

RIGHTS WITHIN REACH

Developing Effective Legal Advice
Outreach Services for Young People



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**Developing Effective Legal Advice
Outreach Services for Young People**

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The Impact of Legal Advice Outreach



“This is the best thing we’ve done as a service – the feedback from young people has been very positive. We were never able to get young people housed before we had the legal advice service... the legal advice provides the solution.”

Personal Adviser, Thamesmead Connexions

“I was feeling suicidal. If I hadn’t got advice I would be dead now.”

Young person, 20 – South London

“[Getting advice] informed me of my rights, and I know what my position is. It also made me feel safer and I’m looking forward to starting my college course. I have a life now!”

Young person, 17– North London

“I would have been homeless. [Now] my outlook has changed, I know that I need to do things for myself...I don’t get into trouble now.”

Young person, 17 - Leeds

“They sorted out my benefit situation –...I didn’t use to eat properly, I am eating regularly now, I smoke less cigarettes and I’m managing to kick drugs...I feel a lot less stressed.”

Young person, 16 – Norwich

“We have achieved some excellent outcomes for young people who may not have accessed us via the main Law Centre.”

Legal Caseworker, Tower Hamlets Law Centre



1. Introduction

1.1 The Aim of this Report

Put simply, we know the problem – young people have huge unmet needs for legal advice, as has been rigorously evidenced by Youth Access.¹ Young people are more likely than the general population to have civil legal problems, particularly in relation to housing and homelessness.² They are also more likely to have multiple and complex problems needing high quality specialist legal advice. Critically, young people are far less likely to seek and obtain advice than the general population.³ Current modes of specialist advice provision are unattractive to young people and deliver poor outcomes for them.

We also know the solution – Law Centres and Youth Access members have tried and tested the ‘Youth Access Law Centre’ model, where specialist legal advice services are delivered in youth venues through collaboration between specialist advice and youth agencies.

Young people facing problems like homelessness, financial difficulties, the transition to independence, disability or educational exclusion, need to know what their rights are, what support they can access and the implications of any choices they make. The mechanisms of government support are complex, especially for those who have never engaged with the system before. Legal advisers ensure that young people receive their entitlements, for example by supporting someone eligible to apply as homeless to their local authority, gathering the necessary evidence, reviewing and challenging any wrongful refusals of support. They will also lobby for young people with needs to be offered appropriate support.

There are already several pioneering projects across the UK that are delivering high quality rights-based legal advice to young people and in doing so are achieving extremely successful outcomes for young people and dramatically changing lives for the better.

We are aware that many other Law Centres, Youth Access members and agencies across both the legal and the youth sectors recognise the need for accessible quality legal advice for young people, and are enthused and ready to set up services. This guide builds on the experience of existing services and other evidence about how these essential services can best be delivered and it will support agencies to go ahead and set up these services.

This guide will demonstrate to funders and commissioners the benefits that investment in targeted legal services for young people will bring. As evidenced in Youth Access reports, advice outcomes contribute significantly to the Every Child Matters outcomes, reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and decrease the likelihood of young people offending.⁴ The challenge ahead is to sustain and develop existing services and to establish new services to achieve coverage for all young people who may need advice in the future.

The messages contained in this guide are highly pertinent to the current development of Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs): organisations managing CLACs and CLANs are under a contractual obligation imposed by the Legal Services Commission to reach out to vulnerable client groups, specifically including young people in most cases. It is hoped that the guide will also inform the forthcoming Developing Access pilots to be undertaken in 2010 by the Working Together for Advice Project.⁵

¹ See, for example: Kenrick 2002; Balmer et al 2007; Kenrick 2007.

² 39% of people accepted as homeless are aged 16-24. This is an underestimate of youth homelessness as many young people are not accepted as homeless (Department for Communities and Local Government, *Tackling Youth Homelessness*, March 2007).

³ 58% of 18-24 year old respondents to the 2004 Civil and Social Justice Survey faced their legal problems without obtaining advice (Balmer et al 2007)

⁴ See, for example, Michael Bell Associates 2007.

⁵ Working Together for Advice is a project managed by Advice Services Alliance and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The project's partners are: AdviceUK, Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Law Centres Federation and Youth Access. Developing Access is one of eight workstreams in the project.

1.2 Methodology

Youth Access and the Law Centres Federation worked together to develop this guide.

A research study was undertaken using the following methodology:

- *Desk research* into evidence and policy on the subject of legal advice outreach and young people's outreach services to identify issues to be explored further in this study.
- In-depth *telephone interviews*, in order to obtain qualitative data, with:
 - six specialist legal advice agencies providing outreach services in youth settings (4 Law Centres, 1 Citizens Advice Bureau and 1 private practice solicitors firm);
 - and eight youth advice agencies hosting legal advice outreach services.
- Three *focus groups* with young people to test the findings.

The evidence gathered was then analysed and used to inform this guide. Please see Annex A for further details on the methodology employed.

1.3 Terminology

The 'Youth Access Law Centre' model of targeted legal advice services for young people is based primarily on partnerships between Law Centres, as community focused legal advice specialists, and YIACS – Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services, offering a wide range of support for young people under one roof. However, due to local variations in availability of services, the model has been adapted for use by any specialist advice provider, working in partnership with any youth advice agency. As such, the terms 'specialist advice agency' and 'youth advice agency' will be used throughout this guide.



2. Key Findings

2.1 Partnerships

Getting partnerships right between specialist and youth advice agencies is crucial in developing successful, well resourced and innovative services. Outreach services improve the range and quality of advice for young people, allowing practitioners to share good practice, building the capacity of both specialist and youth advice agencies.

Different approaches to partnership working, e.g. formal agreements and less formal arrangements, seem to work equally well depending on the needs of the partners. The key elements are that partners are committed and the work embedded across the organisations; key staff identified, supported and trained; and services planned on the basis of identified need.

2.2 How and where should advice for young people be delivered?

Services must be delivered face to face by advisers skilled in working with young people in environments where young people are comfortable and confident, and where they go already for other support. Services need to be flexible and innovative approaches, such as texting as a reminder of appointment times, can work well. Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services were consistently identified by Law Centres and other specialist advice agencies as the most successful locations for legal advice outreach sessions, although several successful outreach services are also currently being delivered in other settings, such as Connexions Centres.

The importance of a positive initial experience for young people cannot be underestimated. Once successfully established, an adviser-young person relationship is far more likely to continue to allow effective follow up work.

2.3 Staffing and operational issues

Legal advisers need to have a strong combination of skills: the ability to engage with young people coupled with sound legal knowledge around young people's rights and entitlements. Legal advisers may need training on Child Protection, delivered by the youth agency or one of their partners, whilst youth agency staff will be trained by the legal advisers in young people's legal rights, and how and when to refer a case.

