

The National Youth Agency

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# Research Programme Series

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## Economic Wellbeing: The implications for youth work of Every Child Matters

Gill Jones\*

Book 1: **Introduction**

Book 2: **Being Healthy**

Book 3: **Staying Safe**

Book 4: **Enjoying and Achieving**

Book 5: **Making a Positive Contribution**

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# Economic Wellbeing

## Key points

- Young people's transitions to adulthood have changed significantly in recent decades, and a re-think of youth policies and services has become necessary.
- Young people who would once have been self-sufficient through work now have to be dependent on their parents, but not all parents are willing to support them. Young people's economic wellbeing cannot be measured by that of their parents.
- Mediation between young people and their parents may be needed to improve economic wellbeing in youth. Youth workers may have a future role in this area. Economic disadvantage in youth needs to be tackled at both individual and family levels.
- There needs also to be initiatives working at a wider level to improve the structure of opportunities so that individuals are not held back by disadvantage at any time in their lives, or blamed for circumstances which are well beyond their control.
- Age is a poor indicator of need. Young people of the same age are at various stages in the process of becoming economically independent of their parents or carers. Age cut-offs in youth policy and provision make it more difficult for young people to achieve smooth transitions to adulthood. Youth work caters for 13 to 25-year-olds and can help with smoother transitions to adulthood.
- There may be differences in values between the youth work profession and other partners working with young people. Partnership working involves recognition of unfamiliar perspectives. Youth work takes a holistic approach to young people's needs, but many mainstream services are compartmentalised. The use in many government policy initiatives of conditional benefits and disincentives is also quite contrary to the ethic of youth work, which is based on voluntary engagement rather than coercion. There is a danger that the emphasis on values in youth work obscures the practical aspects of the work done and the outcomes achieved.

- Youth work plays a major strategic contribution to the outcomes identified under the Economic Wellbeing theme of Every Child Matters, including with regard to preparation for work, re-engagement of disaffected groups, and support with housing, financial and legal problems.
- It will be important to find ways of evaluating youth work in ways which reflect its values and aims. Many of the achievements of young people cannot be measured in terms of hard statistics. Many of the aims of youth work are longer term.
- Interventions targeted at specific age groups or vulnerable groups or disadvantaged urban communities are likely to leave out many who are less visibly needy. Targeted youth work has a quicker and more visible benefit in terms of re-integrating disaffected young people into education, training and work, and it is more easily evaluated. At the same time, there is a need for open provision which cannot as easily prove its effectiveness in terms of economic wellbeing. Different time perspectives of funders and youth workers affect the quality of services and make long term provision more difficult.

## 1. Background

The 2003 Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (ECM) set out a holistic framework for services for children and young people aged 0 to 19 in England (HM Treasury, 2003). Its two-pronged agenda is **to protect** children and young people and to **maximise their potential**, by developing the means of ensuring that they can be healthy, safe, develop important life skills, make a positive contribution to their communities, and achieve their full potential. The framework provides for integration at all levels, from strategy to processes to delivery.

### ECM wellbeing outcomes

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- **Economic wellbeing**

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These linked elements of wellbeing each form a focus for identifying need, tailoring provision, and evaluation. The ECM framework thus contains three dimensions: themes, areas for action, and evaluation targets.

This NYA Briefing Paper focuses on the contribution of youth work to the economic wellbeing of young people aged 13 to 19. It forms part of a series of five, corresponding to the five ‘wellbeing’ outcomes identified by children and young people and developed into themes in *Every Child Matters*. The essence of a holistic approach is that all the five themes are linked. Thus, although only one theme is dealt with here, this Briefing has implications for those on the other themes.

The Briefing first considers the concept of wellbeing in youth, drawing on recent research. It points to some of the difficulties in understanding economic disadvantage among this age group and tackling poverty in youth, especially given the variation in the ways in which young people experience transitions to adulthood. In Section 3 it briefly examines the policy context out of which *Every Child Matters* has emerged. In Section 4, the ECM Outcomes Framework is considered. All of these sections are interspersed with Case Studies of relevant youth work projects. Section 5 draws together the contribution which youth work makes to the ECM agenda, and considers why and how it is effective. Finally, Section 6 considers some of the implications of ECM for youth work, including some of the challenges posed for the future.

## 2. The theme of economic wellbeing

### What is meant by ‘economic wellbeing’ in youth?

**Not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.**

Economic wellbeing underpins all the other themes in ECM, since its corollary economic disadvantage (or relative poverty) limits life chances, increasing the risk of ill health, creating a barrier to developing important life skills, and preventing young people from achieving their full potential. The economic wellbeing of young people is defined in ECM as ‘not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in

life’. This use of a negative definition (in contrast to the other four themes) indicates that it is harder to identify the positive impact of economic wellbeing than to identify the risks associated with its absence.

### Economic (in)dependence and wellbeing in youth

Does ECM really address young people’s economic wellbeing, given what we know from recent research about young people in the UK?

There are particular problems about measuring economic wellbeing in youth, which also affect the ways in which policies and services should be designed. The main problem is that of diminishing dependence.

Rightly or wrongly, poverty and wealth in adulthood are defined on an individual basis, taking into account responsibility for dependants. Child poverty (and wealth) is defined, on the basis of an assumption that children are dependants, according to the financial circumstances of their family household. The statistic that half a million fewer children are living in relative poverty now, compared with 1997 (ECM p.6), is based on this assumption, which may be false. Many children under 16 have jobs or are carers and may be contributing to the household economy as well as drawing on it, so their status may better be described as ‘inter-dependence’ than dependence (viz Morrow and Richards, 1996). Youth poverty is even harder to identify. Over the school-leaving age it is even more difficult to determine whether people should be treated as independent individuals or as dependants, or as a combination of the two (semi-dependent), when measuring the extent of their economic wellbeing or disadvantage.

**Young people of the same age are at various stages in the process of becoming economically independent of their parents or carers; age is therefore a poor indicator of need.**

This is because young people are at various stages in the process of becoming economically independent of their parents or carers. Since this process of transition is very complex, and young people are very different from one another, it is not enough to know a young person’s age. Yet, in order to develop appropriate policies and services for young people, it has to be possible to identify when a young person should be treated as an independent individual, with independent needs. Otherwise it is impossible to determine whether resources should be directed towards them or their carers.

