

Call for Evidence - Youth Sector Support Arrangements

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 5 April
2008

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Name James Cathcart
Organisation (if applicable) British Youth Council
Address: British Youth Council,
Mezzanine 2,
1 London Bridge,
London.
SE1 9BG.

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Damon Boxer on:

Telephone: 0114 259 3605

e-mail: damon.boxer@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Responses

There are more specific questions under each of the following headings. **These are intended as a guide only** so that submissions are focused on the key issues that DCSF is most interested in addressing as part of this consultation.

We are particularly keen to receive **propositions** (both individual and joint) from partners about how sector support arrangements overall could be improved and what practical actions would need to be taken by Government – to secure coherent support for organisations from across statutory, third, and private sectors.

Please tell us your job title

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|----------------------------------|
| Comments: Chief Executive |
|----------------------------------|

Please choose from one of the following statements:

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am responding on behalf of a public sector organisation / local authority | <input type="checkbox"/> I am responding on behalf of a for-profit organisation | X <input type="checkbox"/> I am responding on behalf of a third sector organisation (see TOR) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am responding on behalf of a network, for example a national youth sector membership organisation or a local voluntary sector forum | <input type="checkbox"/> I am responding as an individual | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify |

| |
|--|
| Please Specify: Whilst we are a membership organisation we have based this response on our established positions on the original Aiming High consultation and other recent policy positions. www.byc.org.uk |
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Please choose from one of the following statements:

| | | | |
|---|----------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My work / the work of my organisation is focused solely on teenagers | X | I / my organisation works with a range of clients, including teenagers | <input type="checkbox"/> I / my organisation does not work with teenagers, but they may be affected by my/our work (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify | | | |

Please Specify:

Whilst the majority of young people in our membership are teenagers we also work with young people under age of 26.

Are you / Is your organisation a member of any networks for example a national youth sector membership organisation or a local voluntary sector forum? Please list all applicable.

Comments:

The British Youth Council is a member of the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), and NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)

Supporting regional and national partners

1) How could regional and national youth sector organisations work better together, and with Government, to enhance delivery and challenge underperformance in the youth sector?

Points to consider in your response:

- Do you think current regional and/or national support arrangements are coherent and well coordinated?
- How effective are regional and/or national support arrangements at meeting the needs of professionals/organisations working with teenagers in your area?
- Do you think that underperformance is challenged effectively within the youth sector, and is this true regardless of what type of organisation is providing the service?
- Is there a need for rationalisation at regional and/or national level – to reduce the number of different associations / organisations/ authorities offering support to the youth sector?

Comments:

- BYC works at a national level, consulting and collating the views of members organisations and young people within them. We tend to work across the country as a whole by organisation rather than each of the local Government Regions. The current arrangements that seek to mirror local authority and regional groups tend to dissipate the national messages – for example our members include The Scouts Association which is countrywide, and A National Voice (for those in and leaving care) which is theme specific)
- We are currently seeking funding to represent the 588 local youth council sector in England (and 689 in the UK). There is no national body to represent these. We already provide services and networks to many of them but would call for a national body to coordinate them.

Supporting effective practice

If we are to implement the reforms introduced by 'Aiming high', as well as to secure high quality, Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) in every local area, we need to be confident that all youth sector organisations can access information to help them in their work with young people; and to engage effectively with other professionals providing services for young people.

2) How would you improve support arrangements so that all youth sector organisations have equal access to: coherent, high quality information on practice; integrated working; and training opportunities?

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for you / your organisation to access the latest information about 'best practice' in working with young people?
- Do you feel there is sufficient support and guidance to help youth sector organisations engage effectively with other professionals providing services for young people?
- How easy is it for you / your organisation to access training and development opportunities?
- Is this information equally accessible to all parts of the youth sector, for example to: individuals; local authority youth services; private providers; voluntary groups and other third sector youth organisations?

Comments:

- It is not currently easy for us to access best practice as there are several sources and there are always organisations who are being funded to 'share best practice' and disseminating it in a variety of ways.
- There is usually support and guidance through umbrella organisations such as NCVYS and NVCO and NYA.
- However there is insufficient guidance on how to engage with professionals from other sectors

We would welcome a lead body that is sector neutral – whose job is to provide a national youth support service – not one that is already out there 'competing' for funding against other youth organisations – but is sufficiently large and independent enough to be providing a service to the sector – not part of it.