Services tend to be more viable where youth advice agency staff are responsible for offering holistic advice and support to young people, with the legal adviser concentrating on the provision of specialist legal advice and casework, as this enables cost-effective use of resources.

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems ensure that outcomes are being achieved. Systems need to reflect the varied demands of funders, showing 'soft' person-centred outcomes as well as 'hard' advice outcomes, but they must not be too burdensome on young people themselves. The service itself should be kept under regular review by the agencies involved and young people using the service.

2.4 Funding

Funding is a major challenge for all those seeking to provide advice to young people. The most secure projects have funding from diverse and complementary sources, typically including a combination of government and charitable trust funding. Agencies spend a significant amount of time securing funding, but policy developments in both the legal advice and children's sector mean that uncertainty is the norm for most. Increased local and national government funding from the Legal Services Commission, Department for Children, Schools and Families, and Local Authority Children's Trusts and advice budgets is crucial to long-term sustainability.

2.5 Young people's participation

Many successful projects have young people involved in planning and shaping services from the outset. Some closely involve young people in the delivery and governance of services, including recruitment of staff, evaluation and monitoring. Young people's participation appears to contribute to the accessibility of services and the quality of outcomes achieved for clients.

3. The Policy and Funding Context

3.1 Legal advice sector context

The majority of the specialist advice agencies that we interviewed were working under legal aid contracts from the Legal Services Commission. The need for a diverse funding base for legal advice outreach sessions appeared to have increased markedly since the implementation in October 2007 of a Fixed Fee for each case taken on, on behalf of a young person. Before this, almost all cases were fully funded by the Legal Services Commission for the legal casework element of the advice and casework. Non-Legal Services Commission funding tended to be used to allow legal advisers time to develop the services, train youth work staff, travel to appointments, and provide the flexibility required to enable the solicitor or adviser to act in the interests of the young person by providing a holistic approach to advice giving.

All legal advisers interviewed in our study expressed grave concern about the change from hourly rates for legal advice to fixed fees. They confirmed that:

- Young people typically take significantly longer to advise effectively than adults.
- Most of the young people supported are at a crisis point in their lives. As such, they are often 'chaotic' in their advice/problem management behaviour, e.g. tending to forget their paperwork and appointment times.
- The majority of young people's cases taken on take at least twice as long as the fixed fee allows. Whilst the Legal Services Commission have allowed for extra payment for cases that are three times longer, there is no provision for cases that fall below this threshold.
- The criteria to qualify for legal aid involves having to insist on obtaining proof of income from a young person right at the outset, so that income can be claimed back from the Legal Services Commission. This can act as a barrier to building the relationship of trust which is so essential if effective work is to be carried out with a disaffected young person.

There are therefore indications that these services, despite their successful outcomes for young people, may become unworkable without complementary funding from other sources. This evidence has clear implications for organisations managing CLACs and CLANs, as they may find it hard to meet their contractual targets relating to meeting the needs of young people and other vulnerable client groups without additional funding specifically for that purpose.

3.2 Youth sector context

Under the new Children's Trust arrangements, the Government expects a radical change in the way local authorities assess needs and procure services, by the pooling of public resources to enable better planning and commissioning of all services for children and young people. At local authority level the commissioning of services to

meet young people's social welfare needs may end up being through a combination of Information Advice and Guidance and Targeted Youth Support funds co-ordinated as part of Integrated Youth Support Services.

Several of the legal advice services we interviewed were previously funded by Connexions. However, this funding has largely disappeared since responsibility for Connexions was transferred to local authority Children's Services Departments. Most local authorities appear unlikely to consider commissioning Information Advice & Guidance services from the voluntary sector until they have clarified their wider long-term commissioning plans. Legal advice is not seen as a high priority by Children's Trust commissioners who tend to be unaware of the contribution it makes – and potentially could make – to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Agencies are working hard to promote their work, but their resources are limited.

There are concerns that the reorganisation of Connexions services may lead to a serious reduction in young people's access to independent advice. Under the emerging arrangements for Information Advice & Guidance, 'Targeted' Personal Advisers – who tended to be the only workers in the Connexions Service providing in-depth advice on social welfare, health and personal issues – are employed directly by the local authority, reducing their ability to provide independent and impartial advice and creating a conflict of interest where the young person has a problem or dispute with the local authority. However, it is important to recognise that the development of Integrated Youth Support Services offers a real opportunity for the case to be properly made for legal advice to be at the heart of Information Advice and Guidance and Targeted Youth Support services.

It appears that opportunities exist to considerably improve the co-ordination of funding for youth advice services. At a national level, this will require the relevant government departments – e.g. Ministry of Justice/Legal Services Commission, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions – to develop a cross-departmental strategy for youth advice.

At a local authority level, there is apparent scope for better joining up the funding of advice services for young people through the pooling of advice, youth and homelessness budgets via the mechanisms provided by Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Local Strategic Partnerships. The latest priorities and indicators for LAAs include many which relate to young people and to which legal advice has an important potential contribution to make. For example, the majority of local authorities have decided to focus on reducing the number of 16 to 18-year-olds NEETs. Not only do NEETs comprise the majority of the clients seen by the services to which we spoke for this guide, but youth advice agencies reported that legal advice has been a key factor in moving their clients into education, employment and training.

4. Partnerships

This section sets out the key elements of successful partnerships between specialist advice and youth advice agencies which are fundamental to the delivery of outreach legal advice services.

4.1 Benefits of partnerships

There are a number of benefits arising from partnership working:

- It allows services to be delivered in a joined-up way. Legal problems are often inextricably linked to emotional, personal, health & practical problems and the evidence is clear regarding the value of a holistic approach in meeting the complex needs of young people in one place and under one roof. This also has operational benefits in terms of pooling resources.
- Staff from partner agencies can learn from each other's expertise, both formally in mutual training, and informally through learning about each other's work.
- There are clear policy benefits – the specific outcomes achieved by the advice can be easily matched with wider Every Child Matters targets.
- Partners are enabled to access a wider range of funding.
- It makes the best use of existing services rather than creating something 'new'.

4.2 Identifying and Assessing Need

Needs were identified by either partner using a variety of methods, including: consultation with clients using the youth agency; surveys of non-users of either service; the experience of youth agency staff; analysis of the number of young people using the specialist service; and by interviewing other youth providers in the area. In cases where only one partner had identified the need, other partners were often prepared to trial the service.