## Slow and fast track transitions

Transitions to adulthood are complex, but are also becoming more divided. UK research also shows that there is an increasing 'youth divide' (Jones, 2002). Transitions to adulthood are becoming more and more polarised.

### Polarisation between 'slow track' and 'fast track' transitions to adulthood

On the one hand are those on 'slow track' transitions, who remain engaged in education and training, deferring their entry into full-time employment, and alongside this, also deferring their domestic and family formation transition. Many of the young people on this type of transitions are from middle class families where there is an expectation of continued support. Many others are from working class families who are having to adapt to middle class patterns, with varying success.

On the other hand are those on 'fast track' transitions, who leave education, usually without qualifications, attempt to enter a diminished youth labour market, and start family formation transitions earlier (Bynner et al, 2002; Jones, 2002). In many respects these young people are trying to follow longstanding working class practices, and doing what their parents did. Their problem is that youth incomes no longer support this type of transition. This fast track group is more at risk of various forms of social exclusion including homelessness, unemployment and teenage parenthood. They are likely to experience a protection deficit – unable to receive adequate support from any source (Jones, 2005a).

Although those at risk of social exclusion tend to come from the minority fast track group, it should be remembered that failed slow track transitions – often failing because of lack of financial support – are also associated with risk. This has implications for the identification of vulnerable groups, which are not always the most visible or easy to target for services.

## Using age as an indicator

Despite the great disparities and complexities in the ways that young people effect their transitions to adulthood, many of the current provisions for young people are nevertheless structured according to their age. Welfare benefits are age-graded. Young people receive different levels of benefit at different ages, kicking in for most at 18 and culminating in adult levels at 25. The National Minimum Wage is also age graded: the 16 to 17 rate (since 2005), the 'development' rate at 18 to 21, then adult rates at 22. There is an assumption in both these

policy areas that young people can be dependent on their parents or carers until they are 18, and at least semi-dependent until they are 25 years of age (Jones and Bell, 2000; Harris, 1989).

A recent review of government policy on social exclusion in youth (Bynner et al., 2004) found that age barriers affected young people's access to service at times of most risk. Thus, Connexions covers only 13 to 19s, leaving most young adults with relatively little support. There are increasing calls (including from The NYA, in its response to the recent Youth Matters Green Paper 2005) for appropriate support arrangements to enable smoother transitions to adulthood. These would be based on need rather than age.

Age is a very poor indicator of individual economic need (Jones and Bell, 2000). This is increasingly recognised among policy-makers. The recent government review of financial support for 16 to 19s (HM Treasury, DfES and DWP, 2004) takes account of various other proxy measures of independence for this age group, such as employment, income and household status (whether they have left the parental home), rather than relying solely on age. The matter would not be resolved by raising the statutory age at which young people can leave education or training to 18 years. The more the age of 18 is stressed as a cut-off point for youth services, presumably on the dubious basis that this is the age of legal majority and civil citizenship in England (in Scotland the legal age of majority is 16), the more problems are created for the over-18s who still need support, as well as for the under-18s who cannot be dependent.

This is an accusation which can also be levelled at ECM, which has also had to grapple with the uneasy relationship between age and need. ECM in general relates to 0 to 19s inclusive, but also extends to care leavers over this age who are still receiving services and 19 to 25s with learning difficulties; and monitoring arrangements do not include young offenders in custody aged over 18 years (Ofsted, 2005).

There is a danger in these policy structures of institutionalised age discrimination, which can work on either side of the age divide. The recent DTI consultation (DTI, 2005) on age discrimination covers young workers 16 to 25 years and proposals include removing the 18 age limit for redundancy payments.

The recent Social Exclusion Unit report on young adults 16 to 25 (SEU, 2005) sought to resolve some of these issues. The point is that policies to support and enable smooth transitions to adulthood need to take account of the ways in which life course changes, such as leaving school,

entering the labour market, forming an intimate partnership, having children, all involve changing socio-economic relationships and changing patterns of socio-economic responsibility. As young people begin in different ways to become independent of their parents, their needs will reflect these changes in responsibility, and their recognition in policy structures as independent adults must therefore also involve recognition in their social contexts (Jones, 2005b). Changing social relationships can lead to young adults re-appraising their situations and re-entering education or training as a result (Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; Macdonald and Marsh, 2001, 2004). The need for support to allow young adults second chances was acknowledged in the March 2006 Budget, which contains provision in the form of adult learning grants to help with living costs and enable workers to go back to full-time or part time study.

#### **CASE STUDY: Joined-up holistic service for 13 to 25-year-olds**

*There is a need for services which enable young people to make smoother transitions to adulthood, and which do not cut off too soon. The ECM Outcomes Framework (5.2) indicates that personal, financial, welfare and advocacy support should be available to 16 to 19-year-olds to support their education or training. Young adults need this too.*

STREETWISE COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE is a specialist legal advice service for 13 to 25-year-olds. It employs young people's lawyers alongside youth workers, Connexions PAs and counsellors, and offers free advice, advocacy and representation on areas such as housing, benefits, education, employment rights and debt. An impact report found that getting access to expert legal advice makes a big difference to young people's life chances. Success factors for the centre included its location in a youth project, strong partnerships with youth workers, and the establishment of a formal network including youth service managers.

#### **Extended dependence and the problem of support**

The extension of education, the demise of the youth labour market, and the withdrawal of state support over the last two decades have all resulted in a new situation.

**Young people who would once have been self-sufficient are now dependent on their parents.**

Unlike young people in the rest of Europe, those in

the UK have in the past been mainly self-supporting, depending on their own earnings, rather than welfare or their families (Jones, 2005a; IARD, 2001:43). A typical work pattern for a school leaver would until fairly recently have involved entering low-grade work which could act as a stepping stone to a higher status job. With the loss of the better jobs in the youth labour market, young people are likely to be in 'dead-end' jobs with low incomes and high insecurity (McDonald and Marsh, 2001, 2004; Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; McDowell, 2001). The erosion of state support in the form of welfare and student grants means that young people are now expected to be able to rely on their parents for their economic wellbeing. This does not mean that their economic wellbeing can be measured by that of their parents, however. There are many reasons why they may not be able to access parental support, including some uncertainty about whether they have a legal right to it (Jones and Bell, 2000).

