

Services for young people inquiry
Kathryn Smith
Education Select Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London
SW1P 3JA

15 December 2010

Dear Kathryn

Services for young people inquiry

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of national voluntary youth organisations and regional and local youth networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to raise the profile of youth work, share good practice and influence policy that has an impact on young people and the organisations that support them.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. We cover around 80% of the voluntary youth sector in England and work with our members to build sustainable communities and services that help all young people achieve their potential. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. They also support young people to become active in their communities and offer opportunities for their voice to be heard. Some offer interventions to prevent or tackle specific issues such as homelessness or offending behaviour. Others offer counselling, advice, guidance and information. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Director of Policy and Communications, Faiza Chaudary or NCVYS's Policy Officer, Dom Weinberg on 020 7278 1041.



3rd Floor Lancaster House
33 Islington High Street
London N1 9LH

T: (+44) 020 7278 1041

F: (+44) 020 7833 2491

E: mail@ncvys.org.uk

W: www.ncvys.org.uk

registered charity no. 1093386
registered company no. 4385383

The relationship between universal and targeted services for young people

4. NCVYS members deliver both targeted and universal services and we recognise and support the different roles of targeted and universal services. The needs of disadvantaged young people should be prioritised, and targeted youth services work with those such as care leavers, young people with a history of offending, learning difficulties and mental health problems, and young people who have experienced homelessness and abuse. Targeted programmes deliver cross-cutting outcomes, including helping young people to develop employment skills and engage with volunteering, and reducing anti-social behaviour or re-offending.
5. However, it is not just disadvantaged young people who benefit from youth work. There is much evidence that all young people gain from the informal education, peer learning and relationship with a responsible, trusted adult afforded by good youth work.¹ A joined up approach between universal and targeted services is critical to help avoid duplication. Targeted services can also help young people make informed choices and raise awareness of the universal services available.

How services for young people can meet the Government's priorities for volunteering, including the role of National Citizen Service

6. A number of NCVYS members are part-delivering National Citizen Service (NCS) pilots, and many deliver work very similar to that of the NCS approach. The Government needs to recognise this existing provision, as well as targeted provision, which is different from the NCS, characterised by its universality to ensure social mixing. Disadvantaged young people can be engaged in the NCS, but encouraging and enabling such young people to engage and sustain volunteering requires brokerage.
7. NCS providers must be incentivised and supported to reach young people not currently engaged in community action. They should also be aiming to maximise sustained engagement so that a summer's worth of community action becomes rooted in permanent, locally-led programmes that engage young people from varied backgrounds. The NCS is also an opportunity, with young people taking part in activities in the natural environment, to develop environmentally-responsible attitudes and behaviours.

Which young people access services, what they want from those services and their role in shaping provision

8. Services for young people engage young people from all backgrounds. This includes mainstream access to positive activities as well as bespoke targeted services for those with particular needs. Targeted provision for young people reaches individuals and communities that universal services cannot or do not manage to engage. Disadvantaged young people are at greatest risk of low confidence levels, engaging in criminal activity, becoming homeless, suffering from depression, school exclusion or becoming drug dependant.
9. Talking to young people in our member organisations and young people engaged in our national youth forum, young people say they want these services to offer a trusted, positive adult relationship, one to one personal support, education and skills development and challenging and vocational opportunities. They want services to be flexible to their needs and for participation not to be forced on them. Young people also want services that recognise the interconnectedness of health, skills, family, education and job prospects. In the present

¹An evaluation of the impact of youth work in England, Merton et al (2004)
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/RR606.pdf>

climate we are seeing increasing calls from young people demanding that services for them help to shape their future development. In this respect, access to volunteering, training and employment opportunities are essential services being provided by youth organisations. For many of the young people who are not in education, employment and training or NEET (the latest figures suggest this is as high as 1 million)², these organisations provide the only alternative to a positive future that can divert them from more negative paths. For example, NCVYS members UK Youth provide a Youth Achievement Foundation course that builds skills for young people unable to gain these elsewhere. This offer comprises small independent schools that deliver courses recognising young people against achievement marks. Over 75% of young people participating achieve a skill and in last year's cohort over 94% improved school attendance rates. One young woman said:

“If it wasn't for you I wouldn't have anything on my CV”
UK Youth participant

10. There is evidence that there has been progress in involving young people in shaping provision over the last decade or so.³ However, further work remains to be done to ensure that a wider range of young people are involved in all decisions that affect them, and there is room for progress in involving children and young people in personal decisions affecting their lives, in decisions taken at school and decisions in their local community. Engaging young people in service design requires skilled and sustained facilitation and therefore requires investment in organisations with expertise in doing this. At NCVYS we ensure young people are at the heart of our own decision making processes. We are just one of the 0.5% of charities with young people aged 18-24 serving on our trustee board. One of our young trustees said:

“I'm doing things I never thought I could through volunteering, I just needed to be given the opportunity”.