4.3 Commitment and Shared Vision

Our job is to help young people move from NEET to EET [in education, employment or training]. With the legal advice sessions, we can now offer a holistic service – we need to sort out young people's housing before we can tackle their education and employment and training. Young people can't move on if they are homeless and the legal advice provides the solution

Personal Adviser, Thamesmead Connexions

All agencies involved in the research agreed on the importance of partners having shared values, ethos and goals. Prior knowledge of each other's work seems to help, but is not a pre-requisite of successful joint working.

Having all staff on board increases the prospects of the service being a success. It is helpful at the outset to identify a period of time for partners to commit to the service and to set up regular reviews of the service.

4.4 Identifying key staff & embedding the partnership

An important factor for the success of the sessions is the relationship you have with the host agency – staff there need to be involved and included.

Youth Advice Worker, Stockton & District Advice and Information Service

Having key staff in both organisations with specific responsibility for developing the service emerged as crucial. However, it was equally important that the partnership was embedded right across both partners so that difficulties do not arise if a change in key staff occurs. The service should be fully integrated into the services provided by both organisations from the start, with all staff consulted and aware of what is going on through induction sessions, such as at team/staff meetings, and mutual visits.

4.5 Partnership Agreements

Some agencies argued that a formal agreement had to be in place before starting the service. They identified the following benefits:

- Giving a clear record of what has been agreed
- Clarifying roles
- Enabling discussion of the differing approaches of each agency and methods of reconciling these

Partnership agreements we came across covered such things as:

- Range and levels of advice
- How and when sessions would be offered
- Referral arrangements
- Resource issues
- Respective responsibilities
- Funding and monitoring arrangements

Case study 1

Streetlegal and Two E – An example of a formal partnership

Streetlegal is a young people's legal advice project, based in Islington Law Centre, delivering advice via outreach sessions at young people-friendly venues across North London including Two E Young People's Advice and Information Service in Enfield. The legal advice outreach service was established at Two E in January 2004 and runs very successfully. All Two E staff are involved in, and are supportive of, the outreach sessions and have built up good relationships with Streetlegal staff, making appropriate referrals of young people to the Streetlegal outreach session.

Both agencies place huge emphasis on the value of partnership working. For them this has involved:

- Two E's manager joining Streetlegal's Steering Group
- Drawing up a service level partnership agreement
- Mutual induction for the wider staff teams of both organisations so that each could understand what the other agency was providing
- Streetlegal providing regular weekly outreach sessions
- Two E providing space and office support for outreach sessions
- Two E booking appointments for the outreach sessions
- Training by Streetlegal for Two E staff on young people's rights, how and when to make a referral

Less formal approaches were also found to work in some partnerships, for example in the early stages of a service which was subject to a review after 6 months.

Case study 2

Tower Hamlets Law Centre and One Stop Shop – An example of a less formal partnership

Since March 2007, Tower Hamlets Law Centre's housing advice team has been delivering a successful outreach service at the One Stop Shop run by Connexions in Mile End. There is no formal partnership arrangement – the intention was to set up and pilot the service and evaluate what works well. Both agencies said that once they had identified young people's needs for legal advice, and the Law Centre's willingness to meet these needs via outreach, they were eager to start the service.

They identified the following benefits of a less formal approach to partnership:

- Initial flexibility, enabling a gradual approach to finding the right structure to provide the best service for clients
- Enabling partners to gain a better understanding of each other and their roles before formal arrangements are set in place.

4.6 Promoting the Service

Agencies felt that partners need to agree how and by whom the service will be promoted. Examples included:

- Using local forums and meetings to ensure the service is widely known amongst other practitioners and to promote referrals.
- A formal launch of the new service to raise awareness amongst young people, youth professionals and agencies working with young people.

Young people themselves are the best promoters of a service. They will use a service if they know about it, trust it and it proves it can get results for them; they are likely to pass their recommendation on to friends.

It is important to note that the experience of many practitioners we spoke to has been that demand for their services has strained their ability to meet it. Some pilot services with limited funding have been careful not to promote the service too widely as they are not able to meet demand until further long term funding is secured. Means of managing demand and expectations should be agreed at the outset.

4.7 Capacity-building of youth agencies

In several of the agencies we interviewed, legal advisers provide capacity-building support for youth advice agencies. This often took the form of formal training, but also included the provision of second tier telephone support, enabling youth agency workers to 'shadow' legal advisers, and, occasionally, providing mentoring and/or casework supervision. This gives increased capacity in the youth agency to provide triage or diagnosis, offer general advice and make appropriate referrals to the legal advisers.

The net effect of this work is to ensure the most efficient and effective deployment of resources so that legal advisers can concentrate on matters of legal complexity. Equally, the skilling up of youth agency staff to be able to advise young people at a generalist level on social welfare law issues, and to support some other youth organisations with less expertise, increases young people's access to good advice across the locality.

4.8 Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Young people place particular importance on confidentiality, as the need for emotional and physical privacy is a normal part of adolescent development. They must have confidence that information about them can only be shared with their consent or where there are serious issues of risk and harm. It is important, therefore, for agencies to agree information sharing and confidentiality protocols at the outset of the partnership.

Case study 3

Streetwise Law Centre providing capacity-building support to Croydon Drop-In youth advice agency

From 2004 to 2007 Streetwise Community Law Centre ran a 'Capacity Building Project'. The project:

- increased access to legal and advice services for young people
- improved the quality of advice for 13 – 25 year olds
- and established effective partnerships and networking with youth services, Connexions and Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services.

Croydon Drop In, a long-established young people's information, advice and counselling service, was one of the beneficiaries of the project. Training, support, mentoring and weekly supervision was provided by a young person's solicitor at Streetwise to Drop In's advice and advocacy worker. This arrangement became less regular as Drop In's worker was skilled-up.

The project also allowed the Law Centre to set up a telephone help-line, which meant that Drop In's advice and advocacy worker, along with other youth advisers and Connexions advisers in the area, always had a point of contact for support and could make direct referrals to the Law Centre if specialist advice was required. Drop In increased the number of advice cases they took on by over 50% and Streetwise received a large increase in referrals from youth professionals. Also, having some non-casework staff time allowed the Law Centre to develop strong plans for development.

Streetwise also attracted additional funding for a peripatetic advice service. The advisers run regular outreach sessions at Connexions offices in Croydon, Bromley and Sutton, and at a youth information and advice centre in Lewisham. The work of the Capacity Building Project ensured that young people and their workers knew when and how to refer to Streetwise.

The key success factor for the Capacity Building Project was the combination of basic resources, specialised training, second tier telephone advice, supervision and networking opportunities. Although separate elements of the package would have had some impact, combined they were able to deliver very substantial improvements to local advice services for young people – and many of these improvements have lasted well beyond the length of the project.

