

**H M Treasury / DfES Joint Policy Review on Children and Young People
- Prevention Strand, Youth Services Strategy**

Covering Template for Responses

Please complete the attached cover sheet when sending evidence, indicating the set of questions to which a response is being provided and contact details of the person for any follow-up queries.

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Head of Youth and Connexions Service
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	Suffolk County Council Directorate of Children and Young People's Services Children's Services Authority
Postal address	Endeavour House 8 Russell Road Ipswich Suffolk IP1 2 BX
Telephone number	
Email	

	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	
Review of disabled children	
Strategy for youth services	X
Review of high cost, high harm families	

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Summary

To review the current provision of youth services and support for young people with a view to identifying longer term policy directions that will bring about improvements in the life chances of young people.

Response to key questions – focusing on Annex B3 Terms of reference for the Strategy for Youth Services

Suffolk integrated its Youth Service and Connexions Service provision within Suffolk County Council's Directorate of Children and Young People's Services on 1 April 2006.

In Suffolk, there is agreement and support for use of the *Youth Matters: Next Steps* Green Paper and its thematic development areas as the basis for continuing improvement of youth services.

Significant barriers for Suffolk's young people include rurality factors, the difficulty in recruiting adolescent mental health services practitioners and a local economy heavily dependant of small employers.

Examples of local and regional evidence on the effectiveness of a range of service provision and developmental activity is listed in the Annex to this response.

It is anticipated that the development of community cluster based service provision in Suffolk, will enable a more effective balance between demand led and targeted provision. Increasingly sophisticated needs analysis is being shared (within strict data protection guidelines) amongst partners at community cluster and aggregated service planning levels.

A Children and Young People's Involvement Strategy, owned by the Children's Trust will ensure that young people's involvement in shaping provision is maintained and enhanced. Further work needs to be done to facilitate and monitor the delivery and impact of involvement across all delivery agencies.

Significant intellectual investment is being made to ensure that the reporting mechanisms for the wide variety of national performance indicators are co-ordinated. The objective is to reduce duplication of effort for delivery agencies. Within the Directorate a common approach to service planning and project management of change has been devised and is in the process of being implemented.

Supplementary questions posed a part of the 'call for evidence'.

The Authority is working with Third Sector partners to plan the transformation from significant direct delivery providers to commissioners of local delivery.

Investment in and commitment to worker development can improve the impact of universal service provision to develop access to targeted services. It also creates workers with the ability to contribute to service improvement in a flexible and creative way.

Young people will engage in new and different activity when they feel safe and have the support of trusted adults.

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Programme / Project Connexions	Universal / Targeted Both	Young People's Involvement At the core of service provision	Notes and sources of evidence for the Review
			The most significant evidence of young people's view on the Connexions service is the <i>Connexions Customer Satisfaction Survey</i> . Undertaken across all partnerships by BMRB International on behalf of DfES 2003-2005. Very high rates of satisfaction with the service. The survey demonstrated links between service provision and awareness by young people of other services e.g. EMA. Local services received specific feedback and 'Phase One' services, including Suffolk were able to track improvements in satisfaction over time. A research report on NEET is available from Hazel Mackintosh.
Transforming Youth Work	Mostly targeted	At the core of service provision	In Suffolk included development work with the Third Sector. Evaluation contained in the Annual Youth Plan for 2005-6. Contact: Keith Jennings, Head of Youth Service 01473 260176.
14 – 19 Local Partnership	Both	Limited	Evaluation reports to DfES available from Judith Mobbs 01473 265084
Educ. Maintenance Allowance	Targeted	Limited	Local work to examine young people's access to bank accounts. National evaluation by DfES
Youth Offending Services	Targeted	Limited	National evaluation by YJB Regular feedback multi-agency Chief Officers Group and Task Group.
Millennium Volunteers	Universal	At the core of service provision	Commissioned from Young Suffolk (third sector umbrella agency) Contact: Bud Simpkin, Chief Executive 01473 744187
Teenage Pregnancy Strategy delivery	Targeted	At the core of service provision in Suffolk	Commissioned from a range of providers. Contact: Sharon Singleton, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator 01473 260182
School based health services	Universal	Varies in Suffolk	
Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships	Universal	Varies in Suffolk	Reports on use of CDRP monies for projects led by the Youth Service available from Keith Jennings, Head of Youth Service 01473 260176.
Positive Activities for Young People	Targeted	At the core of service provision in Suffolk	Evaluation reports available from Gerry Bathe, PAYP lead 01473 260170
European Social Fund Projects	Targeted	Varies in Suffolk	Most provision for young people is contracted through the

Comprehensive Spending Review 2007

			Learning & Skills Council as the Co-Financing partner. Contact: 01473 833000
Third Sector provision development	Both	Varies in Suffolk, cannot comment at the Regional level	Children Matter East has published its research report into the feasibility of a single specialist VCS, 0-19 years in the East of England. Available from Kevin Garrod 01473 437528. Young Suffolk is about to publish a local development report. Contact as above.
Family Support Service (children to age of 12), including the Children's Fund	Targeted	The Children's Fund has led on involvement of children in Suffolk	The Family Services Review, 2006 is being supplied in response to Annex B1. The Children's Fund have evaluated provision against the ECM framework, contact Caroline Sutton 01473 662750

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Annex B3: Terms of reference for the Strategy for Youth Services

Objective: To review the current provision of youth services and support for young people with a view to identifying longer term policy directions that will bring about improvements in the life chances of young people.

