

Youth

“I don't want to feel different and would not want to be seen going to something that was for one 'type' of person. Activities should be available to everyone who wants to go.”

Young person, O'Mara, 2011, page 29

Introduction

This final summary brings together the key messages from three C4EO knowledge reviews to support you in developing services for young people. The reviews include current evidence from research and local practice and the views of service managers, young people, parents and carers gathered in consultations organised by C4EO.

C4EO's role is to support senior managers in local authorities, partner agencies and schools to improve the lives of children, young people and families by providing the best possible evidence of what works. The Coalition Government wants to give young people more pride in themselves and their achievements, and has launched the National Citizen Service, a flagship project for 16 year olds to help them mix with people from different backgrounds, increase involvement in their communities and become active and responsible citizens (Adamson, 2011, page 9). The Government has also introduced measures to tackle under-age sales of alcohol, review licensing legislation and encourage local councils to do more to promote health and wellbeing (DH 2010).

C4EO's work focused on three specific areas in relation to this topic: increasing the engagement of young people in structured activities¹; improving outcomes for young people by spreading and deepening the impact of targeted youth support (TYS) and development²; reducing alcohol consumption by young people to improve their health, safety and wellbeing³.

Some themes emerged strongly across all three reviews

- Local authorities should work together with schools and other partners to identify local needs, provide services and monitor outcomes.
- All forms of media should be used to promote positive activities as part of a comprehensive communications strategy. Ideally, to maximise participation, all young people should be offered all activities, but in the current financial climate targeting may be necessary.
- Giving families and young people a say in planning services, for example deciding how to allocate spending, can improve attendance.
- Working to remove barriers, for example, peer group pressure and parental indifference, providing information about what is available, and practical help in accessing services can all help to encourage young people's participation.
- Parents often have a positive experience of extended services in schools and see them as well placed to provide after-school activities. However, offering alternative facilities can help to engage young people and their families who are particularly vulnerable and who may find other venues more acceptable.



Using the evidence to improve practice

Building strong targeted support services

It is important to build relationships between the different players: between services, sectors and agencies, within local communities and with young people. Successful interventions prioritise these relationships and feed information back to all these groups. Good governance across different sectors reduces fragmentation of services, and stakeholders who contributed to the review agreed.

Work in partnership with other statutory services and voluntary organisations to:

- develop strong relationships between agencies and communities to identify and promote the participation of seldom-heard young people
- deliver structured, adult-led activities and agree how to monitor participation, measure positive outcomes and secure VFM
- develop a collaborative approach: agree a shared definition of at-risk groups, and consistent processes of referral, record-keeping and information sharing
- identify leaders to manage inter-agency work, to champion services and who are accountable
- provide a range of TYS to meet a full range of needs, especially at times of transition, and ensure a balance between targeted and universal services so as to engage the most vulnerable without creating stigma
- train staff in the skills needed to deliver services, particularly important for targeted youth support.

Reducing young people's drinking

Children benefit by learning about alcohol in school and being helped to relate the information to their own use of alcohol and drugs.

Acknowledge why young people drink: peer pressure, because they enjoy it, and to try to relieve anxiety: *'For me, drinking is to stop me worrying, trying to forget and letting go of problems'* (Young person, Warwick, 2011, page 25).

Family-focused programmes, which seek to improve the quality of family relationships, and programmes tailored to individual needs, are promising ways to reduce young people's alcohol use.

The role of schools

Schools have an important role in promoting positive and targeted activities because they offer good facilities, and can identify young people who would benefit, but ensure that structured, adult-led activities are provided which are different from school activities, and tailored to different age groups.

School staff should be trained so they are skilled and motivated, non-judgmental and can develop trusting relationships with colleagues and young people.

The participation of young people, parents and carers

Emphasise the positive benefits of joining in: fun, meeting new friends, learning new skills, and for parents, keeping children and young people engaged and 'out of trouble'. But also ensure that young people have a choice about whether to take part.

Help young people to overcome barriers to participation: the most common are knowing what's available, accessibility and cost. Peer pressure is another barrier, and using young people to promote activities amongst their peers facilitates participation, *'I'd take part if friends are doing it'* (Adamson, 2011, page 18).

Work with parents to support young people's attendance, as unfamiliarity with, or apathy about, what is available can influence their children. Parents may also need reassurance about possible risks, such as their children travelling alone at night, and require practical help with transport and costs.