5. Maximising Access

5.1 Flexibility of access

There is still a lack of young people willing to use the main bureau – the CAB image is totally wrong for young people, it is depressing, worse than a doctor's waiting room – young people still see it as a service not for them.

Project Development Manager, Stockton Connexions

It is often hard to walk into somewhere with a lot of older people..... I sat in the CAB for an hour once and ended up leaving without being seen.... Legal advice really needs to be provided by someone who is prepared to listen to young people.

Young person, 21 – Leeds

Quite often the reason you're in this situation is that your life is quite chaotic. To organise yourself to go and [get advice] can sometimes be quite difficult. So it's ideal somewhere like here where you can drop in whenever you want to. You drop in and out of it. Also, you can get other support from coming here.

Young person, 22 – Southampton

This section sets out the key learning points on developing accessible outreach services, identifies the values and principles that help create young person-centred services and offers some case study examples from successful services.

The aim of any legal advice outreach partnership should be to increase young people's access to effective advice. Key factors in creating young person-centred services include:

- Youth venues offering a range of services – youth agency staff book appointments for legal advisers
- Flexibility in the delivery of the service
- Building face to face relationships of trust and confidence with young people
- Ensuring a young person-friendly style – not too formal
- Engaging with other 'trusted adults', youth professionals and youth services that are responsive to young people's needs and can encourage use of the legal advice service
- Being responsive to a range of legal and non-legal problems, as young people often present with a range of issues that need a holistic approach
- Asking young people how they want the service to be delivered

The regularity and flexibility of services was found to be a key success factor. Outreach advice sessions delivered less than once a week tended to be less successful and had the highest number of appointment 'no shows'. Some services also found that relying only on weekly outreach session times was unhelpful, partly because a large proportion of homelessness cases were emergencies. Experience suggested that even young people with severe problems might not come back if their problem could not be dealt with there and then. It was considered very important for young people to see an adviser the first time they approach the service, rather than being given an appointment or asked to come back another day.

Legal advisers tended, therefore, to make themselves available – whether to young people or to youth professionals – outside outreach session times. Where resources were limited, some legal advisers reduced their weekly outreach time to allow more time to respond to ad hoc emergencies as and when they arose, once relationships had been cemented between the partners.

It is important to minimise waiting times. With both fixed appointments and drop in sessions, most agencies used a degree of flexibility to see people as quickly as possible. When young people have to wait, they should not be ignored, so it can be helpful if they are offered refreshments or access to other services such as use of a computer.

Text messaging was used by some legal advisers for young people to make initial contact and trigger a call back. This was found to work well with young people who are shy to make the first call, but happy to send texts and answer the phone.

Agencies found that the following techniques improved access:

- workers reminding clients of appointments by telephone or text
- information being passed on to the legal adviser by the referring youth professional prior to clients attending appointments – with the young person’s consent
- telephone advice being offered outside the sessions
- legal advisers being available to deal with emergencies outside of sessions
- where resources permit, a youth adviser accompanying the young person to the specialist provider

Case study 4

A service evolves in Thamesmead

After analysing their user information statistics, Cross Street (formally Thamesmead) Law Centre realised that very few young people were accessing their services at the Law Centre office. Law Centre staff contacted local Thamesmead youth agencies and asked young people their opinions about a potential legal advice outreach service.

The young people fed back that their perception of ‘Law Centre’ / ‘lawyer’ / ‘legal advice’ was negative – they associated these terms with the establishment and the police, and they conjured up images of intimidating people wearing suits. The young people hugely endorsed the notion of bringing the legal adviser to the youth venue and also suggested setting up a text service – this involves young people texting legal advisers, who then call them and arrange appointments.

The Law Centre partnered with Connexions and they have been running a successful weekly outreach session since 2005.

5.2 Young people-friendly locations offering a range of services

I prefer getting advice in a youth centre – they will focus on your issues..... I would initially like to receive advice from a Youth Worker, they are not so frightening and then I think it would be good to be referred to a lawyer specialising in young people if you need to.

Young person, 21 – South London

Young people have a lot of problems and it is easier for them to walk into a place that deals with young people.... It is good to come to just one place where they sort everything out. I wouldn't want to keep explaining my situation over and over again, it is just too difficult and upsetting.

Young person, 20 - Norwich

Both the interviews with practitioners and the focus groups with young people confirmed that young people’s legal needs are often inextricably linked to emotional, personal, health and practical problems. Outreach sessions work well, therefore, when offered alongside other support services that can support young people with their emotional and personal needs and provide appropriate follow up support.

It is also crucial that outreach sessions are delivered in a venue that young people know, use and trust. It is important for them to feel safe and to know that they will be listened to and not judged.

The venues most commonly cited as successful locations for outreach services were Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services, which typically provide a range of services including sexual health, counselling, advocacy and general advice and information.

Connexions Centres were also found to be successful venues in some cases, although the statutory nature of Connexions threw up occasional problems for legal advisers mainly due to conflicts of interest. We encountered anecdotal evidence of deliberate non referral of young people to legal advisers where statutory workers (including social workers as well as Connexions advisers) feared their parent body might be held accountable for the adverse situation in which a young person found themselves, for example where a young person had been refused housing by the local authority. A separate problem was the relative lack of awareness on the part of some Connexions Personal Advisers, particularly those focussing on careers advice, of young people’s legal problems, which prevented them from identifying relevant issues in the first place, resulting in a lack of referrals to the legal adviser.

It can be helpful to approach senior managers within the local authority, ideally at Children’s Services Director level, in order to secure buy-in to the concept of upholding young people’s rights through making statutory services accountable. Speaking to groups of Connexions Personal Advisers at team meetings can also prove effective as can providing training to Personal Advisers to help them identify and refer legal issues.

5.3 Other locations

Even though the Law Centre is only 10 minutes away, young people will not go there – there is an issue with young people and territoriality – it's much better to have the service based in a neutral venue like the One Stop Shop.

Coordinator, One Stop Shop, Tower Hamlets

There would be stigma going to get advice in school, possibly the worst place. It's the place you most get taunted.

Young person, 17 – Stockton on Tees

We encountered several successful outreach sessions that had been established at youth clubs, youth offending teams and colleges.

There were mixed views about the effectiveness of generic youth centres (as opposed to youth advice centres) as outreach locations. While Government youth policy promotes the concept of large-scale multi-functional youth facilities where young people can access advice and support alongside a range 'positive activities', such as arts and sports projects, some Youth Access members and young people have expressed concerns about how this might work in practice when boundaries between services are blurred.

Schools were generally felt not to be appropriate locations for legal advice outreach sessions, due to young people's perceptions of them as linked to authority and the fact that legal advice problems predominantly affect socially excluded young people, many of whom are not in education, employment or training.

