.
- Discuss how local government, health services, youth justice, and the voluntary sector can tackle the big issues facing young people.
- Examine how to plan and deliver effective young people's plans and meet the duty on local authorities to provide positive activities.
- Explore how different sectors working with young people can work together to ensure the Every Child Matters outcomes are met for young people.
- Hear from young people to understand what they think of public services and what they expect from them.
- Discuss how to build a new era of mutual respect between adults and young people, in their neighbourhoods and communities.
- Celebrate examples of young people's achievements and best practice.

What else 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 focused – it takes me to new places all the time.”

Implications for policy

- Need to change the image of volunteering to enable those who 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.
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Implications for 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.

Implications for 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 – 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?).

Making a positive contribution: Lewisham YouthA.I.D.

- Understanding young people's motivation for volunteering is critical – should there be compulsory elements?
- What should young people do after their education is finished at 16? Stay on? Volunteer? National service?
- What support structures and resources are there for young people and organisations wanting to volunteer with young people?

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

**THE
YOUTH
SUMMIT**

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

The National Youth Agency

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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.

Enjoying and Achieving: Newcastle NACRO

- Too much focus on achievement of hard outcomes detracts from 'enjoyment' – learning should be fun.
- Education Maintenance Allowance: some receive incentives while others don't. Should be equal for all.
- Need more focus on challenging gender stereotypes and promoting equal access to courses and work placements.

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