

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES  
YOUTH MATTERS CONSULTATION  
SEPTEMBER 2005**

**OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES**

**BACKGROUND**

In July 2005, the Government published its Green Paper, 'Youth Matters', and invited comments on the proposals it contained. In September 2005, two consultation events were held for key stakeholders to discuss 'Youth Matters' with a view to both informing the Council's formal response to the consultation and shaping the local response to future guidance on services to support young people. The format of the event reflected the specific questions posed in 'Youth Matters' and the full details of these are attached to the report.

**KEY MESSAGES**

Whilst there was not a consensus of views on all the issues debated, key messages emerged that need to be taken into account when planning future local services for teenagers and in service design and delivery. Whilst some of the issues raised will be determined by Government through future guidance that reflect the national consultation response, there will be opportunities to develop local implementation plans within the requirement made on the local authority and these should reflect the following messages that emerged through the consultation process.

**Young People:**

- are individuals and need to access services that meet their individual needs;
- should be listened to and respected by adults;
- should be the drivers for the services that support them;
- need to agree what their responsibilities are and take them seriously;
- are equal partners.

**The Issues Young People Face:**

- gaining independence;
- lack of money;
- lack of facilities and activities;
- lack of guidance;
- transition;
- those with specific needs face additional barriers, e.g. young people with disabilities.

**Empowering Young People:**

- must be all young people, not just some;
- investment in time and resources is needed;
- young people must be central to decision-making on things that affect them;
- young people need training and development opportunities to properly equip them to fully participate;
- various models of youth engagement will be needed;
- tokenism must be avoided;
- adults need training and development to change attitudes and enable young people's participation;
- adults must keep their word, feedback and action is crucial.

**Incentives, Sanctions and Opportunity Cards :**

- incentives need to be incremental and individualised;
- cash is a good incentive;
- Opportunity Cards largely unsupported, especially the notion of penalties;
- need to recognise and reward achievement, participation and good behaviour rather than additional sanctions.

**Activities:**

- young people should determine activities;
- young people sometimes want to just be with their friends without a specific activity;
- mixed menu of activity opportunities;
- Voluntary and Community Sector important providers;
- flexible access, especially at evenings and weekends;

- affordable;
- national standards could be too prescriptive;
- potential lack of resources.

#### **Volunteering:**

- vocabulary could be out-dated;
- different incentives for young people needed;
- need to build up street credibility about involvement in volunteering;
- significant volunteering activity already taking place;
- community group contacts and communication important, especially older people.

#### **Information, Advice & Guidance**

- must be consistent and impartial across providers;
- must be personal;
- needs to start early;
- remember parents and carers – main influence on young people;
- easily accessible;
- with responsibility must come accountability;
- support for minimum standards of provision;
- should reflect maturity level, not age;
- emphasis on qualifications and training in schools;
- consider local quality mark.

#### **Vulnerable young people and targeted support**

- must be effective communication to and from a variety of groups;
- need to be proportionally represented on youth fora;
- need flexible access to services;
- lack of contemporary activities;
- need a consistent, holistic approach;
- must address the needs of those out of school;
- accurate information and data which are shared is crucial;
- early intervention is important;
- outreach support needs to be developed;
- must be agreement on who the lead professional is and they must be accountable.

#### **Partnership Working:**

- dividing lines between services must decrease, with services being more flexible, multi-skilled and tasked;
- better engagement with, and increased commissioning to, the voluntary and community sector;
- honest and equal partnerships required;
- needs to be jointly agreed priorities and action;
- training and workforce development must embrace all services;
- build on and extend existing success and joint working;
- need to be robust in abolishing systems that don't work;
- needs to be a genuine wish to share resources;
- breaking down barriers and changing the culture takes time.