The geographical location of the youth venue was felt to be important, with poor transport links acting as a major barrier to access and territorial boundaries between gangs an issue in some urban areas. In general, young people tend not to be able or prepared to travel far to get advice.

5.4 Meeting the needs of the most socially excluded

Most agencies felt that they were reaching a good proportion of the hardest to reach young people, including NEETs; homeless young people; young people with disabilities; young people from BAMER (Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee) communities; young parents; and young people with mental health issues.

In some projects, specific Personal Advisers employed by Connexions were available to support more vulnerable young people. Youth projects involved in detached youth work⁶ were able to introduce some of the most isolated and excluded young people into the main youth advice service where they could access legal advice if needed.

All the outreach locations involved in the research were able to accommodate wheelchair users and young parents with small children, and most could provide an interpretation service if required.

⁶ Street-based youth work and mobile youth facilities are two of the most common and effective methods for reaching isolated and disaffected young people through 'detached' youth work, which is aimed at reaching young people on their own territory. See Costing street-based youth work, Tom Wylie, National Youth Agency/Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004.



Case study 5

Mobile Outreach Service in Croydon

Croydon Drop In is an independent voluntary sector agency providing information, advice, counselling and support services to young people aged 11-25. Since 1999 Drop In has had an advice and advocacy post to provide generalist advice on a wide range of topics. This service is quality assured through the Community Legal Service General Help Quality Mark and has forged strong links with Streetwise Community Law Centre. Drop In also employs counsellors and generic outreach workers.

A central part of Drop In's work is to provide information, advice and counselling via outreach in a variety of locations where young people already go. Thirteen years ago Drop In developed a mobile outreach service, originally using a caravan and a trailer to flag up services for young people in Croydon. This led to significantly increased usage of Drop In's main counselling and advice services.

Two years ago, after 3 years of fundraising from a variety of sources to raise the £70,000 one-off cost, Drop In purchased a new all-singing all-dancing Talkbus. The bus has ongoing costs of about £10,000 per annum for maintenance and is estimated to have a 10 year life. Drop In operates seven Talkbus sessions a week, carrying three members of staff per session and reaching 9,000 young people per year. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including Youth Service, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol budgets, as well as trusts and charities.

The Talkbus can go virtually anywhere in the borough. Regular destinations include: the main high street, colleges and schools (where the bus parks outside so that young people can come and engage with the service on their terms), parks where young people hang out and local housing estates in deprived areas.

The sessions attract a variety of young people, many of whom first visit the bus to be nosey, but this helps plant seeds in their minds for when they need advice. The bus affords an informal access route, which is essential to break down young people's 'attitude', enabling them to engage with Drop In's and other services. Young people using the bus have taken ownership of it, seeing it as their place – in stark contrast to their view of statutory services.

Rights-based advice enquiries centre mainly on housing issues, with a fair amount of welfare benefits and some debt, but the service attracts enquiries on a very wide range of personal, practical, emotional, health and legal issues. The most complex legal enquiries are referred on to Streetwise Law Centre or local solicitors.

5.5 Effective follow-up work

If young people know they are coming back to see the youth advice worker they are happier to use the main service – the lure of someone they know is the main factor

Youth Advice Worker, Stockton & District Advice and Information Service

[Getting advice] gave me a boost to my confidence. I don't have to worry and if something is bugging me, I can ring them for advice. They also keep in constant contact with me, and we have a special code to signal if I feel I am in danger from my family.

Young person, 17 – North London

Although young people are more likely to use the specialist advice agency's centre for follow-up work once the initial relationship is established, further appointments or contacts were often conducted at the outreach venue, reducing the risk of no shows.

In a few cases, youth agency staff were available to accompany the young person to the specialist agency, or the legal advisers waited in the reception area to meet and greet clients. Many young people were accompanied by a friend or family member. One service was able to provide volunteer 'accompaniers' and transport costs for follow-up and referral appointments.

Agencies stressed the huge difference that a single positive advice-receiving experience had on a young person's future advice-seeking behaviour and how their trust in a service could often be transmitted to their friends and the wider youth community.

Once we have worked with a young person once, they'll be much more proactive about using legal advice in the future and referring friends to the service.

Solicitor, Streetwise Law Centre

6. Staffing, Operation and Funding

This section sets out key features of successful operational management, including staffing and funding issues.

6.1 Induction and Training

Working with young people has been really interesting and enjoyable for us as Law Centre staff, and we've had the add-on of receiving new training around Child Protection and the Children Act from our partners.

Solicitor, Thamesmead Law Centre

Good induction and training provided at the outset of the service breaks down any misconceptions and barriers staff may have about each other.

Inductions tended to include: how agencies operate; styles of working; child protection and safeguarding issues; confidentiality; and referrals.

Essential staff training included:

- Child Protection training and skills in working with young people (for legal advisers);
- How to recognise legal issues and make appropriate referrals (for the youth organisation staff).⁷

Training has to be provided regularly in line with any changes in the law and turnover of youth agency staff.

⁷ It should be noted that Youth Access may be able to deliver training where partner agencies are unable to offer this to each other.

6.2 Adviser Qualities

Someone that I can talk to that won't judge me 'cos I'm a young person and disabled and won't talk down to me – 'cos that's what most of the older people do, 'cos they think we're little kids.

Young person, 17 – Southampton

Young people see the 'Law Centre' as intimidating beforehand, but the Streetwise Law Centre advisers break down these barriers and explain everything clearly to them, and give them confidence to seek further support.

Personal Adviser, Croydon Connexions

Ideally, practitioners combine the qualities of a good youth worker – flexible, non judgemental, compassionate, able to build relationships of trust and understand young people's needs – with those of a good legal adviser – knowledgeable, thorough and tenacious.

When advising, jargon should be avoided and technical terms kept to a minimum. Some young people have limited attention spans or struggle to understand the advice they are given, so it is helpful to write instructions down clearly in plain English.

6.3 Cost-effective use of staff time

Legal caseworkers and solicitors tended to be involved, unavoidably, in the provision of both generalist and specialist advice. However, services are more viable where youth advisers can provide any basic advice and support required, leaving the legal adviser to deal with the specialist legal aspects of the case.

It is more cost-effective and would achieve better outcomes for young people, for a legal adviser to come to a youth agency once a week to see a number of clients in one sitting, than sending several young people accompanied by a support worker on separate trips to a specialist advice centre. However, there are some potential conflicts between partners, as what is cost-effective for the host agency may not be what is cost-effective for the specialist advice agency. There appears to be a need, therefore, for a more joined-up funding approach to such services that can take account of the use of overall resources.

