

Delivering Information, Advice and Guidance

This briefing forms part of a series, aimed at helping senior youth work managers to:

- Keep up to date with the multitude of government initiatives that have implications for youth work – with particular reference to *Youth Matters* and *Youth Matters: Next Steps*
- Identify the key issues within each theme covered by the briefing papers and clarify their service's position on those issues.
- Identify strategies to promote the youth work contribution to each theme.

Each is structured in a similar way, looking at the key **drivers for change** in youth provision; some of the **key issues** arising from the theme; **next steps** for the youth work manager in developing strategic approaches and some illustrative examples of **'what others are doing'**.

Drivers for Change

Youth Matters: Next Steps outlines a vision of re-shaped **universal services** with **targeted support** for those who need it most. It envisages:

- a young-person centred approach, with personalised and differentiated services to meet individual needs; and an emphasis on empowering young people to take an active part in influencing provision; and
- inclusive services – improving access for those whom services have often found it 'hard to reach'.

In offering young people **'someone to talk to'** and **delivering high quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**, it requires local authorities to:

- lead a collaborative approach to meeting IAG needs;
- promote different access routes, including: one stop shops; youth and voluntary sector drop-in centres; mainstream education settings; and telephone and internet-based services; and
- create a stronger focus on health – physical, emotional and mental health – by complementing the policy set out in the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (Department of Health, 2004) and *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (Department of Health, 2006)

Reform and improvements in the delivery of information, advice and guidance are seen as important in helping young people to make the 'right choices'; to overcome barriers to participation and achievement; and to make successful transitions to adulthood.

The delivery of a comprehensive and integrated approach to IAG is to be underpinned by Government's proposals to develop **new quality standards**. The standards are intended to:

- ensure high quality services for all – providing 'depth, breadth and rigour' in quality assurance;
- cover all the issues on which young people might seek help, regardless of the service delivery route; and
- provide the basis for service commissioning and inspection.

Key Issues

We outline here six key issues in achieving the *Youth Matters: Next Steps* vision of service reform in provision of IAG (See footnote page 2):

• **Blurring distinctions between 'Universal' and 'Targeted' Services**

Youth Matters seems to imply that young people fall into one of two groups: those needing only 'universal' services and those needing 'targeted support'. In reality:

- there is **no simple distinction** between 'universal' and 'targeted' support groups of young people: risk is not a static position and young people can find themselves in greater or lesser need of help and advice at different times, depending on the situation in which they find themselves; and
- given the difficulties in identifying who belongs in which categories, there is a real need to ensure that planning for IAG and for targeted support go forward together, to ensure integration of delivery – IAG and targeted support are part of a continuum of helping interventions and need to be part of a joint planning strategy.

2. Catering for a diversity of needs

Youth Matters primarily focuses on IAG around careers needs, with some reference to health, yet young people have a diverse range of needs:

- **practical** needs such as help with finding a job or accommodation, or advice on managing money;
- **social, welfare and legal** needs including advice about: housing (for example, legal advice in disputes with a landlord); homelessness (and a local authority's responsibilities for them); entitlement to benefit; debt problems; and domestic violence;
- **personal and physical health** needs including: sexual health and relationships, drugs and alcohol; and
- **emotional and mental health** needs including: relationships, stress, depression, and self-harm.

A Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report (2005) on the needs of 16 to 25-year-olds with severe or multiple problems offered clear evidence of the value of a **holistic approach** to meeting complex needs and of the 'under one roof' service model promoted by Youth Access. Youth Access is the national membership association for young people's information, advice, counselling and support agencies.

3. Providing diversity in access routes to IAG

Diversity of access routes to IAG will be important in securing the vision of a personalised and differentiated approach to meeting needs. This will include diversity in:

- **providers** including, for example: Connexions, Health, the Youth and Voluntary and Community sectors;
- **settings** including, for example: schools and colleges, youth and/or community-based drop-in services and projects, health centres; and
- **delivery mechanisms** including, for example: face to face, internet-based information, e-mail and telephone advice services.

4. Providing diversity in 'Someone to talk to'

Various practitioners have the potential to be included as part of the local offer of 'someone to talk to'. Getting a mix of professional skills and people will be important if young people are to have the opportunity to form trusting

relationships. It will be important to cater for:

- **generalist and specialist advice:** Information and advice may be offered by practitioners with various levels of expertise in the knowledge/topic area – for example: initial housing advice may be provided by a youth worker, but will be strengthened if backed up by the capacity to refer to a legally trained worker;
- **guidance and counselling:** Guidance is an intervention largely associated with 'careers'. Many Youth Services, either directly or indirectly through grant aid, will already fund counselling services. Counsellors, peer supporters, telephone advisers can all be part of the mix of 'someone to talk to'; and
- **individuals and groups:** Young people need choice about accessing individual and/or group based help and support. Groups for Young Carers and Young Parents, for example, can successfully provide information, advice and 'someone to talk to' for groups of young people who are often isolated.

5. The importance of youth work values and principles

Youth work values and principles have much to offer to an inclusive approach to young people's IAG needs. Building an IAG strategy which is underpinned by the following characteristics will strengthen the ability of services to meet all young people's needs:

- **self-referral** to promote young people's voluntary engagement with services;
- **flexible and empowering** to ensure services start from young people's concerns; and
- **impartial** to ensure services work in the interests of young people, rather than those of the organisation.

6. Age groupings and transitions

The needs of those aged 16 to 19 and beyond need to be given greater attention in IAG service planning. The Transitions Report SEU (2005) draws attention to the very particular needs at 16+:

- young people may not be in a school setting;
- they may choose to exercise more independence in using community based services; and
- their advice needs are likely to become more complex as they get older and reach greater independence from parents and carers.