Existing Services

The current provision of services to young people and their involvement in shaping provision reflects the wide range of national programmes developed and implemented by numerous agencies and organisations at local level. The programmes have built on the youth services (Youth Service and Careers Guidance Services) traditionally provided by local authorities and third sector organisations. Since 2000, all public sector youth services and third sector partners have shared the agenda laid out in *Bridging the Gap*¹. *Every Child Matters* is ensuring that the social inclusion agenda is all age and holistic.

The most significant youth programmes are listed as an annex to the Summary, all have been evaluated. They have the potential to provide on-going learning, good practice and evidence on their impact in supporting outcomes for young people.

Connexions service delivery and Youth Services are the key providers of universal support services to young people. Millennium volunteers and 'V' development aspires to provide universal opportunities for volunteering. Each service has youth involvement at its core.

Youth Offending, Looked After Children, Positive Activities, Teenage Pregnancy, the Children's Fund and services developed using a range of non-governmental funding sources have targeted young people with 'identified' or specific issues.

Where a genuine willingness to place young people and their families/carers at the centre of provision exists, agencies have worked in partnership to create delivery that young people and their families evaluate positively. This has certainly been the case in Suffolk.

The Review should provide the opportunity to compare how nationally funded and rigorously specified services such as Connexions and the Youth Offending Service have developed in comparison to services that have not experienced the same level of central government funding or service specification.

Whilst the significance of central government 'grant' funding and overarching specifications cannot be over emphasised; it is the national policy documents; *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters: Next Steps* that provide the potential for shaping the strategy and pulling together strands of youth services provision.

National funding programmes carry the disadvantage of being 'fixed term' and creating distinct service 'strands' with a multiplicity of governance and management arrangements.

The creation of Directorates of Children's and Young People's Services and Children's Trust arrangement in the majority of second tier authorities has the potential to further transform services in a drive for efficient and effective integrated commissioning and delivery.

¹ *Bridging the Gap, July 1999, Social Inclusion Unit Cm 4405*

Experience has shown that to achieve both integration, and effective public service delivery, we must build on and reflect local circumstances. Over prescription of organisational structures (example – Connexions Service early development) by central government can result in local services expending significant resources on infrastructural issues (terms and conditions for personnel, financial systems etc.) rather than on innovative service delivery in response to identified need.

Continuing Improvement and Sustainability

The Youth Green Paper: *Youth Matters* provided an excellent basis for discussion of the strategic direction for youth services development. *Youth Matters: Next Steps*, published following a consultation that generated a very high number of responses (19,000 from young people) was celebrated as a demonstration of 'listening Government'.

In Suffolk there is agreement and support for use of *Youth Matters: Next Steps* and its four thematic development areas as the basis for continuing improvement of youth services.

The transfer of Connexions Suffolk into the local authority and merger with Youth Service provision under the auspices of an extended services remit within the Directorate of Children's and Young People's Services will provide the governance and robust service management structure to meet a range of national and local challenges within Suffolk.

This approach may not however, be the most appropriate one for youth services delivery across England.

High quality guidance to underpin responsibilities in the Education and Inspections Bill / Act and the Childcare Act and implementation of *Youth Matters: Next Steps* will be welcomed at local level providing it reflects the diversity of structures and acknowledges the breadth of existing good practice.

The capacity of the Youth Service to provide robust management information and deliver a sustainable level of staff development is a critical issues for effective implementation in Suffolk.

Barriers in accessing services

In Suffolk significant local barriers include:

- Rurality factors including transport and economic 'viability' of provision for small numbers of young people,
- Adolescent mental health services , specifically difficulty in recruiting qualified professionals,
- A local economy heavily reliant on small and medium businesses. We are detecting a number of trends that are impacting on young people who have traditionally entered low skill, low wage employment with scant opportunities for training.

These factors have most impact on young people who may have been supported and 'prevented' from falling through the net and into anti-social activities whilst at school. Their vulnerability continues beyond compulsory education and is often linked to a progressive withdrawal of family support.

The statistical manifestation of these barriers is seen in static participation rates for employment, education and training.