It emerged that few youth advice agencies actually had the capacity to accompany young people to specialist advice agencies except in extreme cases and some had little capacity to provide the kind of in-depth one to one support to young people that would help free up the legal adviser to focus on the legal aspects of the individual's case. Where there is a lack of generalised support for young people, the legal adviser has little option but to take on the role of supporting young people to access other services. However, this is only possible if their advice agency has enough non-Legal Services Commission funding to allow staff capacity to take on 'non-legal' aspects of the case. One service said they use volunteers for some of these tasks. This appeared to work well, but relies on committed regular long term volunteers, and staff capacity to train and support them.



6.4 Monitoring and evaluation



Feedback is given to the service at all times..... constant evaluation, looking at flexible ways to deliver advice rather than just having one approach. Both organisations need to be active in this. We tend to review the service every two months through our steering group meetings. This is where we share what has been going well and how we can improve.



Housing Caseworker, Tower Hamlets Law Centre

All of the agencies involved in the interviews regularly reviewed their services. In more established services, reviews were usually annual and involved a combination of staff, young people, advisory groups and trustees. Where agencies had service level agreements or formal partnership agreements, reviews were built into these.

Effective monitoring and evaluation is vital to check that the service is achieving good outcomes for young people. It also enables agencies to demonstrate the outputs, outcomes and impact of the service to funders and stakeholders.

Agencies collected data in the following categories:

- User profile, e.g. demographic information
- Advice given, e.g. type of enquiry and nature of response
- Referrals
- Outcomes of advice

Some specialist agencies monitored the outreach service separately from their main monitoring systems. This provides them with management information and more specific monitoring information for funders.

Many agencies felt that, although information was collected and monitored, they did not have the capacity to fully analyse it and carry out a proper review that would inform changes to the service.

Agencies recognised the need to achieve a balance between satisfying funders' requirements for information and not overloading young people with unnecessary forms to complete. Some vulnerable young people, particularly those involved with Social Services, were required to complete a plethora of monitoring forms, leaving them with a form-filling 'fatigue' which could impair their relationship with the service.

Agencies that had been part of Youth Access' Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit⁸ pilot found it very useful in enabling them to collect data on the contribution of their work to the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Case study 6

Every Child Matters Outcomes Monitoring – Streetwise Law Centre

As part of the Rights to Access Project, Streetwise Community Law Centre piloted the use of Youth Access' Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit. The toolkit was designed for agencies providing in-depth rights-based advice and aims to capture evidence both of the impact of problems on young people's lives and the difference getting legal advice has made. The toolkit enables agencies to evidence their contribution to Children's Trusts by mapping advice outcomes against the five Every Child Matters Outcomes.

The methodology employed by Streetwise involved a two-part client self-assessment process: part 1 completed at the start of the advice process and part 2 after three months or at the close of the case. Streetwise Law Centre employed the toolkit on a sample of clients over a fixed period, using volunteers to complete part 2 forms with young people by telephone.

Streetwise then analysed the data they had collected from the study, which clearly showed the impact of advice on the young peoples' lives. For example, prior to receiving advice nearly 80% of the young people said that the problem they came for help with was affecting their ability to enjoy and achieve, with 70% identifying that it was causing them stress and ill health. In contrast, when the same young people were asked at the end of the case, 90% said they felt less stressed and able to deal with other problems as a result of the help and support they had received, whilst 76% said they were now able to achieve their goals.

Streetwise has used this information in presentations to their local Children's Trust boards and other stakeholders to show how their work is contributing to the Every Child Matters agenda.

⁸ The Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit is available for free to members of Youth Access at www.youthaccess.org.uk/members/resources Other agencies should contact james@youthaccess.org.uk for further information.



6.5 Funding

Well-resourced delivery with diverse and complementary funding

The service works best when there is a good package of generalist and specialist support work and the generalist work is not funded by the Legal Services Commission – so there is no pressure on number crunching and delivering on targets. This gives you much more flexibility to develop the work.

Service Manager, Stockton & District Advice and Information Service

Organisations working together and pooling resources are able to maximise limited funds, achieve greater value for money and obtain better outcomes for children and young people.

Diverse funding streams help with the longer term sustainability of a service. However, policy changes contribute to an uncertain landscape which affects the availability of funding to develop and sustain youth advice services.

Common sources of funding for services have included:

- Legal aid (for casework only)
- Connexions – although this source of funding had diminished considerably
- Charitable trusts, for example Comic Relief, Children in Need, Lloyds TSB, Big Lottery Fund
- London Councils (for London projects)

In some cases, services were established as pilots without discrete funding – partner agencies had simply identified a need and decided that they should meet it. In these instances, both agencies tended to contribute to the partnership in kind, typically in the form of advisers' time from the delivery agency and resources (such as interview rooms, access to telephones, administrative support and staff time to develop the service) from the host agency. However, as soon as these services begin, it tends to become apparent that dedicated funding is needed to meet the demand and to fully conduct the development work and training needed to ensure a successful service.

Case study 7

The Cabin, Stockton – developed with diverse funding

The Cabin grew out of a pilot Youth Advice Service set up after it was identified there was a shortfall of clients aged under 25 using the Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS), a Citizens Advice Bureau based in Stockton on Tees. The Single Regeneration Budget and Tudor Trust provided seed-corn funding to SDAIS for a generalist advice service delivered through outreach sessions in youth agencies. The Youth Advice Service was then funded by Connexions and the Legal Services Commission, the latter via a legal aid contract to help 16–25 year olds with housing, debt and welfare benefits problems, enabling specialist advice to be given as well as more generalist advice.

The initial three year pilot culminated in a report, *Bridging the Gap*, which made recommendations for the development of the Youth Advice Service into a more comprehensive service. The service became one of the legal advice pilots in Youth Access' Rights to Access Project, enabling it to receive intensive development support for a two year period until February 2008. During this period, consultation was conducted with young people and it was identified that a larger and more specifically youth-targeted service was required with the ability to undertake specialist casework.

A business plan was developed which facilitated a number of successful funding bids. Stockton Children & Young People's Trust agreed to replace the funding from Connexions, which ended following the reorganisation of Connexions and Children's Services. Substantial new funding was secured from the Big Lottery Fund's Advice Plus programme and Lloyds-TSB foundation's regional and national "collaborative" funds, allowing the vision

of a specific youth-friendly service in its own premises away from the main CAB to become a reality. A re-branded service, The Cabin, named by young people, was launched in 2008 and represents a significant expansion of the previous Youth Advice Service with more targeted work with hard to reach groups, such as BAMER young people.

