

## Children and Young People and Families Grant Programme

### Department for Children, Schools and Families

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

October 2009

### 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. 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.

## Introduction

4. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) consultation on the Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) Grant. Funding, such as the CYPF Grant, is highly valuable to voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) organisations that want to contribute to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes in a flexible way. For many, particularly smaller organisations at a national level, the CYPF Grant may be the only way of achieving this.
5. As a direct recipient of the CYPF Grant, NCVYS has completed the DCSF consultation form based on its own experience of the fund (see attached). This additional response sets out key issues that have been raised within the NCVYS membership by organisations that have benefited from the CYPF Grant.
6. Key recommendations emerging from the NCVYS response are:

**Recommendation 1: Government should acknowledge the importance of grants, especially at a local level, and continue to offer a variety of funding opportunities for voluntary and community sector organisations.**

**Recommendation 2: DCSF should support NCVYS and its partners to develop tools to support commissioners in decision-making.**

**Recommendation 3: The CYPF Grant fund should invest in a balanced mix of universal services and targeted support, and recognise the diversity of the voluntary and community youth sector.**

**Recommendation 4: Throughout the CYPF grant process, DCSF should follow its own timetable to enable voluntary and community youth sector organisations to have time to make changes to strategic planning and resources if necessary.**

**Recommendation 5: DCSF should ensure that the CYPF Grant is transparent and consistently managed by divisions within the Department.**

## Key comments

7. In 2005, NCVYS responded to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) consultation on the rationalisation of grant funding from the Children, Young People and Families Directorate to voluntary organisations. Although the funding and commissioning environment has changed since 2005, the recommendations in the NCVYS response continue to be a relevant today. NCVYS recommended that there should be:
  - flexibility over the outcomes to allow for innovative work that reflects emerging priorities;
  - an open and unbureaucratic application and monitoring process;
  - a named contact within the DfES, who is able to be open and honest;
  - encouragement for smaller organisations to develop partnership bids and to work with their local specialist infrastructure provider; and
  - a significant role for young people in administering the grant, which enables them to make a real difference
8. Grants remain a vital source of funding for VCYS organisations as the switch to commissioning and contracts continues. However, central Government needs to be an advocate for mixed-funding economy which includes contracts and grants. Central Government should provide a good example at the national level which can be replicated locally. Clear arguments have been put forward as to why grants are so important at a

local level. These have been highlighted below as NCVYS would urge central Government to follow the same principles.

9. For some local organisations only grants will enable them to achieve outcomes that matter for local people. Reasons why grants are so important include (NAVCA, 2007<sup>1</sup>):
- a grant is a stepping stone and initial lifeline for a small organisation just starting out;
  - a grant is in keeping with the voluntary ethos and offers the sector its independence;
  - a grant can create opportunities and enable groups to take a risk and to innovate;
  - a grant can be infinitely flexible and often made at low cost, proportionate to the size of group it is supporting;
  - a grant can allow organisations to meet the needs of the community without the need to adapt to meet the requirements of a particular contract;
  - a grant can underpin a variety of initiatives in regeneration and community development work, including those aligned with Local Area Agreements;
  - a grant can offer sustainable finance for established projects; and
  - a grant can offer flexibility as it can be used as a stop gap in an emergency or strategically over a number of years to achieve long-term outcomes.
10. Grants can also benefit local authorities (LAs) as they can gain from cultivating relationships with local voluntary and community groups. Allowing local groups more flexibility can enable LAs to deliver against their targets in a rich, diverse and meaningful way. It can also help LAs to meet obligations and recommendations such as those in the Local Compact (NAVCA, 2007).
11. The Local Grants Forum (2009) has provided evidence and set out reasons why grants are so important at a local level. *Defending Local Grants* offers case studies and resources to demonstrate the impact that grants can have and how they can lead to improvements in services. For example, Croydon Council gained Beacon status for increasing service delivery by local third sector organisations.

**Recommendation 1: Government should acknowledge the importance of grants, especially at a local level, and continue to offer a variety of funding opportunities for voluntary and community sector organisations.**

12. NCVYS is working with members of the Local Grant Forum and the Commissioning Support Programme to inject new thinking around how to support commissioners in decision-making. For example, the development of a flow chart or tool for commissioners to use to decide whether grants or contracts are appropriate. NCVYS is considering developing such a tool and would look to DCSF to champion and launch it as a good practice guide to funding.

**Recommendation 2: DCSF should support NCVYS and its partners to develop tools to support commissioners in decision-making.**

13. The CYPF grant fund has broad criteria which enables a wide range of organisations to apply. This has raised concern within the VCYS that the need to ensure a balance between universal services and targeted support has not been achieved. It also highlights that some groups of VCYS organisations may appear to miss out on the funding. For example in the 2008 round of applications, many faith-based organisations within the NCVYS membership were not successful. Several of these had been long-standing recipients of funding from the DCSF.

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<sup>1</sup> NAVCA (2007) *Sustaining Grants*. Available via: <http://www.navca.org.uk/publications/sustaininggrants>

**Recommendation 3: The CYPF Grant fund should invest in a balanced mix of universal services and targeted support, and recognise the diversity of the voluntary and community youth sector.**

14. NCVYS has received good feedback from its membership around the way DCSF has handled grants and there has been recognition within the VCYS that there has been much learning over the years of the CYPF Grant. However, creating one single grant and increasing the number of recipients may have caused more problems for the DCSF in sticking to its timetables. The criteria for the Grant needs to be clear and transparent, and targeted marketing should take place to avoid organisations applying when they are not actually eligible. This would contribute to controlling the number of applicants and consequently help the DCSF to manage the fund.
15. Clearer criteria would also help the VCYS as fewer delays should occur. Some NCVYS members have experienced difficulties with DCSF and its processing of CYPF grant fund applications. This has included DCSF not sticking to its own deadlines on informing applicants whether they have been successful or not. Delays in the process have caused complications for unsuccessful organisations as it has a huge impact on the organisation, in particular small organisations. For example, organisations have had insufficient time to sensitively deal with making staff redundant. It also has significant consequences for organisational planning which, in some cases, will need to be dramatically revised in light of an unsuccessful bid.
16. DCSF needs to be particularly sensitive to organisations that have been funded before but are not successful in the current round as they may need additional support and time to deal with the implications of this on the organisation.

**Recommendation 4: Throughout the CYPF grant process, DCSF should follow its own timetable to enable voluntary and community youth sector organisations to have time to make changes to strategic planning and resources if necessary.**

17. NCVYS is aware that different divisions within DCSF are involved in the management of the CYPF Grant. For example, the Positive Activities Division only funds youth organisations. This could mean that the Grant is not seen as a single-grant fund, but one that brings together different third sector budgets across Department. It is useful to have a single fund, however having different funds under one heading could cause confusion. If pre-allocations of funding exist within DCSF, the Department needs to be transparent so that VCYS organisations know how much funding is allocated to different recipient groups, such as young people or families. Consistency in what divisions are recommending and how they are working with Grant recipients would improve relations and aid both grant giver and receiver.

**Recommendation 5: DCSF should ensure that the CYPF Grant is transparent and consistently managed by divisions within the Department.**