

# Youth Sector Support Arrangements: Response to the Call for Evidence

## Department for Children, Schools and Families

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### A briefing paper from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

April 2009

#### 1. Introduction

In 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) held a Call for Evidence consultation to gather information, advice and views on current youth sector support arrangements. NCVYS submitted a thorough response<sup>1</sup> and DCSF's findings were published in August 2008<sup>2</sup>. In March 2009, DCSF published its response to its findings; *Youth Sector Support Arrangements: Response to the Call for Evidence*<sup>3</sup>.

DCSF's Response to the Call for Evidence provides details of its plans to improve support to the youth sector through new delivery arrangements and specific actions, including the Youth Task Force, the Children's Trust Commissioning Support Programme, the youth workforce reform programme and the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's and Young People's Services (C4EO).

This briefing paper summarises the Response to the Call for Evidence, but first highlights potential issues for the voluntary and community youth sector arising from the document.

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<sup>1</sup> NCVYS's response is available via: <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=600>

<sup>2</sup> Findings from DCSF's Call for Evidence results are available via:  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=conResults&external=no&consultationId=1525&menu=1>

<sup>3</sup> DCSF (2009) *Youth Sector Support Arrangements: Response to the Call for Evidence* is available via:  
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/news/?asset=News&id=136508>

## 2. Potential issues for the voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS)

The *Response to the Call for Evidence* sets out Government's vision for youth sector support arrangements. One of the key decisions is not to create one single lead agency for youth sector support arrangements. Instead Government is focuses on improving partnership working between different organisations while avoiding duplication.

Government has introduced new measures which build on current youth sector support arrangements, including the Commissioning Support Programme and the workforce reform programme. The VCYS needs to be fully aware of existing and new support arrangements to ensure that it can contribute to developments and also benefit from the new initiatives. For example, the measures should also help to create better relations between sectors and provide opportunities for the VCYS to engage with the private sector, which is welcomed in the current difficult economic climate.

NCVYS will continue to keep members up-to-date with developments within youth sector support arrangements through its briefings and information services.

## 3. Youth Sector Support Arrangements: Response to the Call for Evidence summary

This section provides a summary of *Youth Sector Support Arrangements: Response to the Call for Evidence*, highlighting key, relevant points for the VCYS.

### 3.1 Introduction

DCSF's Call for Evidence in 2008 aimed to consult those working for the benefit of young people about how to improve capacity, coherence and quality of support arrangements for youth sector professionals, volunteers and organisations.

For the purposes of the Call for Evidence, and subsequent work, DCSF has considered the youth sector in its broadest sense, covering statutory, third sector and private sector organisations that work with young people.

### 3.2 Call for Evidence

The Call for Evidence considered how the youth sector and Government can work together better at local, regional and national levels. It asked for input on how current youth sector support arrangements could be improved and how young people could be meaningfully engaged to influence policymaking at a national level.

The findings from the Call for Evidence pointed to the need to develop a much clearer strategy for youth sector support and create greater co-ordination of activity and clearer delineation of responsibility between Government departments and partners. There was no appetite for a rationalisation which would leave only one sector leading agency.

### 3.3 Government response to the findings

This chapter sets out Government's plans to develop and improve youth sector support arrangements based on findings from the Call for Evidence. The plans focus on five specific areas:

- quality of practice;
- workforce;
- commissioning;
- empowering young people; and
- matching third sector and statutory organisations to corporate sponsors and supporters.

## Delivery of sector support arrangements

There are no grounds for a single agency lead in the delivery of youth sector support arrangements. DCSF wants to improve the effectiveness of partnership working and there remains considerable scope for delivery partners to align their work to key areas of support for frontline organisations.

DCSF will change the way in which it commissions its strategic and policy work from the youth sector, through the introduction of framework agreements<sup>4</sup>. In 2009, DCSF will run a competitive tender exercise which will lead to a number of framework agreements being put in place that DCSF and other Government departments will be able to use to commission work. Each framework agreement will be for a broad area of youth sector support. Contracts for specific work will be awarded following mini-competition among those organisations that have a framework agreement.

DCSF state that this national approach will complement local commissioning arrangements and will supplement the existing and emerging mechanisms to engage with, and support the services, including:

- the Children's Trust Commissioning Support Programme;
- the C4EO<sup>5</sup>;
- the Young People's Learning Agency; and
- the Youth Sector Development Fund.

## Quality of practice

DCSF is aiming to more clearly define its expectations of services that local authorities (LAs) commission and manage in delivering the objectives *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*<sup>6</sup>. DCSF will develop one set of overarching standards, covering the commissioning of positive activities at local level.

DCSF recognises that there are many standards, kite marks and awards for youth organisations. DCSF expects standards to be developed in a way that is sector-led and in partnership with commissioners, providers of services and young people. DCSF will test the overarching standards with a range of providers of services, young people and users prior to a formal launch.

The new C4EO will also play a significant role in driving up standards. Youth will be one of its themes of work in the next two years, starting in September 2009.