- ▶ **Inequality between families.** The increase in wealth in recent decades has not been across the board, and wealth and poverty have polarised. More parents are able to provide economic support for their teenage children, but others cannot afford to.
- ▶ **Inequality in families.** Resources are not shared equally within families, not even between spouses, and young people vary in the extent to which they have access to family resources.
- ▶ **Unclear obligations.** Many parents are unclear about their legal obligations towards their children, especially over-16s. The law is unclear about how parental obligations are expected to diminish as a child gets older, and there is likely to be an increase in litigation in the UK as there has been in Italy and Spain.
- ▶ **Complex family structures.** Many young people live with a lone parent following separation and divorce, in one of the poorest family types. A high proportion live with a step parent, whose obligations are particularly unclear.
- ▶ **Parent-child relationships.** There are many families where the relationship between parents and children has broken down, or is detrimental to the child – not only resulting in the children entering local authority care.
- ▶ **Cultural reasons.** There may be cultural reasons why a parent may be unwilling to provide financial support. There is, for example, no tradition of extended financial support from parents in working class families, though there is in middle class ones. Practices in minority ethnic groups also differ.

- ▶ **Willingness to support.** Parents' willingness to support education or provide housing, for example, depends on their beliefs, their resources and the quality of their relationship with their children (Jones et al, 2004; Seavers and Hutton, 2002; Jones, 1995a, b).

These problems cannot be dealt with by reference to young people alone. Some problems could be reduced through increased support (including information and guidance) to young people's parents in cases where they are taking financial responsibility for their children, and more mediation services working to improve family relationships in cases where they are not.

### **Structural factors**

Economic wellbeing/disadvantage are also the consequence of wider structural factors which are beyond the power of the individual or their families.

- ▶ Global change has affected the structure of the youth labour market, through the loss of the UK's manufacturing base and expansion of the service sector (which mean that first jobs are often without future potential), and increased competition from overseas (which increases the demand for qualifications).
- ▶ Wider social structures of inequality affect individuals' ability to achieve their potential. Thus, social class, gender, ethnicity and disability all variously affect wellbeing and disadvantage throughout the life course, including the type and timing of transition to adulthood (the fast/slow track polarisation).
- ▶ The structures of local labour and housing markets and local educational structures can reinforce social divisions and make it difficult for young people to escape disadvantage.
- ▶ Disadvantage is often clustered in families and communities and likely to be reproduced from generation to generation.
- ▶ The social and cultural capital within communities can act either as a bridge or a barrier to achievement and 'getting on'. This is a factor in disadvantaged urban and rural areas.

The wider social context in which young people live cannot be overlooked. Initiatives working at individual level must therefore be paralleled with initiatives working at a wider level to improve the structure of opportunities so that individuals are not held back by disadvantage at any time in their lives, or blamed for circumstances which are beyond their control.

The '**employability**' of young people is an important issue, but the concept of employability can be individualising – ie it leads to blaming young people for their circumstances and letting the 'system' off the hook. A recent study found that in contrast to Germany, where youth transitions are highly regulated through occupational structures and the apprenticeship system, England has a more diverse and unregulated approach. Young people in England needed to be more proactive and to maintain a positive approach to opportunities, and as a result, they felt more responsible for their failure or success – more 'individualised' (Behrens and Evans, 2002; Evans, 2002). Evans indicates that the least advantaged may feel the most exposed by this form of individualisation.

Research by Macdonald and Marsh (2001) and by McDowell (2001) found that working class young men had very little understanding of the kinds of jobs available, and unrealistic expectations of the local labour market. These unrealistic expectations can be nurtured by their parents or peers. Young people may not realise what skills are needed by employers, or recognise when they themselves have these, thus work experience can be advantageous (Prince's Trust, 2005).

### **Individuals, families or communities?**

The changes in young people's transitions to adulthood are very largely the result of changing policies, such as the extension of education, and the shift in responsibility for social protection from the state to the family. But these changes also have major implications for youth policy and provision and a rethink is needed. What may have 'worked' a generation ago is less likely to 'work' now. Policies and services cannot ignore the problems associated with the extension of dependence on their families and unequal access to parental support, at a time when state support has reduced.

**An economic wellbeing agenda must involve interventions at individual, family, community and societal levels.**

A focus on the individual will not be sufficient, and maximising individual potential is not enough. The raising of a young person's human capital (self-esteem, educational qualifications, work experience) needs to be matched with the development of structures which actively reduce the barriers for those who are disadvantaged and provide real opportunities.

### 3. The policy response and Every Child Matters

To what extent are the needs of young people currently reflected in national policy?

There is a tension between the needs of any one age group or social group and the needs of the country as a whole. The main thrust of national policies over the last decade has been informed by the need to increase the economic competitiveness of the UK. This involves increasing the qualifications level of the workforce, and reducing welfare dependence, through welfare to work policies. ECM targets for economic wellbeing clearly fit within this overall agenda, even reflecting the difficulties of determining whether wellbeing is an individual issue or a family one. As far as youth policies are concerned, these drivers have led to a mix of universal preventive policies emphasising 'learning' (education and training) with policies targeted at combating social exclusion. The underlying ideology is arguably concerned with social justice. However, youth policies are linked in many ways with the wider current 'citizenship' agenda.

#### Raising qualifications of the UK work force

The recent **White Paper on 14 to 19 Education and Skills** (2005) spelled out current policy aims, to

- ▶ **increase retention in education** until all young people continue in learning at least until the age of 18
- ▶ **improve basic skills** of literacy and numeracy.

To achieve these aims, the White Paper acknowledges the need for ways of increasing enthusiasm for learning (viz Briefing on Theme 3: Enjoying and Achieving), as well as re-engaging disaffected young people. A range of education initiatives has included curriculum reform and incentives to stay in learning (such as the EMA). There are new work-based vocational routes for 14 to 25s, including Apprenticeships and Young Apprenticeships for 14 to 16 year olds. Entry to Employment (E2E) is designed to prepare 16 to 18-year-olds for Apprenticeships. Part of the policy emphasis on volunteering is because of the opportunities it provides for work experience.

The aim is to build up a culture in which learning outweighs the attraction of early entry into the labour market and is seen as equally economically viable.