**Youth Matters Consultation Workshops  
19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September  
Detailed Responses**

**Questions and Answers**

- 1 a) What do you think are the most important issues facing young people now?**
- Independence – need to be in control of life
  - Money – cash for activities
  - Value and respect, peer pressure, being accepted
  - Need to have / be able to make better choices
  - Safety
  - Lack of facilities
  - Lack of guidance
  - Priorities will change
- 1 b) How are these issues different for younger (13-16) compared to older (17- 19) teenagers?**
- May be less likely listen to some of the younger groups
  - Not always able to express views
  - Not appropriate to segregate into specific age groups – better to look at them as individuals
  - Early interventions seen as important
- 2. Are there issues faced by particular groups of teenagers that are not addressed in this document? If so, what are they?**
- Children with complex needs and long term conditions
  - High achieving children – lots of references to low achieving and how to address/support but nothing for other spectrum
  - Transitions – gaps
  - Children with a range of health needs – no clear focus
- 3. Do you know of any projects or initiatives which have been outstandingly successful in tackling the challenges covered in this document? If so, please give details?**
- Education Maintenance Allowance
  - Sixth Form College generally
  - Connexions, in-school advisory services
- 4 a) How can we encourage young people to take their responsibilities seriously?**
- Questions raised re who determines or decides the responsibilities – might be seen as ok by some but needs to be a jointly agreed set of responsibilities.
  - Need to engage and encourage ownership to establish value bases
  - Need to have equal respect for young people
- 4 b) What should the incentives be for good behaviour?**
- Cash
  - Young Person's Allowances
  - Need to make sure incentives are incremental – start from equal bases to enable all to achieve some level of success i.e. a young person who is never able to get to school due to poor social circumstances may never be able to achieve 100% attendance.
  - Incentives would need to be individualised to work – one scheme will not fit all.

- 4 c) What sanctions should be applied for poor and disruptive behaviour?**
- We already have a Youth Justice system which should deal with this.
  - Generally not in favour of introducing additional sanctions – not felt to be the best way to deal with the majority of children.
- 4 d) Do you know of any examples of schemes, which have applied these kinds of incentives and sanctions effectively?**
- EMA works well
- 5. What more could be done to divert young people from risk-taking behaviour, like smoking, binge-drinking and volatile substance and illicit drugs misuse?**
- Start education on these issues early.
  - Development of high esteem / confidence levels
  - Flexibility in services – need to have street based access, need to reach difficult points of access.
  - PSHE, Programmes
  - Parental support and therefore linked programmes for parents.
  - Sharing best practices
  - Wider integrated youth service
  - Use of community facilities
  - Address the wide age range
  - Media maximise its use in a positive way
- 6. What practical benefits and challenges will there be in developing an integrated youth support service?**
- Need to get rid of dividing lines – make services more flexible, multi skilled and tasked
  - Need to engage closely with Voluntary and Community Sector – they know what works
  - True and equal partnerships required
- 7. How can the Connexions brand be used to best effect within the reformed system?**
- Don't need a 'brand within a brand'.
  - Group felt that this does not need to continue – Connexions may have good and bad connotations for different individuals. If establishing a true and newly formed integrated service why should Connexions be singled out as a continuing agency?
- 8. What more can we do to ensure that reformed services are focused on achieving the improved outcomes we all want to see?**
- Develop a clear overarching strategy
  - Get rid of bureaucracy
  - Consider, but not be overwhelmed by, the need to achieve outcomes
  - Get time, commitment and finance right.
- 9a What do you think of the emphasis in the proposals on empowering young people themselves to shape local services?**
- Needs to be integrated to include all young people not just a chosen few.
  - Needs appropriate person for young people to undertake lead role.
  - Young people suggestions need to be embedded into service delivery.
  - Will need to use various youth work engagement models to engage cross representation.
  - Training and development opportunities need to be widely available to all young people to equip them with the skills to participate fully within the empowerment process.

- Ensuring partnership working across organisations: Inclusion, Citizenship and Democracy, Corner House, Voluntary organisations to engage young people not accessing mainstream service provision.
- Representative not tokenistic
- Developing skills amongst professionals to adequately consult with young people.
- Young people should be the 'drivers'
- Young people will chose what they want and vote with their feet
- Internet café/SEAL Website useful tool why not use on street corners
- Street work/young people hang around local shops. Why not build on recommendations in Joseph Rowntree research into street based youth provision 1994
- Ask young people and involve in planning recreation/leisure programmes.
- Local Authority attitude towards young people needs to change and integrate as equal partners.
- Young people feel disappointed and disillusioned when they are told something is going to happen and then it does not.
- Young people should be informed and empowered and listened to.
- Young people may not want major change but they need to be asked.
- Time-scales for consultation need to be realistic and wrap around young people. Lets get it right from the start and not rush through things young people don't want. Adults sometimes ask the wrong questions.