## Workforce

The *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy*<sup>7</sup> sets out a substantial change programme including how youth sector support workers in both the statutory and voluntary sector are a priority for workforce development<sup>8</sup>.

The Children's Workforce Development Council is currently working with all relevant sector skills councils and national partners in leading the national youth workforce reform programme and providing support for its delivery.

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<sup>4</sup> Framework agreements establish the terms and conditions that apply to any contracts that are awarded by the DCSF to organisations that are on the DCSF's framework list.

<sup>5</sup> Further information on the C4EO is available via:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/cfeo/>

<sup>6</sup> DCSF (2007) *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, and further information on its implementation, is available via:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/aiminghigh/>

<sup>7</sup> DCSF (2008) *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy*, and further information on its implementation, is available via:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/childrenandyoungpeoplesworkforce/>

<sup>8</sup> NCVYS's briefing paper and consultation response to *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy* is available the policy pages on the NCVYS website: <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=265>

Specific proposals for building the capacity of the third sector to operate within an integrated youth support service are currently being developed, involving better local and regional access to training and development materials in key areas of operations. Furthermore the Youth Sector Development Fund will be providing bespoke training and development support to 18 current and further planned 25 organisations.

### **Commissioning**

Commissioned services for young people should be considered within the wider strategic framework set out by the Children's Trust in its Children and Young People's Plan. However, the Call for Evidence highlighted the continuing difficulties third sector organisations face in accessing LA commissioning arrangements. There was also strong support to address funding issues, e.g. provision of longer-term contracts. DCSF has launched the new Commissioning Support Programme which will facilitate and support a number of activities for people working to improve the commissioning of youth support services. For example:

- facilitate communities of practice which relate to commissioning of youth services and developing the provider base, including third sector agencies;
- respond to Children's Trusts needs around how they work with providers, ensuring this includes the third sector as appropriate;
- work with Children's Trusts Boards, and other stakeholders, to explore issues relating to commissioning of youth service provision, including commissioning from the third sector; and
- publishing sector specific information, guidance, case studies and other materials on the Support Programme's website.

Funding for 16-19 learning will be transferred from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to LAs<sup>9</sup>. The Young People's Learning Agency will provide support to LAs to carry out their new duties in respect of 16-19 learning. The React programme<sup>10</sup> will support LAs to build capacity to ensure a smooth transfer, working closely with Directors of Children's Services and providing a view on integrated commissioning.

### **Empowering young people**

Developments in Government's youth empowerment policies include:

- The Young Inspector service – will train marginalised young people to assess the quality of their local services. The scheme will be trialled in up to 36 LAs across England from April 2009 to March 2011;
- National Body for Youth Leadership (NBYL<sup>11</sup>) – will increase opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills. NBYL responsibilities will include identifying and commissioning innovative practice from organisations that provide leadership opportunities for young people and the direct delivery of a new leadership programme to young people; and
- myplace<sup>12</sup> - programme for improving youth facilities.

These developments add to the ongoing delivery of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds<sup>13</sup>. These improvements should also support LAs in meeting the aspiration that, by 2018,

<sup>9</sup> Further information on the transfer of funding from LSC to LAs is available via: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=505&ctype=None&ptype=Contents>

<sup>10</sup> Further information on the React programme is available via: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=1157471>

<sup>11</sup> The consortium that will deliver the NBYL comprises the National Youth Agency, Changemakers, The Young Foundation, the Citizenship Foundation, UK Youth Parliament, The Prince's Trust and the British Youth Council.

<sup>12</sup> Further information on myplace is available via: [http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_myplace.htm](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_myplace.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Further information on the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds is available via: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthfund/>

young people should actively shape decisions on at least 25% of LA's budgets for services to young people.

### **Corporate sponsors and supporters**

*Building Stronger Partnerships*<sup>14</sup> and the new employer-led Task Force, focusing on mobilising business support and education business partnerships, will help to secure better outcomes for young people and give greater impetus to empower involvement across a range of services for children and young people.

DCSF is also seeking the engagement of businesses in the delivery of programmes where national and local private sector organisations can make a clear contribution to the delivery of Aiming high including:

- a myplace support team has been appointed to support local projects, including attracting private sector interest both locally and nationally;
- the NBYL will use investment and partners' networks and influence to create more opportunities for young people whose background or circumstances make it hard for them to develop their talents to the full;
- the Youth Sector Development Fund will provide business support to help ensure the long-term stability of third sector organisations receiving funding; and
- through the Office of the Third Sector, Government is working with businesses to support volunteering and giving. In particular, the youth volunteering organisation v has secured over £32 million from business to support volunteering opportunities specifically for young people which the Government will match pound-for-pound.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The document concludes with a message from Government emphasising the importance of partnership working and the avoidance of duplication within youth sector support arrangements.

### **3.5 Appendix A: List of respondents**

A full list of respondents is given, including NCVYS.

For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Policy Officer, Hannah Dobbin, email [hannah@ncvys.org.uk](mailto:hannah@ncvys.org.uk) or on 020 7278 1041.

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<sup>14</sup> DCSF (2009) *Building Stronger Partnerships* is available to download via: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00938-2008&>