



Raising Expectations: Enabling the system to deliver
Department for Children, Schools and Families
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

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

June 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. 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 broadly welcomes the proposals made in *Raising Expectations: Enabling the system to deliver*¹, but would have liked to have seen greater acknowledgement of the role of the third sector in skills delivery.
5. The voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) has valued experience, skills and knowledge of delivering educational services to young people. The VCYS is well placed to support and engage young people most disadvantaged in our society. The sector operates at grass roots levels in communities and services are created by communities themselves. The VCYS reaches out to those hardest to reach (which the statutory sector finds difficult to achieve) and works preventatively with young people. The sector helps young people to overcome barriers so that they continue in education, employment or training. Learning providers in the VCYS are more likely to support the learning needs of those young people with for example:
 - low literacy and numeracy levels;
 - multitude of problems hindering their engagement in learning;
 - difficulty in engaging in traditional learning routes; and
 - previous experience of being NEET (not in education, employment or training).
6. The VCYS also provides learning provision to its adult workforce, both paid staff and volunteers, in vocational-based subjects connected to the delivery work of the sector including youth work, advice work, sport leadership, counselling. In addition, many VCYS organisations deliver training to adults on a vast array of subjects such as diversity, alcohol abuse, working with care leavers and child protection.
7. There are areas within *Raising Expectations* that the VCYS could provide a valuable contribution to. For example the VCYS could be a key provider of training to young people and adults, including apprenticeship delivery, be involved in the regional planning groups and input into the overall commissioning plan. Every Regional Development Agency (RDA) should provide a monitoring role to ensure that the VCYS is represented at a sub-regional level and ensure that its contribution to upskill young people and adults is recognised and commissioned as appropriate.
8. Every RDA should ensure that young people also participate in the development of regional strategies and decision-making.
9. Within NCVYS's previous consultation paper response to *Delivering World Class Skills in a Demand-Led System* (LSC/DfES) March 2007, NCVYS welcomed the recognition that a different approach to procurement for third sector organisations operating as learning providers in local communities is needed. Some VCYS learning providers are not able to operate as independent learning providers, and are unable to seek Learning and Skills Council (LSC) training provider

¹ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1520>

registration, as they cannot survive financially being paid retrospectively for the training that they deliver. Therefore, many VCYS learning providers forge partnerships and contractual arrangements with further education colleges and Local Authorities' (LAs) adult education departments.

10. Many providers are currently paid on outcomes, e.g. when a young person achieves a level 2 qualification. Due to the nature of the sector, a VCYS organisation typically would continue to support a young person even if they were never able to achieve a level 2 qualification. They would recognise achievements that young person had made in terms of attendance, improvement in literacy skills, confidence building, behaviour and skills development. No funding would be forthcoming for the recognition of this work, which puts pressure on the staff within VCYS organisations. To encourage existing VCYS learning providers to continue to offer provision, and attract other VCYS organisations to set up as new learning providers, the outcome-based criteria system needs to change and the procurement system simplified.
11. LSC's (2007:20) *Statement of Priorities*² states that: "We will work with the Third Sector, the Commission for the Compact and the Office of the Third Sector to agree a realistic set of guidelines for effective commissioning and procurement with the sector in an open and competitive framework". NCVYS would be happy to work with LAs, the RDAs, the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency to ensure that these guidelines are produced and that a different approach to procurement is indeed implemented.
12. In terms of contract arrangements, NCVYS agrees with the statement made in paragraph 9.22 of *Raising Expectations* that different contractual arrangements are needed for large (national) and small third sector organisations.
13. The third sector continues to require support with capacity building and knowledge to be able to: enter the commissioning process; operate as effective learning providers and for infrastructure organisations to undertake representation work. LAs need to continue to increase their understanding of the role that the third sector can take in skill delivery and increase their awareness of the sector at a local level. Local and regional voluntary sector infrastructure organisations will play a key role in working with LAs to help identify learning providers and to offer a representation role in sub-regional planning and strategy work. The sector should also be represented at sub-regional Employment and Skills Boards.
14. NCVYS supports concerns expressed by members, in particular The Foyer Federation and Rathbone, that there is a danger that the proposals within *Raising Expectations* will lead to an increased gap between pre and post-19 provision. This could cause problems in providing a holistic and continuous service to NEET young people and vulnerable adults who can access youth services until the age of 25.

² <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-statementofpriorities-nov07.pdf>

15. The drive towards self-regulation raises some concerns around accountability. External evaluation can be used as a tool by government, through regulation and inspection, to keep a central steer over delivery systems and use as a lever to ensure consistency and effective provision.
16. As *Raising Expectations* states, the upskilling of the adult workforce is important to creating a high-skill, high-productivity nation. A key part of that workforce, especially within the VCYS, are volunteers. NCVYS is disappointed that volunteers are not mentioned in *Raising Expectations* and would like to see further recognition and support for volunteering.

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