#### **9b What options are there for achieving this?**

- Focus groups, established forums, questionnaires, develop creative youth work models such as outreach and detached projects.
  - Investment and time is needed to ensure VCS, BME, Disability groups, Lesbian Gay and Bi-sexual and other under represented groups are fully engaged
  - Young people should organise events/forums for consultation
  - All youth organisations to ask young people that use their projects what they think and send in responses.
  - Create peer mentor opportunities that are paid to enable young people to consult with their peers.
  - Communicate with young people by text.
  - Buildings need to be developed around the needs of young people and accessible when young people need them.
- **10a What should be done centrally to support the development and delivery of local opportunity cards?**
    - Scrap this idea you shouldn't give something then take it away.
    - Concern over the inconsistency of application.
    - Expensive, how can this be justified, starting up and running fees for an unproven reward scheme.
    - Can we not just extend the leisure saver card scheme, SBC already successfully operate.
    - How is it going to be controlled? What organisations will be involved? EG: Mc Donald's, Pizza Hut, and HMV?
    - If only SBC services, what's available that they want as a reward?
    - Control of point's credit?
    - Can't see long term - a fad!
    - Implementation of recognition of achievement/participation rather than reward/punishment scheme?
    - Is this just cover for ID Cards for all young people? How will this data be used/accessed?
    - Think a good idea to have point's cards but not to take away points once they have been earned.
    - Fraudulent opportunities with card system
    - Does this idea take away the rights of young people under 18 to have full access to Education, health, protection, social care and leisure under the UN Convention Rights of the Child?

**10b How should opportunity cards be developed so that the maximum number of young people can benefit?**

- They should not be developed.
- Do young people want them or see the benefits?
- Do reward schemes create empowerment, if this is desired outcome?
- What alternatives have been discussed?
- Advertise in places so young people know what is available to them.
- Agreed we should reward good behaviour.
  
- Disagreement regarding use to penalise young people. Some for, some against.
- Suggest that the Youth Assembly could make decisions about the types of opportunities on offer.
- If we penalised young people, what type of evidence would we use? How would it be seen to be consistent?
- Possibility of a 'black market' / currency in opportunities.
- Concerns regarding funding being for capital rather than people.
- Real concerns about the overall level of funding.
- The opportunities are more important than the cards.

**11a Which activities do you think have the most benefits for young people?**

- Young people not adults should set activities and agenda as this is prescriptive and goes against involvement and empowerment of young people and will not create real ownership.
- Can't young people just be young people? Do they need an activity? Why can't it be a "space" for them to be young people, without a prescriptive curriculum. Young people need to have space/time out for them to be allowed to be young people. "HANG OUT PLACES"
- Define activity?
- Sport/coaching qualifications, relaxing, enjoyment, a mixed menu for young people to choose to dip in and out as they feel, transport and resources key issues that need to be addressed.
- Increase opportunities for young people/community members to volunteer and recognition of their contribution.
- Services commissioned to Voluntary and Community Sector or those best placed to deliver.

**11b Do the proposed national standards on activities cover the right areas?**

- Need to be established by young people. Very prescriptive.
- Where has the research for these activities stemmed from?
- Sporting venues need to be available at times that suit young people at affordable prices.
- Young people should be involved in decision-making process so they decide what activities they would like to do.
- Venues need to be available 24/7, especially evenings/weekends

**11c Are they achievable and affordable within existing resources?**

- Definitely not. Need to invest considerably more to achieve some very ambitious targets.
- 40 million capital funding over 2 years is not a lot of money nationally.

