



## **Sport England Strategy 2008-11**

### **A response from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)**

**April 2008**

#### **Introduction**

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of over 170 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. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. Most offer opportunities for young people to engage in physical activity or play sport. 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 policy officer, Hannah Dobbin on 020 7278 1041.

## Comments

4. NCVYS welcomes the vision and purpose of Sport England's proposed strategy. Representing and supporting youth organisations that in the main have strong roots in communities is one of NCVYS's key roles. NCVYS understands the need for effective systems that link communities with national strategies and provide pathways and progression routes from community engagement to national leadership.
5. NCVYS welcomes the role that Sport England intends to take and the commitment it offers to its stakeholders. In particular, we welcome the focus on partnership, based on the recognition that different organisations have complementary contributions to make in achieving the vision of a world leading community sport system. We remain concerned, however, that the role of youth organisations is not sufficiently recognised in the draft strategy.
6. Youth organisations have a range of contributions to make in the strategy, some of which are outlined below. Of particular importance is the youth sector's role of facilitator and broker, which could assist Sport England in all three aims of its strategy (growing participation, sustaining involvement and ensuring excellence):
  - Growth: the increased participation of adults in sports will to a large extent be determined by their successful participation as children and teenagers. Whilst it is taken for granted that schools are pivotal in the provision of successful experiences, youth organisations reach those young people and young adults (aged 16+) that either do not/no longer engage in schools or where traditional education fails. The youth work and informal educational approach provided by NCVYS members is key to engaging some of the most disadvantaged young people.
  - Youth organisations can facilitate the transition for young people from a school sports environment to club based sport and competition. This can be done in two ways: firstly, by providing complementary out-of-school opportunities for young people to play sport; and secondly, by acting as an informal community based broker that brings sports clubs, community groups and schools together.
  - Youth organisations can also provide the holistic approach that young people require who have multiple development needs. Without such holistic approach many young people would not contemplate accessing mainstream provision. By being able to help young people develop their confidence, assist them in accessing services (such as education or housing), facilitate their active participation in their community, and provide constructive leisure time opportunities, youth organisation can introduce young people to sport, as well as help them sustain their involvement.
  - Youth organisations can provide opportunities to play sport for those young people that are more confident to do so in alternative or non-competitive environments. Many youth organisations already have effective links with sports clubs and leisure facilities and partnership initiatives where youth workers and coaches work hand in hand should be encouraged.
  - Sustain: strategic links and better partnership networks are key to sustaining young people's participation in sport as this will provide opportunities for young people to dip in and out of club based services, depending on their personal situation and

circumstance. These strategic links and networks must involve youth organisations who can provide consistency and ensure that young people remain in touch at times of transition (e.g. from school to college to work or university). They can also act as brokers and make referrals.

- Excellence: youth organisations have a role to play in spotting talent early and can refer young people who show promise to appropriate sports clubs that can develop that talent further. For this to work effectively, youth organisations need to be fully networked locally and regionally, so that they can interchange effectively with clubs and coaches.
7. Much remains to be done to utilise the potential roles that youth organisations can play. As stated above, effective networks and partnerships are key, and current systems do not always deliver. At local and regional level, school sport partnerships, for example, are not known for involving community organisations despite the stated intention for them to do so. Sport England's delivery system is unaligned to youth and education sector structures and therefore presents challenges for access. At national level, the strategic relationship between Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust may offer opportunities for national youth organisations and NCVYS to participate in the development of strategies and programmes. We therefore welcome the strategy's emphasis on creating partnerships and hope that Sport England will take on the role of broker to make sure that young people and communities can benefit.
  8. NCVYS welcomes Sport England's ambition to act as advocate for community sport with government at all levels. We hope and anticipate that this may lead to a higher profile for the role that youth organisations can play and that government strategies and initiatives may begin to reflect this. Many children and young people are already well served by schools and their sport provision but to reach young people facing disadvantage it will be necessary to allocate youth organisations a full role.
  9. NCVYS also welcomes Sport England's work strand on Extended Activities and looks forward to making a contribution. However, we would like to point to the need of youth organisations to be empowered to be an effective partner. NCVYS will submit a separate proposal detailing what is needed to facilitate better links and to build the capacity of youth organisations so that they can play their part.

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