Funding has been obtained under the Extended Schools programme to extend the project's community education⁹ work and Citizens Advice's national office has supported the service with a small grant so it can act as a beacon for other CABx to follow in improving their services for young people. SDAIS are also now looking at raising additional funds to carry out a full evaluation of the service to ensure its future sustainability.

Keys to the success of the service include:

- Comprehensive consultation with young people
- Integration of the service within existing accessible services for young people
- Its ability to conduct specialist as well as generalist-level advice work
- The youth work skills of its advisers – to engage with vulnerable young people
- The expertise of staff within the rest of the CAB, enabling complex cases in housing, immigration and other areas to be seamlessly referred by the Youth Advice Service to specialist workers
- Its partnerships with local voluntary and statutory services, including Connexions, Extended Schools and the Youth Offending Team
- Its diverse funding base
- Its independence from the local authority

⁹ The term 'Public Legal Education' is now often used to refer to community education focused on raising awareness of legal rights.

Case study 8

Connexions funding key to service flexibility and capacity

Cross Street Law Centre receives some funding from the local Connexions Service to deliver legal advice outreach sessions in a Connexions centre. This has allowed the legal advisers from the Law Centre more flexibility to meet young people's needs than would have been allowed under Legal Services Commission funding.

The Connexions Centre houses a team of targeted Personal Advisers, working with young people with high needs.

The Connexions Centre has sufficient resources available to offer young people a relatively high level of support compared to many other youth advice projects. Connexions PAs can accompany clients to other appointments, manage and follow up referrals to other support agencies and keep track of young people throughout the process. This has resulted in a very clear division of labour between the legal adviser and the Connexions worker, where the adviser takes on the legal aspects of the case and the Connexions worker provides general support.

7. Young People's Participation and Involvement

7.1 Involvement in planning, management and delivery

This is vital as it makes young people feel more trust in the actual place itself, to know it's being run by young people – just shows they are really being listened to in a sense.

Young person, 22 – Stockton on Tees

There was a clear commitment amongst agencies that young people should be involved in the planning and, where possible, in the management and delivery of services. Involvement ranged from consultation with service users, through to participation on management committees and as volunteers in delivery.

The evidence suggests that comprehensive consultation pays off, as services often obtained effective tips from young people about how best to deliver their services.

Both agencies and young people told us that young people's participation tended to have a beneficial impact in terms of the accessibility, relevance and ownership of services, as well as on the quality of outcomes achieved for young people.

Case study 9

User participation in a young person's Law Centre

Streetwise Community Law Centre developed its outreach services following extensive consultation with young people about the need for services and the shape these services should take.

Streetwise has gradually extended user participation across all of its work and services. For example, they

- regularly obtain feedback from young people using the service to inform the continuing development of the service
- have three young people on their management committee
- involve young people on recruitment panels for their paid and volunteer workers
- obtained funding from the Youth Opportunity Fund for a youth-led benefit take-up campaign targeting young people with disabilities.

One of Streetwise's ex-clients, and management committee members, Patrick Friel, was recognised in a book by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, as one of his 'heroes' for his work with Streetwise and for his campaigning for improvements to young people's access to legal advice.

7.2 Involvement in evaluating the service

I think the key thing is you can't just consult beforehand, you have to keep consulting, check that it's working well, 'cos if it isn't working, then realise this and fix it as soon as possible.

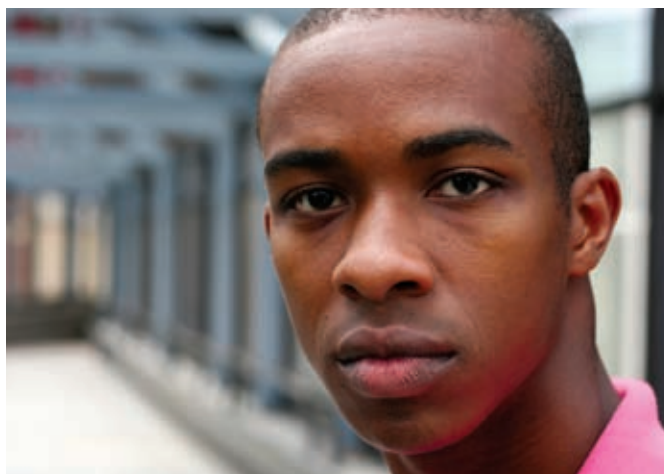
Young person, 18 – Stockton on Tees

Organisations that had formal procedures for involving young people in the review and evaluation of the service were able to produce hard data to support any anecdotal evidence they may have had. They used the information to plan and shape service developments and convince other local stakeholders and funders to support their work.

A variety of approaches were used by the agencies involved in the research to include young people in evaluating the service including:

- Youth inclusion forums
- Young people's representation on advisory groups
- One to one feedback
- Focus groups
- Letters and case study testimonials
- Feedback questionnaires

Feedback from individual clients was generally sought once the contact with the young person had reached a natural conclusion. However, due to the chaotic lives of some young people, it is not always possible to contact them once the advice has ended.



Case study 10

User and stakeholder involvement key to successful evaluation

The successful recent development of The Cabin, a legal advice service for young people in Stockton on Tees, has been overseen by a youth advice steering group made up of representatives from: Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (the lead body for the service), the local authority's children and young people's department, young people, Connexions, the Youth Offending Team and the Legal Services Commission.

A Youth Advice Inclusion Forum was also set up to evaluate the service and undertake consultation with young people directly. In autumn 2006 the former Youth Advice Service undertook a questionnaire with young people with the help of local youth partners. As well as asking young people about the types of issues they were experiencing, the questionnaire asked young people's opinions on the type of service they would like to see delivered and changes they would like to see in the existing Youth Advice Service. A series of focus groups were also run as part of the consultation and evaluation process.

The consultation highlighted that the service would be enhanced by moving to separate premises away from the main CAB office. This resulted directly in the formation of The Cabin to replace the previous Youth Advice Service.

Top Tips for setting up a legal advice outreach service for young people

1 Analyse need

Legal advisers: check your user stats – how many young people does your service currently see? Consult with young people, talk to staff from other youth agencies – ask them if they think a legal advice service is needed.

2 Find partners

Look for organisations who will share a vision of meeting the need. Specialist advice agencies should look for an organisation with the capacity to provide wider support to young people on their non-legal needs. Youth agencies should look for a legal advice agency prepared to be flexible about delivery methods.

3 Get the right space

Site the outreach session in an accessible location, with good transport links and facilities for disabled people and those with young children. Make sure it is a space that young people know and trust with a friendly reception and things for young people to do while they wait to see an adviser.

4 Involve young people

Ask young people's views throughout the development and delivery of the service and involve them in shaping and managing the service.

5 Establish a steering group

Establish a steering group involving young people and representatives from both organisations, the local authority Children's Trust, and other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies.