**12. Will our proposals, taken together with those of the Russell Commission, lead to increased mutual respect between young people and others in the community?**

- Concern that the proposals don't go far enough

- Already Youth Parliament/Youth Assembly in place however young people involved in these types of activities are the type who would 'volunteer' for other things.
- We need to get to the 'hard to reach' pupils - how do we engage with them?
- Small steps with the right people involved, build up trust and selling the 'projects' in such a way that there is peer credibility in being part of a group – very important to young people.
- Felt money might be more of an incentive for some youngsters/could it be linked to benefits? Could it be widened to 16 – 24 linking to benefits/New Deal?
- Is 'volunteer' the right word?
- Alternative curriculum activities going on in schools which often involves disaffected pupils with the right staff involved for it to be a success – can often be successful.
- There is a need to match up skills/aspirations and there is some purpose to what is being asked of the young person. Rewards could be offered and this then would put some value on the tasks undertaken.
- Already undertake Community Volunteers Course – through the school curriculum which gives good constructive feedback to pupils.
- Millennium volunteering course goes on in colleges – amounts to an award and adds to the young persons record of achievement.
- Take into account, peer pressure – can we get the message across that it's 'cool'?
- Youngsters have different incentives for volunteering, depending on what their needs are at the time e.g. may need to be involved in a community group to add to their experience before apply for a place at University/FE College for a particular course.
- Importance of having contact and communication with all groups in the community especially in relation to older people who can often have preconceived ideas about young people (works both ways).
- Old fashioned title that does not convey the real meaning. Linked to 'Community Service' type image.
- Workforce participation and involving businesses to support.
- Is it sustainable? Real question over continuity and long term value.

## 13 & 14

### **What more can we do to recognise and celebrate young people's positive contributions to their communities?**

### **Would the opportunity to earn rewards motivate young people to get involved in their communities?**

- Recognising that volunteering could be linked to rewards but it was felt that young people would not necessarily want large presentations
- Volunteering could be acknowledged in the form of being part of work experience etc, so that when young people move on to other things they have something tangible to offer
- The suggestion of 'Opportunity Cards' for young people as a way of adding points for rewards – there were concerns about this/culture develops/who is involved and what is it worth.
- Would need to look at individual needs – short and long term aims for use.
- What would it mean to the young person – again concerns – would need to link to positive life skills but these would change as the youngster became older
- There have been similar schemes set up to link to rewards but again a concern that those that aspire will achieve more and there may be some who will never be able to achieve the desired outcomes – could not be a positive outcome
- Could end up with disaffected youngsters so need to look at how we can engage.
- It was acknowledged that young people wanted to be left alone to be with friends – safe place for them to gather – nowhere for them to go. Discussions took place relating to what type of places: some LAs have alcohol free pubs
- Monday nights have been very successful at Zanzibar for young people.
- Should look at commissioning services.

- Concern that Youth Service now has different focus – is the service too target focussed and not reaching the young people and building up mutual respect and understanding that was there previously
- Shouldn't we have something in Stockton locally to engage young people?
- Discussions took place around where there were a number of groups for young people already going on. Also, some groups can be too specific about which young people can attend. Do we need to get rid of restrictions?

**15 How can we ensure that young people from the diverse range of communities that make up today's society are effectively engaged by Service Providers?**

- Common denominator – the activity that is put on.
- Communication with young people/all groups in the community. Participation/activities/consultation form integral part of the process
- Too much consultation? Not enough feedback!
- Ethnicity need not be a barrier.
- Music is very important to young people and there is a need to look at things from young peoples perspective.
- Suggestion of putting on one event a year at a venue within the area e.g. Tall Trees possibly joined up with raising money for a particular charity
- Service providers need to be more flexible in their thinking around engaging young people.
- We need to change rather than expecting young people to change.
- Connexions – change? Confusion if it does change as people have got used to the service name. How will that work in providing a better service for supporting young people. Previous service didn't aspire to expectations – appeared to give a more 'watered down' service.

**Supporting Choices: Information, Advice and Guidance**

**16. What kind of help and support is most important for young people?**

There are many facets involved in the help and support young people require, involving both content (IAG) and practice/process issues:

- Impartiality vital
- Consistency across providers / areas
- "No closed door" – finding answers for young people
- Support should be comprehensive and timely
- Needs to start early (preventative)
- Non educationalist (i.e. outside of school)
- Don't forget parents and carers need support / IAG - they are main influence on young people.
- Should be "personal" – someone to trust – not driven by ICT
- Identifiable for easy access

**17. How can we ensure that information, advice and guidance provided to young people is comprehensive, impartial and challenges rather than perpetuates traditional stereotypes?**