While some young people aged 19 up to 25

¹ The subheading of *Youth Matters: Next Steps* (DiES, 2006) is 'Something to do, somewhere to go, someone to talk to'. Information advice and guidance services fall into this third key element of youth provision.

years will be taken into account, others will not. This age range generally lies outside Youth Matters. The SEU intends the Transitions Report to be influential and taken up by different government departments over time. A number of voluntary youth sector organisations have developed good practice models for working with 16 to 25-year-olds, in line with SEU (2005) recommendations for early intervention and a holistic approach. These models can play a useful role in bridging the gap and supporting the transition between child/adolescent and adult services.

Next Steps

Now is the time to start bringing together all those agencies that have a role in providing information, advice, counselling, support and guidance services. You will need to work out the map of local providers, including voluntary and statutory youth services, Connexions, the Primary Care Trust, schools, the Community Legal Service, as well as adult-oriented advice providers such as Citizens Advice. In working towards an effective mix of providers, settings and delivery mechanisms, you may find it helpful to address the following questions:

- How do the different agencies define information, advice, guidance, counselling and support?
- Who currently provides these interventions, where are they located and what issues do the different organisations cover?
- What standards are used to measure the quality of the provision?
- Which young people are – and are not – being reached by services?
- How are organisations working to improve access for 'hard to reach' groups?
- What evidence do services have about the issues young people bring to their services?
- What information do agencies have about gaps in services?
- What is the current evidence about how these services are delivering against the five Every Child Matters outcomes – what tools are they using?
- What do young people say about the services available?
- How effective are services in meeting the needs of different age groups ie 13 to 16; 16 to 19s and what are the transition arrangements post-19?

To improve your own position in the market place for commissioning and delivering IAG, it will be important for you to:

- clarify your current contribution to this mix
- build on or strengthen current partnerships
- collate the data you require, to put forward your own case as a provider;
- generate good practice examples that show how youth work approaches to IAG have led to positive outcomes for young people – highlighting the use of outcome tools, where relevant; and
- identify, with partners, how any gaps in provision might be tackled together.

What Other Youth Services are Doing

Within this section we provide examples from two key themes within this briefing – the importance of taking:

- a **strategic approach** to provision – working towards common definitions, local area agreements and integration of procedures, for example; and
- a **holistic approach** to provision – co-locating services.

Strategic approaches

Dorset Young People's Advice & Information Partnership:

The Head of Dorset Youth & Community Service has actively supported a voluntary sector initiative to develop a county-wide strategy for information and advice services for 12 to 25-year-olds.

The partnership comprises a range of organisations providing or commissioning advice and information services for young people in this age group. It was initiated by LINX, a network representing nine local voluntary sector youth advice services, with support from the Head of Dorset Youth & Community Service and at the urging of the local Primary Care Trusts. Partners such as Connexions, the Social Care and Health department and the Community Legal Service were later brought on board.

First steps have included: agreeing common definitions; agreeing quality standards; creating a common recording system; and jointly assessing needs/mapping provision.

Cornwall Local Area Agreement: The Cornwall Youth Service is using the LAA as the mechanism for developing a county-wide strategy for information, advice, guidance, counselling and support. The Agreement includes proposals for the development of:

- enhanced levels of independent information, advice, counselling and support for young people across the county; and
- a rights-based and client-focused approach, which Cornwall views as most relevant to meeting young people's needs.

The delivery model has developed in line with Youth Access values, principles and standards.

Croydon Youth Service: Croydon has two agencies which offer complementary services: Drop-In (an information, advice and counselling service) and Off the Record (a counselling and information service). Both have received funding from CAMHS – underlining their contribution to meeting the mental health needs of Croydon's young people and CAMHS has also funded Off the Record to advise it on ways of improving access for Black and Minority Ethnic young people.

A *Youth Matters* Planning Group has effectively included both agencies – in a move to develop integrated information, advice, counselling and support services. In addition, the VCS is addressing the needs of 'harder to reach' young people and offering services which cover generalist advice through to more specialist advice and help.

A holistic approach

YES, Plymouth: An information, advice and counselling service for young people aged 13 to 25, which in addition to counselling sessions offered on-site and via outreach to geographically isolated areas and schools has also developed some innovative responses to mental health needs. This includes an early intervention service

for 16 to 25-year-olds experiencing their first episode of psychosis: a multi-disciplinary team based at YES works with young people to help them manage their symptoms and reduce the need for hospitalisation. A more recent addition is a new multi-disciplinary team to work with young people diagnosed with a Personality Disorder. Other services include a sexual health service, a Sure Start Plus project working with young parents and pregnant teenagers; and a Child Advocacy service for 'looked after' young people in statutory reviews and Child Protection cases.

YES also offers a mentoring project for young people in trouble with the law and is part of the Appropriate Adults scheme, ensuring the rights of young people aged 10 to 16 are adhered to whilst in police custody.

References

- Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Youth Matters: Next Steps*. Downloadable from the Every Child Matters website. www.everychildmatters.gov.uk
- Department of Health (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* – downloadable from the Department of Health website www.dh.gov.uk
- Department of Health (2006) *Our health, our care our say: a new direction for community services* – also downloadable from the Department of Health website
- The Social Exclusion Unit (2005) *Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

This briefing paper was written by Barbara Rayment, Director of Youth Access and edited by Bronwen Hunter.

Youth Access is the national membership organisation for young people's information, advice, counselling and support services. 'We believe all young people have a right to locally accessible, free and impartial information, advice, counselling and support. We work in partnership with our members, The National Youth Agency and other organisations to promote the development of high quality, young people-centred services.'

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Published by  **The National Youth Agency**

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