The concept of 'preventative' services in *Every Child Matters* quite rightly recognises that these must start from birth (pre-birth in some cases); however, adolescence and the transition to economic independence is a period when many young people need initial and continuing support from youth support services. Strategic recognition would provide a great morale booster to a committed and skilled workforce.

National and Internal Evidence

A wealth of Government and independently commissioned research and evaluation on service provision exists.

Contacts for local evaluation of nationally funded programmes are listed in the Annex to this response.

Balancing supply and demand for provision

In Suffolk, service provision for children and young people is being planned using a '**community cluster**' approach. Geographic / demographic areas have been identified that are smaller than the traditional district, borough and sub-county 'Areas' currently used for defining public sector delivery.

Collection and analysis of historic and real-time qualitative and quantitative information is developing to meet the needs of cluster based planning and delivery.

If a community focus is maintained, then the resources commissioned to meet demand led provision and provide targeted delivery are, in theory, more flexible and responsive.

The challenge for local managers is to ensure that performance management and planning processes are robust and consistent. This challenge extends to those that support them at a whole authority, regional or national level. Knowledge, understanding and expertise will be best achieved if programmes are sustained over time (3+ years). Managers must also feel empowered to use reflection and analysis at local level.

Youth Involvement

Youth Matters: Next Steps provides the basis for local strategies to ensure young peoples exert a strong influence on provision. The Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund provide funding which, overtime, will create tangible change that young people can evaluate.

Youth involvement is most effective when it is a recognised strand of a children and families involvement strategy supported by the Children's Trust.

This is the case in Suffolk and the principles and practice of involvement is beginning to permeate public service development and provision at all levels. The Strategy includes references to the rights and responsibilities of young people drawn from existing good practice across the UK – "Hear by Right".

The Government can support the process by using CPA, APA, JAR and other inspection processes in a facilitative way. Publication of good practice and support to ensure that involvement is recognised, celebrated and accredited would also be appreciated.

Young people will participate in new and different activity if they:

- Feel safe,
- Can afford to pay for the activity where a cost is incurred, and
- Have the support of a trusted adult.

For the majority of young people, access to safe activity is available and trusted support (emotional, financial and transport) by parents continues into early adulthood.

Young people may be unable to sustain activity (including learning) if they do not have access to a trusted adult or a trusted adult cannot provide access to more specialist services when the boundaries of their professional expertise are reached.

Examples of the benefits arising from young people's involvement are feature in some of the evaluation reports available from contacts listed in the annex. As Ofsted's inspection processes for Connexions services were developed, they undoubtedly benefited from the involvement of young people.

Targeted Resources

During the development of Connexions services in Suffolk much thought has been given to different approaches to the allocation of resources.

Young people can be 'identified' by circumstance; young offender, teenage parent, excluded pupil etc.

Young people and their parents / carers can also be involved in the assessment of their support needs through individual engagement with skilled professionals and sensitive use of tools such as the Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) framework. As a result, the criticality of a range of factors (18 in the case of APIR) can be recorded and prioritised.

Addressing the issues presented by individuals is more challenging when local agencies and service providers do not share the same priorities or do not have the capacity to respond to demand.

Ability of universal provision to 'identify and provide services to those with greater needs

The Connexions Customer Information Specification (CCIS) requires the identification and recording of levels of need for all young people aged 13 – 19 within each of the 47 Connexions service areas.

Over time it has been possible to track the ability of practitioners to recognise and respond to a wider range of need than the 'universal' information, advice and guidance that formed the original core of service delivery.

In Suffolk, under the auspices of the new Directorate, significant barriers to data sharing have been removed. Collaborative work to explore the correlation between indicators of need is just beginning. It has the potential to improve prioritisation of scarce resources. A barrier to collaborative work is the rarity of research methodology experience combined with knowledge of service delivery!

Youth Service Workforce

As with other 'people centred' public services, the youth services workforce is attracted and motivated by interaction and engagement with young people. The Connexions Service in Suffolk has never had difficulties in attracting significant numbers of applications for practitioner opportunities offering the nationally recognised training routes to level 4 qualifications.

Services that seek to attract qualified applicants have found it more difficult where a national shortage exists. The difficulties are compounded when a single agency observes vast amounts of funding for staff development being targeted at other service strands.

The use of a programme approach to central government funding can create pressures on the core funding that is used for staff development if the programme does not allow an element of revenue to be used for 'infrastructural' support.

Many Youth Workers perceive that skills are not well understood or appreciated. For those delivering 'adventurous' activity (to be further developed into *Things to do and places to go.*), some health and safety regulations are perceived as unnecessarily restrictive.

Youth services are encouraged to place involvement of young people at the centre of delivery; workers can perceive that many of the targets they work to are 'top down' rather than reflecting the holistic situation of young people.