- Who is best placed to deliver "comprehensive and impartial" – Do we need to drive up the numbers of people achieving qualifications?
- Will unqualified school/college staff be allowed to undertake this role (2/3 of schools do not have CEG qualified staff – National Audit Office report 2004)
- Quality standards and processes are also key to ensuring effective IAG.
- IAG must retain its existing strong element of impartiality, resisting sectional or vested interests and ensuring young people follow progression routes that are best suited to their needs and aspirations. Impartiality in IAG is one of the key drivers if we are seeking parity of esteem between vocational and academic career routes.
- In terms of challenging stereotyping, this needs to run through all activities that support IAG – better training for the delivery of careers education, careful monitoring and review of messages we give young people.
- Training / workforce development – for **all** those providing advice and guidance
- Peer training



- Recognise that change in culture / perceptions takes time.

**18. What do you think of our proposals to devolve responsibility for information, advice and guidance to children's trusts, schools and colleges?**

- With responsibility **must** come accountability
- Key issue about impartiality
- Funding – where does it go?
- Definition of “poor” what does it mean and who decides?
- Need an “honest broker” – without sectional interests
- Will there be too much targeting at the expense of universal services?
- Schools – issues about subjectivity from school staff (e.g. attitudes to “non – academic”), standards and monitoring, and maintaining the “currency” of information

**19a Do you agree that it is important to have minimum expectations of the information, advice and guidance received by young people?**

- A definite yes to this one.

**19b Are the proposed expectations correct for each age group?**

- Depends on maturity levels not age
- Depends on the circumstances for each young person – i.e. individualised
- Generally feel interventions proposed are too late, esp. preparation for secondary – should be in Year 6 (existing practice anyway?).
- How do we support choice in 14-19 agenda across schools (specialist schools initiative) ?

**20a Do you agree there is a case for quality standards for information, advice and guidance? If so, what should they cover?**

- Definite yes
- More emphasis on qualifications / training for those in schools
- Should include LMI
- How do we monitor / evaluate if standards are being met?

**20b How can they be made affordable without putting pressure on financial or workforce resources?**

- Does it come at the expense of other delivery aspects?
- Perhaps a local “Kite” Mark
- Shouldn't only focus on “mainstream” provision.

**21. Would quality awards for IAG help to ensure high quality and impartiality?**

- Yes – only if they are monitored and fit for purpose

**22. Do you think a 'personal health MoT' for 12-13 year olds would be an effective way of helping young people make a successful transition to the teenage years and to secondary education?**

- This is a confusing question.
- No one was clear about the meaning of this question – general feeling was that it is ambiguous in the use of the term “health”
- Should be more support for parents/ carers
- Parents/ carers influence all transitions.
- Young people make the transition to secondary education at age 11!
- There needs to be more clarity about what “personal health MoT” actually means.

- Good practice would suggest that the routine screening, monitoring and review of young people's needs and progress takes place as a progressive and ongoing process. There are many existing processes within school settings that seek to promote early identification and intervention.
- Key pre- transition "windows" can be identified and include:  
Age 10/11 – transition to secondary school  
Age 13/14 – key stage 3 (options) – transition to Key Stage 4 and GCSE  
Age 15/16 – Year 11 – transition to post 16 education, employment and training.
- The concept of a "personal health MoT" is a good one but cannot be seen as a one-off and should be seen as a process including all key transitions. In addition they should be looking at the holistic needs of the young person and identifying the support they need to make the "next" transition successfully.

**23. Do you think there is a good case for bringing together within Children's Trusts, responsibility for commissioning different services that provide support to young people with additional needs?**

- Already doing joint work - logical to follow this on and continue.
- Issues around management and leadership needs to be a *genuine* wish to share resources etc. (at high level - lower levels).
- Need to break down barriers will be a challenge. Staff confidence employment etc - 'Streamline' 'Services' - not jobs.
- Need to build on successes so far and develop new strategies.
- Need to be ruthless in terms of abolishing systems that are not successful.
- More involvement with schools.
- Where does accountability belong?
- Voluntary Sector - lack of information. Information not coming across.
- SEAL - information sharing - different sectors.
- Need systems in place - networking.
- Information for children needs to be physically accessible.
- Good case for going ahead.
- Operational/Strategic implications.