Allow sufficient time for young people to trust initiatives and for benefits to be realised.



“ The programme includes one-to-one contact between the young woman and a young child, and personal development and life-coaching sessions. ”

Time Out (Southampton County Council)

Local practice that has made a difference

Practice examples submitted to C4EO are validated against criteria to determine the extent to which they have improved outcomes. Three validated practice examples are summarised. Information on cost-effectiveness was not available at the time of publication; further details on these and more validated and promising local practice are at the C4EO website at www.c4eo.org.uk

The U Project (Cambridgeshire County Council)

The project is delivered by multi-agency staff to young people at risk of becoming ‘not in employment, education or training’ (NEET).

Workers engage with young people at school and home. Sessions build relationships, break down barriers and develop ground rules for a residential event. This includes social activities to encourage team work and problem solving, and to improve interpersonal skills. There is an activities award, a celebration event, and individual sessions with the young people, who are referred on to other programmes, education, employment and training.

Workers can build strong relationships with the most vulnerable young people and successfully reduce the number of young people becoming NEET.

Teens and Toddlers

This intervention is for teenagers at risk of pregnancy and aims to raise their self-esteem, aspirations and educational attainment. Schools help to identify participants. There has been a reduction in teenage pregnancy and relationships between staff in participating agencies have strengthened. The programme includes one-to-one contact between the young woman and a young child, and personal development and life-coaching sessions. The cost is £1,500 per teen. The social return on investment indicates a return of £1.71 per £1 invested.

Time Out (Southampton County Council)

The programme is for young people who are looked after. In order to improve placement stability, and to reduce the financial burden of requests for breaks at crisis points, foster carers receive planned breaks. Each young person at risk of placement breakdown is offered a residential break in the summer, and 12 weekends throughout the year. Activities include outdoor team games, sports, drama workshops, and crafts. Each residential stay is tailored to the group’s interests.

Outcomes include a 95 per cent reduction in the number of foster carers who leave fostering, and a 29 per cent improvement in placement stability. Participating young people have also performed better at school than other looked-after children. The key to the success of the programme is the whole-system approach which has also helped to establish good relationships between frontline staff, management and commissioners. 182 looked after children enter a specific programme at a cost of £122,476 for the year. This equates to a cost of £673 per child per year. The social return on investment indicates a return of £1.68 per £1 invested.

Footnotes

1. The term 'positive activities' covers adult-led structured leisure-time activities outside of school hours and taking place in, or being delivered by, children's centres, extended services, youth services, school-based extra-curricular activities, play and leisure services, sports and recreation services, private providers and the arts.
2. Targeted youth support aims to ensure that the needs of vulnerable young people are identified early and met by agencies working together in ways that are shaped by the views and experience of the young people themselves. Vulnerable young people are defined as those who experience multiple support needs or are at risk in multiple ways.
3. 'Wellbeing' means the state of being contented and healthy and able to:
 - develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually
 - initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships
 - use and enjoy solitude
 - become aware of others and empathise with them
 - play and learn.

References

Adamson, J., Poultney, J., Stutz, A. (2011) *Increasing the engagement of young people in positive activities*, London: C4EO.

O'Mara, A., Jamal, F. Lehmann, A., Martin, A., Cooper, C. (2011) *Improving outcomes for young people by spreading and deepening the impact of targeted youth support and development*, London: C4EO.

Warwick, I., Kwan, I. (2011) *Reducing alcohol consumption by young people and so improve their health, safety and wellbeing*, London: C4EO.



Stay involved with C4EO

- Access the range of support and national and local data on the C4EO website and compare your data with that of other areas.
- Suggest that your organisation can submit local practice examples to be validated and placed on the C4EO website.
- Measure cost-effectiveness: C4EO has developed a tool to help you assess the cost of effective interventions www.c4eo.org.uk/costeffectiveness
- Encourage managers to consider applying to be C4EO Sector Specialists.
- Use C4EO Tailored Support scheme: discuss with your colleagues and director of children's services whether you could use the **free** support from C4EO's accredited and trained experts to develop your youth service.

Final summary and recommendations

This summary is a concise overview of C4EO's work in this theme for directors of children's services. Please visit www.c4eo.org.uk to download full, in-depth versions of the knowledge reviews.