The **Review of financial support for 16 to 19s** (HM Treasury, DfES and DWP, 2004) aimed to ensure that all young people aged 16 to 19 have the support and incentives they need to participate in education and training. The report proposed a single coherent system of financial support for 16 to 19-year-olds, giving more equal value to education, training and employment. It also tried to deal with the age/dependence problem. Thus, all under-18s living in the parental home are treated as dependent unless they have full-time jobs. Support will be paid direct to young people if they are living independently, or to their parents/carers if they are living with them. There is some recognition of young people's individual needs in the extension of the **NMW** to cover 16 to 17-year-olds, and in the fact that additional learning incentives (including **EMAs** and **Opportunity Cards**) will be paid to the young people themselves. Overall, the review does attempt a more sophisticated approach than simple reliance on age, though it contains an assumption that young people are dependent while in the family home and independent once they move out.

#### CASE STUDY on financial literacy

*Many young people are still disadvantaged in the welfare system, but there is also a need to enable them to use their incomes effectively, and learn 'financial literacy'. The ECM Outcomes Framework (5.2) indicates that steps should be taken to ensure that young people are financially literate.*

CENTREPOINT manages a number of hostels for socially excluded homeless young people and works with them to enable their personal, social, educational and vocational development. The Lifeskills and Youth Work Team, recognising that money issues are one of the biggest causes of stress among their service users, works on a one-to-one basis to help with debt management, budgeting, opening a bank account, and other needs identified by the young adults (FSA, 2005: pp. 66-68).

#### Welfare to work agenda

One of the main reasons for the increasing emphasis on the welfare to work agenda is change – particularly the increase in life expectancy and the decrease in fertility. Together these are creating a demographic crisis in which the 'dependency ratio' – the ratio between those contributing to the welfare system and those drawing on it – is becoming

unsustainable. There are differences between welfare to work policies for adults and those for young people: the main aim shifts to reengaging them in learning.

The identification of young people in need has been framed in recent years around the concept of 'social exclusion'. The SEU has published a series of reviews and policy documents on young people in vulnerable groups (either socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion). The *Bridging the Gap* review (SEU, 1999) identified the main group to be targeted: those not in education, employment or training (NEET). The *Policy Action Team 12 report* (SEU, 2000) highlighted evidence of economic disadvantage in youth:

#### **Economic disadvantage in youth (SEU, 2000)**

- One in five children in Britain were growing up in workless households, a higher figure than in any other OECD country.
- One in 11 16 to 18-year-olds were not in education, training or employment (NEET).
- One in 16 young people left school without qualifications each year.
- Alongside Greece and Portugal, the UK had the lowest number of 18-year-olds in education in the EU.
- Unemployment rates were two to three times higher for young people aged 16 to 24 from ethnic minority backgrounds, regardless of educational attainment.

Subsequent SEU reviews have been on specific groups deemed to be particularly at risk (ie 'vulnerable groups') such as rough sleepers, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents and looked-after young people. Many of these young people suffer from multiple disadvantage, and there is overlapping membership of vulnerable groups. These reviews have led to the development both of preventive policies and of targeted provision aimed at reintegrating into education or training, and eventually, employment (see Bynner et al, 2004 for a recent review of the impact of these). These programmes involve coordination and integration of services at local level to identify gaps and prevent overlap.

#### **CASE STUDIES on re-engagement**

*Youth work, especially outreach work, is especially well placed to identify the needs of 'hard-to-reach' young people, to work with them. Youth work is actively involved in offering informal education to those who are unable to engage with formal education, including help with gaining basic skills, and providing information,*

*advice and guidance on education, training and labour market issues. Some youth work projects provide opportunities for young people to become involved in volunteering and work experience schemes, which help improve both their basic skills and their knowledge of the local labour market.*

#### **MITWOW (Moving into the World of Work) Project (Oldham)**

Project aims to create opportunities for disaffected young people, through a team of youth and community workers mentoring young people through individual programmes of support and guidance. It is a 13-week education and learning programme targeting young people aged 16 to 25. Mentoring is used to address the barriers identified by young people themselves, that have led to social exclusion and being marginalised. Literacy and numeracy difficulties are addressed, self-esteem raised and skills learnt that allow young people to progress into education, training and employment.

**DAYLIGHT PROJECT (Aldershot)** is a day centre for homeless and/or unemployed young people aged 16 to 25 which uses casual and structured involvement to re-engage homeless and/or unemployed young adults in education, employment or training. It is part of Emmaus Projects, a registered charity which aims to house and "empower homeless young people to achieve independence".

**CONNECT 2** (Derbyshire) works with 16 to 18-year-olds in the NEET category who have been identified by Connexions PAs as requiring additional informal support through the E2E programme (its funding body). Young people are required to attend a minimum 16 hours per week, to take part in a monthly assessment of their progress and to set targets for further development. Connect 2 is seen as a stepping stone to other learning opportunities. A range of activities help young people understand the world of work, for example how to apply for jobs and attend interviews, build confidence, develop life skills, self-knowledge and personal skills. Some 96 per cent of learners progressed into a job with training or into further training opportunities.

#### **STEPS FORWARD (Newcastle) Personal Development Mentoring Programme**

Programme of basic and social skills education for young people aged 16 to 25 who are marginalised by poor educational achievement and social development. Each young person has a trained volunteer mentor who offers one-to-one support in following an individual learning programme. Sixteen young people, including two asylum seekers, have been matched to mentors,

and have developed skills including reading, writing, grammar, punctuation, use of numbers, budgeting, confidence, independent living skills, parenting skills, self-esteem and communication skills. Some have gone on to secure, paid employment, apprenticeships, tenancy agreements, qualifications and further education.

The **conditionality** of many provisions is increasing in a policy construction of citizenship which stresses the importance of balancing rights with responsibilities, even in youth, when opportunities to contribute are either limited or (as in the case of young carers) overlooked. The New Deal, which constructs welfare as dependent on good behaviour, and EMA bonuses, which reward attendance, are examples of approaches seeking to shape young people's behaviour through incentives and disincentives. They are individualising, can be seen as penalising those who are already vulnerable, and can exacerbate disaffection, as Allen et al's (2003) evaluation of EMA pilots for vulnerable young people found (quoted in Bynner et al, 2004). Nevertheless this policy approach is being extended. Activity Agreements are being piloted and there will be penalties for those who do not conform (SEU, 2005).

*The use of conditional benefits and disincentives is however quite contrary to the ethic of youth work, which is based on voluntary engagement rather than coercion.*

### Area-based provision

Part of the ECM agenda involves building strong and vibrant communities (ECM p. 32). The development of local strategic partnerships to identify problems and find solutions at local level is all part of this area focus.

A major focus of government policies in recent years has been on communities. Several initiatives target poor neighbourhoods rather than individuals in vulnerable groups. Alongside the wider community agenda, to improve housing standards and create safer communities, are initiatives which focus on disadvantaged communities. These range from neighbour-level approaches (such as **Excellence in Cities**) to increase participation in learning, to more specific targeting of areas seen to be in greatest need. So far these have been mainly areas of urban disadvantage. Thus, areas with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy or offending are targeted for specific provision. The danger is that while this focus may assist in the achievement of national policy targets, it misses those in need who live outside the designated areas and particularly those in rural areas (Bynner et al, 2004).

### CASE STUDY on targeting poor communities

*Youth work is about young people in their community context. The NYA itself is very involved in community activities. The Neighbourhood Support Fund is an example.*

The **NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND (NSF)** is a six-year £90 million programme funded through the DfES, and co-managed by The NYA. The programme has been using the best of youth work practice to facilitate the re-engagement of the hardest to reach young people aged 13 to 19 into education, training and employment. The NYA NSF supports 53 projects in disadvantaged communities in England. Each project offers a range of activities including drama, music, IT, peer education, sports and youth action. The average amount of time a young person stays on the project is three to nine months. Recognition of achievement is integral: since April 2002, young people have gained over 10,000 certificates including local youth service, internal project certificates, and accredited awards. Some 62 per cent of those who have left the projects (a total of 10,000) have gone onto education, training and employment. The average annual cost for a young person to participate in the programme is £1,100.

### CASE STUDIES: Community cohesion

*A Newcastle study has observed (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2005) that there is a need to recruit more Bangladeshis as youth leaders, to build a better relationship between the local community and local policy makers. Projects like FYA (below) are particularly significant, therefore.*

**FITZROVIA YOUTH IN ACTION (FYA)** is a community based youth action project. It uses sports and youth work to engage young people and support them in developing projects which benefit the community and improve relationships between people from different ethnic and age groups through the London Borough of Camden. Its members are ethnically diverse, including a high proportion of Bangladeshi origin, and aged from 11 to 25 years. Efforts are being made to increase the involvement of young women through targeted work. Activities include a community football programme (including an anti-racist tournament), a drug peer research project, a young residents' association, and a range of inter-generational and environment activities.

**SIGNPOST (Sheffield)** is a voluntary youth organisation working in partnership with schools to engage 'at risk' young people (mainly white

male 14 to 16-year-olds) in alternative personal and social education programmes. There is a strong focus on involving young people in the regeneration of the local community, which has helped contribute to community and inter-generational cohesion, and on encouraging young people to gain or improve their qualifications and basic skills. Activities include drama, IT and digital art, practical environmental work, local history projects, an allotment project and a cookery club. Most young people stay with the project for two years, and a Connexions personal advisor is based in the centre – both factors are key to its long-term success. The project works in partnership with a range of local agencies, is based in a multi-use centre and managed by an umbrella organisation, The Young People’s Health Project.

### Engaging with parents

There is increasing acknowledgment that young people’s lives need to be seen in their family context, partly because of the extension of economic dependence in youth and problems in accessing support (Jones, 2005a). The recent report *Support for Parents* (HM Treasury & DfES, 2005) stresses the importance of economic and financial security for families as a foundation for improving the quality of children’s lives, and announces plans to pilot outreach ‘Parent Support Advisors’ in schools.

**The new emphasis on prevention and early intervention could lead to a ‘step change in the extent to which professionals who support young people engage with parents’ (Youth Matters page 9).**

The *Youth Matters* Green Paper (DfES, 2005: p.9) expects a new emphasis on prevention and early intervention to lead to a ‘step change in the extent to which professionals who support young people engage with parents’. This would include providing more opportunities for parents to be involved in helping their children with learning and career choices, if the young people want this (p. 54). It is clearly important to involve parents where possible in decision-making which will have financial implications for the family, as well as to persuade them of the value of learning and qualifications. For parents to provide financial support, they need to be convinced that their sacrifice is worth while (see Jones et al, 2004).

#### CASE STUDY: Working with families

*This is an area where youth work is not often involved, currently, because of its emphasis on young people. St Basil’s in Birmingham (see*

*below under housing) undertakes family mediation work as part of its programme in preventing homelessness. Astra is another exception.*

**ASTRA (Gloucestershire)** is a multi-agency initiative line managed by Youth and Community, providing support, advice and information to young runaways. It offer young people the opportunity to talk in relative confidence and to be supported in making their own decisions about the best solutions available to them. A family worker works with young people and their families that request additional support. Its website contains information for young people, parents and for professionals. Astra has been recognised as a model of best practice by the SEU and the Social Services joint review.

## 4. ECM Outcomes Framework

The ECM Outcomes Framework (DfES, 2005) shows the extent to which economic wellbeing underpins the other four themes of ECM, and is underpinned by the Children Act 2004. It sets out the aims of the programme in terms of planned outcomes. These provide a framework for evaluation of services.

The Framework attempts to address economic wellbeing at individual, family and community levels. The first two outcomes (see box) relate to young people. The remaining three outcomes are concerned with young people’s households, and will mean their parental households if they are still living there.

#### ECM Economic Wellbeing Outcomes

- Readiness for employment
- Engagement in post-school education, employment or training
- Live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- Access to transport and material goods
- Live in households free from low income

### Outcomes and Evaluation

ECM involves an outcomes-based approach to youth services. The Outcomes Framework is intended to support policy development, enable the delivery of targets, and monitor progress of the local children’s services in delivering outcomes. Monitoring will be facilitated through a common data set for children’s services.

- ▶ For each outcome, there are **priority national targets** for which statistics are available. These are shown in Appendix 2 and include take-up of provision; levels of deprivation, etc. There are specific outcome indicators for the two specified vulnerable groups, looked-after children and young people, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- ▶ There are also more **qualitative factors** on which inspectorates are to base their judgments on the contribution of services to improving outcomes, and which may be of best value in evaluating soft outcomes associated with youth work provision. Measures such as ‘distance travelled’ – ie progress – rather than defined and standardised targets, may be more valid indicators of outcome in many cases. Ofsted (2005) recognises that it is hard to measure the extent to which children’s voices are heard, for example.

The danger is an over-reliance on hard statistics simply because they exist. The table in Appendix 1 shows how aims (or outcomes) have been translated into judgments and the evidence on which they are to be based.

### Individuals and their families (5.1)

There is a notable difference between the support arrangements under Theme 5 and those under Themes 1 to 4, in the ECM Outcomes Framework. Where in the latter the focus is on **support for young people from their ‘parents, carers and families’**, for Theme 5, the focus is on **supporting parents, carers and families to be economically active**, as a means to maximising economic wellbeing at family/household level. This is most clearly applicable to dependent children. The implication is that young people aged 16 to 19 are not economic units and their economic wellbeing is based on their dependence on their parents (assuming therefore that parents are willing to accept this responsibility).

#### ‘Supporting parents, carers and families to be economically active’ (ECM support arrangements for Theme 5)

The outcome is framed in terms of the economic wellbeing of parents, and the evidence – information and guidance on childcare, tax and benefits, and the costs of childhood activities – is geared to them. There is a clear message here about the dependence of children, but no indication about the responsibility of parents.

Most noticeable by its absence is any recognition

that young people may need support in their relationships with their parents. Young people are not always received into care when family problems arise and the distinction between looked after young people and others is not as great as the ECM document appears to imply.

### Readiness for employment (5.2)

The intention appears to be to ensure that young people understand and are prepared for the realities of working life. For this, they need a range of forms of support, including impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment opportunities, as well as personal, financial, welfare and advocacy support. While some of the outcomes here can be measured with available statistics, others reflect soft skills, such as self-confidence, team-working skills and enterprise, and financial literacy. Young people also need vocational training (vocational studies, work-related learning) and work experience. The NEET or potentially NEET groups are to be identified and targeted. The personal and academic development of 16 to 19s is to be monitored, challenging but realistic targets set, and appropriate provision made.

### Engagement in post-school education, employment and training (5.3)

The Framework makes it clear that EET provision is to be planned collaboratively in response to an evaluation of the needs of children and young people in the context of the local and national economy. It should also allow smooth transition between learning opportunities, to support progression. It should be inclusive, and sensitive to equality issues including race. Provision should be sufficiently flexible to enable young people to review and revise the choices they have made. Steps should be taken to ensure acceptable standards of education and training.

### Live in sustainable communities (5.4) and decent homes (5.5)

The Framework indicates that the most needy areas should be targeted for initiatives to address the broad range of family needs, and that young people are involved in the identification of need, and the planning, management and review of community regeneration initiatives.

Generally speaking, young people are seen **from a basis of living in their families of origin**, despite the fact that many young people have

left their parental homes by 19 years. There is reference to one of the main government targets – the reduction in numbers of families living in B&B accommodation, but the ECM framework appears to overlook the fact that youth homelessness is increasing because parents are not willing to provide accommodation (Bynner et al, 2004). Though support is to be provided for young people seeking to enter the social housing market, advocacy – which could be valuable in this respect – is mentioned only in relation to support for education and training.

#### CASE STUDIES on housing

**SAFE MOVES** pilot project (2002-2004) was developed by the Foyer Federation and Connexions, in four local authority areas in England (Ryedale, Suffolk Coastal, Birmingham and Wolverhampton). In Birmingham, St Basil's, which was already delivering homelessness prevention work in school and youth settings, took over as lead partner after the first year. The initiative aimed to test a new model of preventing homelessness for young people aged between 13 to 19, involving the development and delivery of a package of services to young people, and where appropriate their families.

**SOUTH SHROPSHIRE YOUNG PERSON'S HOUSING PROJECT** works with young people aged 16-25 who are either homeless, threatened with homelessness or in other housing need. It helps young people through a variety of practical measures and support, and is committed to finding ways to improve the availability of appropriate housing and support services for local young people in housing need, including working alongside other relevant agencies.

**MAYPOLE CENTRE** provides planned programmes of support to young people in the Druids Health area within a target age range of 11 to 25. It seeks to improve personal and social development and assist with entry into education, training and employment, through programmes on sexual health, substance misuse, adventure and sports opportunities, alternative education, personal development, mentoring, peer education and arts development. The centre is one of the few statutory youth service outlets contracted with Supporting People to deliver housing-related floating support to 40 young people, assisting them to move to independent living.

#### Access to transport and material goods (5.6)

In a similar vein, although access to transport is listed as one of the five aims under this

theme, it receives little attention in terms of judgments or evidence. It is assumed that parents bear the cost of transport. Many young people (perhaps especially those living in rural areas) would benefit from individual access to transport, such as through subsidised public transport, driving lessons, etc, rather than being left to rely on the uncertain support of their parents (viz Storey et al, 2000; etc).

#### CASE STUDIES on transport

*Wheels to Work (W2W) and Wheels to Learning (W2L) schemes have been developed in many rural areas. These schemes are a way of providing personal transport, and have opened up new opportunities for some young people (Commission for Rural Communities, 2005). Somerset Rural Youth Project is one example of a moped loan scheme (see below).*

**SOMERSET RURAL YOUTH PROJECT** is committed to rural regeneration. It aims to engage and support young people aged 11 to 25 in a range of social, economic educational and recreational opportunities designed to encourage social inclusion and life-long learning. Methods include detached work, mobile provision and a Moped Loan scheme for (16 to 25s).

**The RURAL (NEW START) BUS (Lincolnshire Youth Service)** aims to reengage young people aged 13 to 17 in learning through providing an attractive, supportive learning environment. The bus visits schools, leisure centre car park and traveller sites, etc, and is used in various ways: open access at school lunch breaks, as a supplementary teaching resource, to deliver self-esteem and other small groupwork classes, alternative curriculum delivery at non-school sites, and youth work out of school hours.

Urban projects also use buses. The **TALKBUS project in Croydon** provides information, advice and guidance services for young people with a focus on sexual health advice. North Manchester Youth Action Project undertakes detached work and uses 'THE BUS' to contact young people.

Access to material goods is also indicated as an outcome. This can be a poor indicator of economic wellbeing, once a young people has left the parental home. Research has shown how young people's standards of living, particularly in terms of material goods, dips when they leave the parental home, mainly because these goods are only gradually accumulated over the early part of an individual housing career (eg Jones and Martin, 1999). Among single young people this may be because they are less home-based in their leisure time, but lack of

material goods among young parents may reflect unmet need, and thus poverty.

### Live in households free from low income (5.7)

The ECM aim that young people should be able to live in households free from low income appears to relate to those living in their parental homes rather than independently – ie the focus is on the parental home.

### Vulnerable young people

Two groups of vulnerable young people are highlighted, in part because it is seen that their needs extend beyond the ECM cut-off age of 19. Children and young people who are **looked after** (or care leavers), and those with **learning difficulties and/or disabilities** are helped to achieve economic wellbeing. Emphasis is placed on the development and review of transition plans; and personal and welfare support to support education and training. Care leavers are to be enabled to access age-appropriate services to support their mental health and wellbeing, to be supported in their social development, to receive financial support which meets their needs, and to be provided with suitable and affordable accommodation, including residential or sheltered provision. As indicated above, the needs of care leavers are not always very different from those of other age peers, who might also benefit from these provisions. MITWOW, for example (see Case Study above) started as a project working with care leavers and expanded to include other disadvantaged young people.

#### CASE STUDIES: Targeted work with hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups

##### STAFFORDSHIRE YOUTH SERVICE PROJECT

'Looked after young people gained good knowledge and skills from a DVD project on leaving care. They developed their knowledge of film technique, and increased their awareness of healthy eating, budgeting, accommodation issues and tenancy rights and responsibilities. All had gained Millennium Volunteer accreditation' (Ofsted report, 2005).

**STREETREACH** is a specialist project providing confidential support services for young women abused through prostitution and drugs, and is an excellent example of highly skilled work with young people who live on the very margins of society (Ofsted, Doncaster, 2003)

##### SPEKE YOUNG PERSONS' OPPORTUNITIES

**PROJECT (Liverpool)** works with young people over 13 who are at risk of being excluded from mainstream education. It offers educational classes leading to qualifications in business administration and childcare, computing, provides an onsite crèche and manages work experience placements. Lone parents have chosen to study on a vocational training programme with onsite childcare, gaining skills to enable them to access jobs or further training. Recommendations arising from evaluations include widening participation to include young men.

#### MENTORING FOR CARE LEAVERS

An evaluation by Clayden and Stein (2005) of 14 volunteer mentoring projects supported by the Prince's Trust found that mentors helped with advice about accommodation, education, training and work, and young people valued help with relationship problems, confidence-building and emotional wellbeing. Positive outcomes for the young people were more associated with longer-term mentoring. The study concluded that mentoring could be improved by better matching, greater flexibility and fewer time restrictions. Earlier research has found that young people could be more resistant to building relationships with volunteers than with professionals (see Bynner et al, 2004).

## 5. Conclusions

Youth work already brings a major contribution to the ECM economic wellbeing agenda, as this briefing has shown. It plays a particularly important role in working through non-formal education with young people, often allowing young people to develop skills which will help them into work, but which do not get taught in school. Youth work enables young people to achieve their full potential in learning and work, and to gain protective social capital and life skills, and to provide the kinds of information, guidance and support they may need through the difficult period of transition to adulthood. Commitment goes beyond the ECM and Connexions remits by extending up to the age of 25, and youth work thus plays a part in enabling smoother transitions into adulthood. It does these things effectively through relationships of trust and respect between youth workers and young people. Essential to effective functioning is long-term support, which allows time for trust to develop and personal life plans to be evaluated and, if necessary, revised.

Many aspects of ECM hold great possibilities for youth work. In particular, it might provide scope for longer-term and more secure funding for projects

which have been identified by local partners, communities, parents and young people as responding to local needs. Longer-term funding will be beneficial to career development among youth work professionals as it could lead to better training and support structures.

Working in partnerships with other professionals is not new to youth work, but it can be difficult where there is a clash of ethos. Partnership working should, however, encourage professionals to reflect on their own professional values and also perhaps gain from learning about that of others. Partnership working with family workers, for example, may be a means of helping young people who have difficulties in their family relationships, enabling youth workers to understand more of the family context of young people, and to gain new skills.

The flexibility illustrated in the ways youth workers engage with young people is one of the strengths of the profession, and it can be put to use in other ways. We live in a rapidly changing world, and for youth work to be a key player in integrated youth services, it must be responsive to young people's changing needs and able to adapt itself accordingly. Thus, while the value base and ethos of youth work are essential for effective current practice, it is also important that the youth work profession keeps a door open for new possibilities and challenges.

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# Appendix 1:

## The relationship between aims, the inspectorate’s judgments and the evidence on which they will be based (Ofsted 2005)

| Aim   | Judgment   | Evidence   |
|---|--|--|
| Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active* | <p>5.1 Action is taken by partners to support families in maximising their economic wellbeing</p> <p>Information and support is provided on benefit entitlement</p>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Parents and carers are informed about the range of childcare facilities available to them</i></li> <li>– <i>Parents and carers are encouraged to take up in and out of work benefit and tax credit entitlements</i></li> <li>– <i>Partners are aware of and minimise the financial stress on families of childhood activity, such as cost of school trips, transport, and entry to libraries and sports facilities [See Theme 3 Briefing Paper]</i></li> </ul>   |
| Ready for employment  | 5.2 Young people 11 to 19 are helped to prepare for working life   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Young people are supported in developing self-confidence, team working skills and enterprise</li> <li>– Steps are taken to ensure that young people are financially literate</li> <li>– Opportunities for vocational studies are available for all Key Stage 4 pupils</li> <li>– All Key Stage 4 pupils undertake work-related learning and useful work experience</li> <li>– Careers education and guidance is provided to all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4</li> <li>– Impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment opportunities is available to all 13 to 19-year-olds</li> <li>– Action is taken to identify groups under-represented in education and training post-16 and to target recruitment strategies accordingly</li> <li>– Personal, financial, welfare and advocacy support is available to 16 to 19-year-olds to support their education or training</li> <li>– 16 to 19-year-olds’ personal and academic development are monitored; challenging but realistic targets for improvement are set; provision is planned to reflect this</li> </ul>  |
| Engage in post-16 education, employment or training                   | 5.3 Action is taken to ensure that 14 to 19 education and training is planned in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16 to 19) is of good quality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 14 to 19 provision is planned collaboratively in response to an evaluation of the needs of children and young people in the context of the local and national economy</li> <li>– Provision is planned to give access to a range of affordable and structured learning opportunities post-16, with smooth transition from one to another, to support progression to further and higher education, training and employment for all learners</li> <li>– Provision is planned in a way which is sensitive both to race and other equality issues and to the needs of potentially underachieving groups</li> <li>– Provision is sufficiently flexible to enable young people to review and revise the choices they have made</li> <li>– Education and training providers (16 to 19) are monitored, challenged and supported in improving their provision, especially the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Intervention is undertaken, when necessary, to ensure the provision of acceptable standards of education and training</li> <li>– Education and training providers (16 to 19) are encouraged and supported in self-evaluation to ensure continuous improvement</li> <li>– Inclusive practice by schools, colleges and training providers (16 to 19) is encouraged</li> <li>– Education and training providers (16 to 19) are implementing appropriate race equality schemes and promoting good race relations</li> </ul> |

\* Some of these repeat in later evidence.

| Aim  | Judgment  | Evidence   |
|--|---|--|
| Live in decent homes and sustainable communities | 5.4 Community regeneration initiatives address the needs of children and young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Initiatives are targeted at the most needy areas and address the broad range of family needs in an integrated way</i></li> <li>– Residents, including children and young people, are involved at all stages in the identification of need and the planning, management and review of community regeneration initiatives [Participation is discussed in the Theme 4 Briefing Paper]</li> </ul>  |
|  | 5.5 Action is taken to ensure that young people have decent housing                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Action is taken to maximise the proportion of children and young people living in homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>– Support is available for families and young people seeking to transfer within or enter the social housing market</li> <li>– The use of temporary accommodation for families with children and young people is minimised (NSF 1)</li> <li>– Teenage parents unable to live with family or partner are offered supervised, semi-independent housing with support [See Theme 1 Briefing Paper]</li> </ul> |
| Access to transport and material goods           | See 5.1   |  |
| Live in households free from low income          | See 5.1   |  |

## Appendix 2:

### Alphabetical list of case studies with websites

**Astra** (Gloucestershire) [www.astraproject.org.uk](http://www.astraproject.org.uk)

**CentrePoint** (London) [www.centrepoin.org](http://www.centrepoin.org)

**Connect 2** (Derbyshire) [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth\\_service/](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth_service/)

**Daylight Project** (Aldershot) [www.hants.org.uk/millennium](http://www.hants.org.uk/millennium)

**Fitzrovia Youth in Action** (FYA) (Camden) [www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/contacts/non-council-contacts/community-and-living/contact-fitzrovia-neighbourhood-centre.en.jsessionid=bWqFrTgsXPe](http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/contacts/non-council-contacts/community-and-living/contact-fitzrovia-neighbourhood-centre.en.jsessionid=bWqFrTgsXPe)

**Maypole Centre** (Birmingham) [www.southbirminghampct.nhs.uk/\\_news/PressReleaseLocal.asp?TitleID=241](http://www.southbirminghampct.nhs.uk/_news/PressReleaseLocal.asp?TitleID=241)

**MITWOW** (Moving into the World of Work) (Oldham) [www.nya.org.uk/Templates/internal.asp?NodeID=91066](http://www.nya.org.uk/Templates/internal.asp?NodeID=91066)

#### Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Rural (New Start)** Bus (Lincolnshire)

**Safe Moves Pilot Project** (Rydale) [www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/safemovesfinal.pdf](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/safemovesfinal.pdf)

**Signpost** (Sheffield) [www.nya.org.uk/templates/internal.asp?nodeid=92698&parentnodeid=91058](http://www.nya.org.uk/templates/internal.asp?nodeid=92698&parentnodeid=91058)

#### South Shropshire Young Person's Housing Project

[www.nya.org.uk/Templates/System/practice.asp?Nodeid=88981&CSID=107&section=cs](http://www.nya.org.uk/Templates/System/practice.asp?Nodeid=88981&CSID=107&section=cs)

#### Speke Young Persons' Opportunities Project (Liverpool)

[www.nya.org.uk/templates/internal.asp?nodeid=91069&parentnodeid=91058](http://www.nya.org.uk/templates/internal.asp?nodeid=91069&parentnodeid=91058)

#### Staffordshire Youth Service Project

**Steps Forward** (Newcastle) [www.nya.org.uk/Templates/System/practice.asp?Nodeid=88981&CSID=1116&section=cs](http://www.nya.org.uk/Templates/System/practice.asp?Nodeid=88981&CSID=1116&section=cs)

#### Streetreach (Doncaster)

[www.dialdoncaster.co.uk/supgrops/locgroup/loc202.htm](http://www.dialdoncaster.co.uk/supgrops/locgroup/loc202.htm)

**Streetwise Community Law Centre** (London: Bromley/Crystal Palace) [www.youthaction.org.uk/centres-streetwiselaw.html](http://www.youthaction.org.uk/centres-streetwiselaw.html)

**Talkbus** (Croydon) [www.croydon.gov.uk/education/pupil\\_support/pshce/175193/176138?a=5441](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/education/pupil_support/pshce/175193/176138?a=5441)

**The Bus** (Manchester)

**For more information, and other case study examples, go to the NYA Electronic Information Centre:**  
[www.nya.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=92785](http://www.nya.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=92785)

## **The National Youth Agency**

works in partnership with young people and with organisations and services to ensure better outcomes for young people. It is an independent, development organisation located between government and funding bodies on the one hand and service providers and their users on the other.


### **We strive to ensure that the work of services and organisations is:**

- relevant to the lives of young people;
  - responsive to policy;
  - effective and of a high standard;
  - efficient and provides good value; and
- successful in securing the best outcomes for young people.

### **Our five strategic aims are:**

- Participation: promoting young people's influence, voice and place in society.
- Professional practice: improving youth work practice, programmes and other services for young people.
- Policy development: influencing and shaping the youth policy of central and local government and the policies of those who plan, commission and provide services for young people.
  - Partnership: creating, supporting and developing partnerships between organisations to improve services and outcomes for young people.
  - Performance: striving for excellence in The Agency's internal workings.

### **Published by**

  
The National Youth Agency

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