Leon Bruff, Young Trustee serving on NCVYS Board

The relative roles of the voluntary, community, statutory and private sectors in providing services for young people

11. All sectors have a vital role to play in providing services for young people. The voluntary and community sector is often a bridge between public and private sectors. One of its strengths is its work through strong partnerships with the public and private sectors both nationally and at a very local level. Such relationships with the local authority and other statutory agencies are the key to successful service delivery. Voluntary and community youth organisations regularly work alongside schools, prisons, Youth Offending Teams, colleges, and employers to promote a joined-up approach. Work with universal or statutory service providers ensures the best possible transitions for young people across services. In a climate where resources become tighter, we are keen to see partnership working to deliver services becoming stronger.
12. However, some NCVYS members report that pressure on statutory services to meet efficiency targets is leading to some operating a 'slash and burn' approach to the voluntary sector in order to make much needed spending cuts. This is a false economy and we are convinced will lead to many young people and communities going without core services that divert them from negative outcomes. Over time, these will present new demands on the state purse. For example, NCVYS member Catch 22 is delivering projects across 150 towns and cities with tens of thousands of young people already involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. They report that 9 out of 10 young people who have been involved in

² http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000969/Quarterly-Brief-NEET-Q32010_final.pdf

³ *Children's Participation in Decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010*, Participation Works (2010) http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/files/npf~/npf_publications/A%20Summary%20Report_jun10.pdf

crime don't re-offend whilst in their programmes and that 8 out of 10 young people they work with say that they have found new goals and ambitions with their help.⁴

13. A mature approach to assessing community needs is required; this should be supported by priority services to support those needs. This can best be achieved by working across a partnership of providers that can together deliver services, rather than fast-paced wide ranging cuts that do not consider the long term impact of cuts on young people and their communities.

The training and workforce development needs of the sector

14. NCVYS is currently delivering Progress, a project which seeks to deliver 25,000 accredited training opportunities to staff and volunteers working front-line with young people between September 2010 and March 2011. The data from the project will be a key resource in identifying the training and workforce development needs of the sector.
15. NCVYS's submission to the 2010 Sector Skills Assessment identified the skills shortages and gaps of the voluntary and community youth sector.⁵ NCVYS members find that funding and a lack of time continue to be the biggest barrier in accessing training and other development opportunities.
16. The submission identified the following skills gaps. An Entry Level qualification in youth work, with a lower guided learning hours requirement, but with the necessary basic skills and knowledge requirements (including safeguarding, which is currently missing from the Level 1 Certificate) would meet the needs of volunteers, as well as those new to youth work or considering working in the sector. There is also a need to support those who might benefit from an Apprenticeship but who do not yet have the skills to begin one, so skills delivery which focuses only on outcomes such as qualifications is inadequate.
17. The submission identified the following particular skills gaps in the youth workforce:
 - Understanding commissioning.
 - Developing supervision practice and reflective practice.
 - Child protection and safeguarding – there are significant gaps in training provision and a lack of understanding of the requirements in levels of training needed.
 - Managing volunteers and fundraising e.g. sourcing funding for a youth project.
 - The spiritual development of young people – faith organisations employ a large number of workers and volunteers in the delivery of youth services.
 - General skills e.g. team work, managing a team, project management.
 - Assessor and verifier skills – with the sector becoming an increasingly important provider of training delivery, these skills will help increase capacity in the sector to deliver key programmes such as youth work apprenticeships. Training providers have indicated to NCVYS that the reason for the lack of take-up of assessor units and qualifications is that they believe that employers are unclear of the key role assessor skills play in capacity building within their workforce. Reliance on external organisations providing assessment is costly and can prevent employers from developing their workforce.
 - Optional units connected to global youth work for youth work qualifications.