**24. How can we ensure that young people facing particular barriers (e.g. those who are disabled) are effectively engaged by service providers?**

- Key : effective communication to and from a variety of groups, networks to reflect the needs of individuals/carers/parents etc.
- Audit of current provision/measure of impact/effectiveness.
- Avoidance of stereotyping.
- Developing junior viewpoints (younger age range).
- Important to capture the interests of groups within the population - ethnic minorities etc. Also to ensure that they are proportionally represented on groups such as the Youth Parliament.
- Young people could have an audit role - e.g. the Youth Charter (ConneXions, Corner House etc) would be one model.
- Not one complete list of young people.
- Lack of communication.
- Need to 'talk the same language'
- Whose responsibility?
- Co-ordination?
- Criteria - Some people do not perceive themselves as having a disability. People with disabilities need to build confidence amongst professionals. Want to be in employment/contributing to society - not on benefits etc.
- ConneXions - tracking most vulnerable young people and providing additional support.
- **Consultation** - asking them but giving them the ability to answer ( 1. Choices. 2. Constructive answer).
- Young people need to make *informed* choices.
- Need to know what is out there.
- Not enough contemporary activities.
- Questions to young people - do not see results until adulthood.
- **Resources** - support needs to be co-ordinated across organisation/agencies.

- All young people brought in centrally - forum?
- Consistency/holistic approach.
- Structure/guidelines rather than free choice (chaotic)
- Social issues - targeting young person not always best.
- Euphemistic targets - ConneXions
- **Working Hours** - School Hours.
- Services need to be accessible after school hours.
- Young people need to be asked where they want services i.e. around school/out of school.
- What about young people who do not attend school or who have had bad experiences of school.
- Anonymity/confidentiality for children and young people.
- Personal barriers - need to improve perception of mental illness etc.
- Improve confidence
- Influencing the Media.
- Institution models.
- Needs to be a new model.

**25. How can we ensure that the new lead professional role is successful in co-ordinating the delivery of targeted support to young people who need it?**

- Lead professional - accountability.
- Need to know what information there is.
- Pool information - joint agenda.
- Legal issues.
- Must be an agreement on who the Lead Professional is.
- Lead workers have responsibility.
- Need good team ethics/clear focus.
- Early Intervention/Prevention - resources - realistic timescales - targets.
- Targeting - sharing information.
- Prediction - prevention.
- Identifying young people whose families are known to Services.
- Take into account geographical/cultural elements of availability.
- A suggested model based on high, medium and low levels of need.
- Felt Outreach important.
- Similarly accurate and up to date data.
- Early intervention and response to indicators important.
- Young people may have significant needs whatever their background.
- May be differing root causes/similar problems.
- Important to listen to concerns expressed from a wide range of sources - gather/collate information.
- Important to maximise the networks of information - not just SBC.
- Financial targeting - imposes constraints and a lack of flexibility.

**26. What more could be done to help older teenagers make a smooth transition to support from adult services, where they need them?**

- Money - main motivation of most young people.
- Routine - important for young people with disabilities/challenging behaviour.
- FE/College - different from school.
- Early intervention - awareness - need to see where problems could arise before they do.
- Keep encouragement going - FE.
- Transition for children & young people with disabilities - big issue.
- Y11 term ends June/July - FE starts October.
- Need underpinning support.
- Transition - strategic/operational plans - big area needed.
- Adult Services - list - how defined.
- Peer mentoring, promotion of role models may be a way forward.
- Transition planning in the 14+ style would be a positive step.
- Concern at artificial age barriers to services.
- Importance of gathering data etc.

- Post 16 provision - quite wide differences which complicates planning for progression. A more uniform approach?

**Do you have any other general comments?**

***(Empowering Young People : Things to do and Places to go)***

- Agenda needs to be set by young people if real ownership is to be created and sustainable outcomes achieved in Youth Matters. Youth Workers need to lead on this process and act as facilitators.
- How as an under-valued professional within a multi-disciplinary team are youth workers going to be heard, find a voice or understood?
- Which approach by professionals do young people prefer?
- If we are going to empower young people with regards to services/activities, then we need to ensure that there are professionals and money there to keep to our word.
- Training and development opportunities for all young people/volunteers to progress to professional status.
- Youth and Community facilities need to be modernised and be available 24/7 at affordable prices.