Improving local commissioning and assuring quality

Local commissioning and growth

To secure a high quality local offer for all young people, it will be vital that local children's trust arrangements, in particular local commissioning arrangements, are robust enough to engage, and harness the capacity of individuals and youth organisations in the third and private sectors. The role of local authorities – and the practical help they receive to act as strategic commissioners of young people's services – will be crucial in achieving this. It will be equally important to secure the sustainability of these providers, as well as, where appropriate, to promote and support their growth.

3) What improvements could be made to help youth sector organisations access local commissioning opportunities, and where applicable, to grow their business / organisation?

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for you / your organisation to understand and access local commissioning opportunities (such as contracts and grant funding)?
- What are the barriers to growth for youth sector organisations?
- What support could we offer Local Authorities to help them improve their commissioning practice, including helping them to engage with and support local third sector youth organisations?

Comments:

- Youth-led organisations need free training to understand commissioning opportunities. As CEO I am frequently sent marketing information by organisations to attend courses, or breakfast briefings. These fees are prohibitive to small organisations and we would welcome public funded or supported invitations and briefings that develop the capacity and build the networks.
- We would welcome the input of consumers or users – young people – in the commissioning process – as lay assessors/ or attending user panels The benefits of involving young people in the process of decision making can be seen in BYC's 'Youth at the Table' programme that trains young people to be involved in governance. A version of this could be developed into a Youth In Commissioning package
- As a national organisation we find it difficult to know about, understand or access opportunities to local commissioning – despite being able to offer a range of products – for example we offer training to Youth Councils at a local authority level.

Quality Assurance

4) What improvements could be made to drive up and assure the quality of services for young people?

Points to consider in your response:

- Is there a case for further regulation and what form could this take?

- What role should quality assurance and kite marking and award schemes play?
- How can we ensure more consistent standards of quality without creating barriers to smaller organisations?
- How can young people's safety and 'safeguarding' issues be included within quality assurance arrangements?
- How should young people be involved?

Comments:

- Quality assurance and kite marking are a useful way to ensure good services for young people and we would welcome young people's involvement in their – writing, assessing and recognition
- An example would be a new product – “Investors in Young People kite mark”
- We have the expertise and experience to usefully contribute to this development

Promoting Private Sector and Personal Contributions

It is clear that there are many individuals and businesses willing to invest expertise, resources and time to support local and national third sector youth organisations and projects.

This can range from substantial financial investments in buildings or projects, to a commitment of a few hours a week to offer advice and support on finance, fundraising or project planning. Regardless of the scale of investment, it is always valued. Government believes there is potential to do more, through reform of youth sector support arrangements, to attract such investment to the youth sector, and match investors to projects.

5) How could support arrangements be improved so that third sector youth organisations can benefit from expertise, resources, and time offered by private individuals/organisations?

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for third sector organisations to access support from private individuals / organisations?

- Do you feel there is sufficient support to help individuals / organisations match their skills and resources to suitable third sector youth organisations?

Comments:

- This is difficult for us – we don't have the resource to make the links and approaches – although we are confident that we have the opportunities to work and involve private sector organisations.
- We would want the first offer of support from them to be a new service called 'community corporate partnership brokers' . People who are themselves resourced to make the introductions . They could be recruited from both sectors.
- This could be a role for a new national youth support agency with resources and powers to broker relationships between the private sector and the voluntary /third sector. This could be a role for the Cabinet Office for the Third sector to coordinate across Government Departments

Empowerment: young people influencing services

Programmes such as the Youth Opportunity Fund have demonstrated clearly the benefits of empowering young people to influence local decision making. New legislation requires local authorities to ascertain and take account of young people's views on local positive activities and facilities and the Government has committed to extend the Youth Opportunity Fund until 2011.

These are important steps, but Government is keen to go further by empowering young people to influence national policy, including decisions taken about a wider range of services which affect and interest them – such as environment, health and transport.

6) What would be the best way to help young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, influence policy making at national level?

Points to consider in your response:

- How effective are mechanisms and organisations currently offering a voice to disadvantaged young people and/or those from minority groups?
- What more could these organisations do to secure that young people's voices are heard?
- What role should be played by central Government departments?

Comments:

- We would welcome themes roundtable meetings where groups of young people are brought together by a range of organisations to meet Ministers and Officials. These need to be well planned and prepared and chaired at a Senior level. I have come across an excellent model for this pioneered by The Prince's Trust.
- At BYC we are seeking resources to particularly reach the hardest to reach and are exploring models of mentoring to take this forward. Mentors can act as supporters and facilitators of young people's views so that they can become more effective ambassadors and influence in an informed and passionate way,.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 9th April 2008

Send by post to:

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Moorfoot
Sheffield
S1 4PQ

Send by e-mail to: YouthSectorSupport.CONULTATION@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk