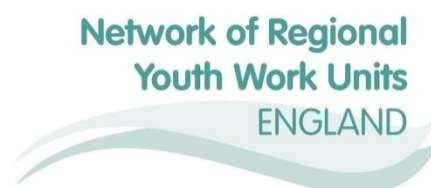


Youth services in England:

Changes and trends in the provision of
services

November 2014



Background

- Discussions and information provided by heads of regional youth work units in the North-west, North-east, Yorkshire and Humber, South-west, London and the West Midlands.

Overall points

- There is no longer a common form of youth service across England - everywhere services are different. Councils are rapidly re-shaping services according to local circumstances rather than a national vision.
- There is an absence of national youth policy: the focus is on social action.
- Reductions in council spending continue. There was some levelling of budgets in 2014 (e.g. London) but big further reductions expected for 2015.
- Overall the shift from open access to targeted services continues. Councils often recognise the value of professional youth work and move staff to support social care intervention.
- Commissioning is widespread but other models of youth service delivery such as mutuals are limited, so far. Commissioning has increased sector competitiveness.
- The resilience of the local voluntary sector is often down to strong leadership, good partnerships and clarity of vision. Small social enterprises and small businesses/ CICs (community interest companies) are emerging.
- Youth voice is often delivered separately to youth services and has been better protected.

Re-shaping services across England

- There is no longer a common form of youth service across England. Services are being reshaped in a number of different ways for example the youth service is...
 - reduced significantly but still retained in house (e.g. North Tyneside, Cornwall, Birmingham);
 - brought in house after being managed separately
 - integrated into a wider youth support or early intervention service (e.g. Rotherham, Swindon, Walsall) or delivered in partnership with another body (e.g. the police in Bolton);
 - wholly or partially commissioned out (e.g. Sunderland, Manchester, Bristol, Greenwich, Worcestershire);
 - delivered through new structures (e.g. Knowsley mutual, the Tri-borough arrangement in London, a new joint CIC in Richmond and Kingston, reconfigured into a co-op in Lambeth).
- Decisions about the re-structuring of youth services are driven by:
 - overall financial challenges in the authority;
 - strength of understanding about youth work from senior leadership and elected members as champions;
 - political make-up of the council (evidence in London, crudely: Tories commission out, Labour retain provision in-house).
 - localism – supporting the local economy, jobs and voluntary sector;
 - strength of existing non-council provision (in Greenwich the lead agency for youth services is Leyton Orient Football Club; Manchester College is the largest employer of youth workers in the city).

The youth work 'offer' is diminished and has little currency: e.g. no council in the south-west currently publishes a youth offer.

Reductions in council spending continue...

- Some levelling of budgets in 2014 (e.g. a number of London boroughs), but...
- Big further reductions are expected in 2015 (e.g. Lancashire 50% in 3 years from £22m; Somerset £4.5m to £500k in 3 years; Shropshire 45% in 2 years; East Yorkshire 54% up to 2014).
- Potential new income is largely from national programmes (e.g. Youth Contract, NCS, ESF) and are targeted at specific profile groups, ages, localities etc. They don't offer much local determination in programme design or spend and Payment by Results and performance targets add significant complexity to deliver.
- Grants through commissioning are often small, (e.g. Manchester 50 small grants to voluntary sector maximum £35k over 2 years).
- Scepticism about the S251 data and its accuracy – shows cuts but not really sure if this reflects the true picture. Current budget forecasts for 2015-16 show overall increase in open access provision and decrease in targeted support.

Youth work contribution...

- Typically, professional JNC qualified youth workers have moved to support targeted/ social care services, often on a caseload basis (Wigan, Sefton, Lancashire) or working on troubled families agenda (Hackney).
- Universal/ open access provision is often commissioned out to the voluntary sector or to new social enterprises, sole traders or emerging CICs. (N. Yorkshire, Barnsley, Blackpool, Cheshire).
- Some evidence that the value of open access provision is being recognised again. New structures in Hackney and some councils in south west (Plymouth, Poole, Bournemouth) show signs of this. However, the overall reduction in open provision have, in some areas, reduced the council's information about what's happening to young people locally.
- In rural areas in south-west evidence that local provision is highly valued and town/ parish councils are finding resources to keep youth clubs open (e.g. North Somerset).
- Cabinet-style governance has not worked in favour of youth services: it has removed the contact between elected members and heads of youth service, so their influence has diminished.

Local voluntary sector and leadership

- Local voluntary sector presents a mixed picture. Not all areas have a well co-ordinated voluntary youth sector – it is sometimes fragmented and often under-funded.
- In some councils there remains a lack of knowledge about and confidence in voluntary sector's role and ability to deliver (examples from Yorkshire and Humber).
- Strong local provision is often down to good leadership of the voluntary youth sector with strong networks into the council, vision and the ability to bring organisations together to bid for work. One regional youth work unit commented that 'brighter, effective organisations beginning to thrive, smaller unresponsive organisations going to the wall'.
- Local consortia and partnerships are key to picking up commissioned services and new responsibilities (e.g. management of neighbourhood youth services in Surrey, Bristol, Devon). Some resistance to large national voluntary sector organisations bidding locally, especially where there is no local partner
- Small community sector organisations are struggling: often volunteer-led they lack skills and capacity to take advantage of larger contracts (e.g. NCS) and cannot survive on small grants.
- Some evidence that funders recognise the difficulty for these smaller organisations (e.g. Garfield Weston) in supporting core costs though this remains a predicament.

New delivery models beginning to emerge...

- Mutualisation is being encouraged by Cabinet Office (recent *Delivering Differently* funding support , Youth Engagement Fund) . Knowsley seen as pioneer but others in the pipeline (e.g. Torbay).
- Government short-term financial incentives to set up mutuals plus underwritten staffing costs by council make it an attractive way to secure youth services. However, some have questions about long-term viability in competitive business environment, plus impact on local voluntary sector (preferential funding etc).
- Cross-borough collaboration (e.g. Richmond-Kingston CIC; Tri-borough arrangements) are happening in London but little elsewhere. London slightly differently to the rest of the country – capital-wide services such as GLA, Transport for London, London Health etc still provide infrastructure, policy frameworks and funding.
- National cross-sector partnerships are emerging: e.g. (e.g. Ingeus and Ambition)
- Faith sector continues to survive. YMCA is growing and strong in some parts of the country (Leicester, Somerset)
- Youth populations projected to increase in the next 20 years especially in London, South-east, East Midlands, East Anglia, South-west and parts of Yorkshire and Manchester. Will impact on council services.

Youth voice

- Evidence that youth participation and youth voice have been protected (politically risky to slash funding for these structures).
- Youth voice is often managed in a different part of the council (e.g. Gloucestershire in Chief Exec's department, North Tyneside).
- Young people have played a part in protecting some services from the worst cuts (e.g. Devon: pressure from young people saved 8 youth centres/hubs).
- Strong expectation from government that youth voice continues (Positive for Youth).

Conclusions

- The funding situation is likely to change for the worse in the next 18 months, following 2015 spending cuts.
- The Youth Offer no longer seems to have the traction it once had. Consideration needs to be given to how it can be strengthened.
- Similarly, politically there isn't much appetite for a statutory service, although an increasing call for it. The statutory guidance needs to be clarified and made more specific to support the youth offer .
- The uncertainty around current funding means there is little investment in programmes that build long-term relationships and support for young people.
- A stronger case needs to be made for the value of open access provision and its impact in reaching marginalised/ disadvantaged young people
- Competition is challenging voluntary sector to balance charitable aims with social business drivers.
- New delivery models and new players are emerging: some introduced by Government (NCS Trust, Challenge Network).

NYA Vision for Youth Work in England to 2020

NYA's *Vision for Youth Work*, published in August 2014, draws on its knowledge and understanding as the national body for youth work in England. The main recommendations are:

- Government must publicly recognise the value of high quality youth work;
- Government must identify a budget equivalent to 10% of the cost of youth unemployment as the payment mechanism against social investment and social impact bonds specifically for youth work;
- Government should introduce an appropriate framework to inspect the scope, quality and impact of the local youth work offer.
- Local government must recognise its position at the heart of the formulation of local statutory, voluntary sector, business partnerships to deliver youth work.
- Twenty of the FTSE100 listed companies must invest in high profile youth work programmes.
- Employers must require all youth workers to undertake JNC approved qualifications relevant to their roles and responsibilities.