⁴⁴ *Life changing results: Our services are here to help you achieve them* Catch22 (October 09) <http://www.catch-22.org.uk/Files/Commissioners-brochure.pdf?id=4b3218c7-895d-4256-9a40-9dac00a2a49b>

⁵ *Consultation on the 2010 Sector Skills Assessment*, Lifelong Learning UK (September 2010) <http://ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/NCVYS%20response%20to%20LLUK%20for%20SSA.pdf>

The impact of public sector spending cuts on funding and commissioning of services, including how available resources can best be maximised, and whether payment by results is desirable and achievable

18. NCVYS members believe that payment by results is desirable and achievable in certain areas (such as resettlement and employment) so long as sufficient working capital is available. If it is not, all but the largest voluntary organisations will simply not be able to get involved. It is important to identify how success is going to be measured and whether the measure is on outcomes and outputs rather than inputs. Payment-by-results contracts must pay a portion of delivery costs as they are incurred to ensure that risk is proportionate to benefit. Financial and social return on investment will be greater if payment-by-results contracts recognise the broader spectrum of outcomes and development needs of the most disengaged. Often it is early, smaller step outcomes that enable personal and social development. We recommend that payment by results recognises this and considers a more appropriate staged-payment model whereby voluntary organisations do not experience a cash flow problem.
19. It is crucial that public sector spending cuts do not undermine quality provision whilst allowing poor services to linger. Organisations that have invested in their own development, diversified and strengthened their offer to young people are still very susceptible to cuts, and unless remaining funds follow quality, there is a risk that those most fit for purpose may not survive the cuts. Funding on a long term basis should enable organisations to capture the learning to replicate the models of best practice. This will also help organisations develop stronger strategies that are proven to work. Good youth work needs strong institutions. Investing in impact assessment, sharing lessons, sound financial management and staff and volunteer development is not wasting money on bureaucracy - it is strengthening the hands of those at the front-line work to the long-term benefit of young people.
20. Cuts could be mitigated by pooling of departmental budgets. Young people's needs are not isolated from one another and many voluntary and community youth organisations are characterised by the holistic nature of their approach. Emotional wellbeing is linked to employment prospects, which in itself is crucial to poverty levels and prison numbers. At present, no single department has the budgetary incentive to properly invest in preventative and holistic services that deliver multi-faceted outcomes. If there were more joined up policy and budgets across departments, we would also mitigate any unintentional contradictions.
21. We are pleased to see the Cabinet Office looking seriously at the subject of commissioning through the *Modernising Commissioning* green paper. We know that improving commissioning arrangements will be even more important than ever if voluntary organisations are to take on the enhanced role in public service delivery envisioned by the Big Society. NCVYS has produced a range of commissioning resources and guidelines for our members and statutory providers through *Kindle*: a community sector partnership set up for children and young people.⁶ The latest publication focuses on the Big Society and signals how much needs to be done if services are to work effectively in maximising resources through good commissioning models.

How the value and effectiveness of services should be assessed

22. Services must focus on the whole young person and address causes not symptoms. Some funding streams have focused on specific presenting symptoms and not the development of wider emotional and social capability. The unintended consequence is to constrain and contort interventions towards a particular, mechanical, linear and limited approach where, in actual

⁶ *Commissioning and the Big Society: the role of the community sector:*

<http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Commissioning%20and%20the%20Big%20Society.pdf>

practice, a young person is targeted as unemployed or at, say, risk of unplanned teen pregnancy in one programme, at risk of offending in another and at risk of knife carrying in a third with no link-up between initiatives.

23. In fact, investment in programmes looking at the whole young person, building personal and social confidence and capacity is of greater long-term value. Such programmes, evidence suggests, develop a whole range of non-cognitive life-skills leading to successful transitions to adulthood and thereby a wide range of positive outcomes. However, public policy and funding tends (for the need to hit quantifiable targets within a bound time-horizon) to have been directed in more limited directions, targeting presenting symptoms not underlying causes.
24. We are clear about the need to assess impact, but there needs to be recognition that there are practical limits. Any evaluation process must be inclusive and involve the voluntary and community sector in its design and delivery. Success should be determined by voluntary organisations, local communities, frontline staff and young people themselves but should be supported by government to drive better impact measurement across the sector as a whole. NCVYS is happy to provide further information about this subject and the experience of our members in putting a value on what they do.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Faiza Chaudary', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Faiza Chaudary
Director of Policy and Communications