6 Train your staff

Ensure legal staff receive training on Child Protection and working with young people, and youth agency staff receive training on legal rights and how and when to refer cases. All staff need to be friendly, compassionate, informal, flexible, professional, and treat young people with respect.

7 Maximise use of resources

Have a clear division of labour – with legal advisers covering casework and youth agency staff providing general advice and support.

8 Adopt flexible but robust systems

Be flexible in how you deliver the service, adapting to young people's needs, but have robust recording and monitoring systems.

9 Set up referrals for holistic support

Ensure all staff are aware of where and how to refer young people for additional support, e.g. drug and alcohol, sexual health, parenting services and counselling, if this is not provided by the host agency.

10 Obtain diverse funding!

Easier said than done, but aim for a combination of Legal Services Commission funding for the direct specialist casework element and local authority or charitable trust funding for generalist advice and support and project development.

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Annex A: Methodology

Youth Access and the Law Centres Federation worked together to develop this guide.

A small research study was undertaken to obtain evidence. The methodology employed included:

- desk research
- in-depth telephone interviews with agencies
- focus groups with young people

The evidence gathered was then analysed and used to inform this guide.

Desk research

Desk research identified evidence, policy and issues to explore further in interviews. Sources consulted included:

- Research and evidence reports on outreach advice service provision for young people.
- Research reports on legal advice outreach provision.
- Policy and strategy documents.

A full list of the references used for this guide is included in the Bibliography.

Telephone interviews with agencies

In-depth telephone interviews based on a structured survey¹⁰ were undertaken in October and November 2007 with six legal advice outreach service providers and eight youth advice host agencies to obtain qualitative data. The survey content reflected good practice for outreach services identified by the desk research.

Our thanks go to the following organisations for assisting us with this research:

Off the Record, Bath
South West Law
Stockton and District Advice & Information Service
Stockton Connexions
Embrace Young Refugee Project, Sheffield
Two E Advice and Information Service, Enfield
Streetlegal, Islington Law Centre
Drop In, Croydon
Croydon Connexions
Streetwise Young People's Law Centre
Thamesmead Law Centre
Thamesmead Connexions
Tower Hamlets Law Centre
Tower Hamlets One Stop Shop

Full descriptions of the agencies that took part are included at Annex B.

Testing the findings with young people

The findings from the research were tested in three focus groups held with young people in Southampton, Hackney and Stockton-on-Tees in the summer of 2008. In total, 29 young people participated in the focus groups. Eighteen were male and eleven female. All were aged between 16 and 25. Over a third of participants were from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

Only a minority of those young people who took part in the groups had direct experience of using advice services, but most had used other services offered by the Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services in which the groups took place and many had experience of using Connexions services.

Young people's opinions and experiences are reflected in the quotes from young people across the guide. Additional quotes have been included in the guide from a separate qualitative survey carried out for Youth Access in 2006 and 2007 by Michael Bell Associates Research & Consultancy. This survey included 27 young people aged between 16 and 24 who had received in-depth legal advice in youth settings.

¹⁰ Full copies of the host and legal advice provider can be requested from:

Pamela@youthaccess.org.uk
or
Mandy@lawcentres.org.uk

Annex B: Participating groups

Our thanks go to the following organisations, who assisted us with this research by participating in the interviews:

Off The Record and South West Law

Off The Record is based in Bath, providing free, independent and confidential information, advice, support and counselling on any issue affecting children & young people up to the age of 25. The organisation works across Bath and North East Somerset and provides outreach services in Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Wiltshire. Specialist targeted services include: a children's rights and advocacy service; a young carers' service; a young parents' project; a young people's domestic violence and abuse service; outreach therapy and advocacy services for disabled children; anti-bullying work in school. A young people's legal service partnership was developed with South West Law in the Spring of 2007 which has enabled a pilot legal advice service for young people offered through fortnightly appointment-based sessions (4 appointments per session). Legal advisers from South West Law work alongside volunteer information and support workers to meet young people's legal and emotional support needs.

South West Law is a large private practice solicitors' firm carrying out a wide range of social welfare legal work under contract with the Legal Services Commission. It was established in 2002 by experienced and specialist lawyers and delivers legal advice in education law, housing, welfare benefits, mental health, debt advice and action against the police.

Croydon Drop In, Croydon Connexions and Streetwise Young People's Law Centre

Croydon Drop In is a charity which provides information, advice and counselling services to young people in Croydon aged 11-25. Drop In works closely with Streetwise Community Law Centre, hosting outreach advice sessions. Streetwise staff also provide second tier support to Drop In's advice and advocacy staff. Drop In's own outreach service consists of a Talkbus service which includes advocacy and advice. Partners for the project include local schools, colleges, youth centres and public venues such as health centres. The advice and advocacy outreach takes place one afternoon at a public venue and on one morning per week at a designated school or college. There are three other Talkbus sessions on teenage pregnancy working mainly with young men from BAMER communities, an evening session delivering general outreach health support related mostly to sexual health and substance misuse and a service delivering information to young people on a range of health education issues.

Croydon Connexions offers advice, guidance and opportunities for young people to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. It also provides targeted advice and support for young people aged 13-19, especially those not in education, employment or training. Streetwise Community Law Centre has been running a successful weekly legal advice outreach session at Croydon Connexions for several years.

Streetwise Community Law Centre is the only dedicated young people's Law Centre in England, providing free legal advice to any young person aged 11-25 across Bromley, Sutton, Croydon and Lewisham. The Law Centre employs solicitors dedicated to providing specialised legal advice and representation, through the courts if necessary, in Housing, Benefits, Education, disputes with Social Services and Employment. Outreach sessions are provided each week at youth advice venues in each borough. A telephone advice line is provided outside the outreach session times.

Embrace Young Refugee Project, Sheffield

Embrace Young Refugee Project aims to improve the delivery of and access to child-centred services for young refugees living in South Yorkshire. This includes practical support to young refugees and their families through information, casework, advocacy and emotional and peer support. The project also provides a range of youth work-type activities through one to one work and group sessions. The project model is based on a holistic approach to meeting young refugees' needs. The project is registered to deliver OISC level 1 immigration work. Workers run information and advice sessions throughout the week covering a range of both personal and support needs. An adviser from the Refugee Council has provided a monthly outreach advice session since September 2007.

Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS) and Stockton Connexions

SDAIS is a large Citizens Advice Bureau based in the North East of England. It provides the normal range of CAB social welfare services, including offering advice on debt, housing, welfare benefits, employment and community care under legal aid contracts. SDAIS runs a number of specialist projects, including a Youth Advice Service (now called The Cabin), a probation advice service, a representation and advocacy service, a self advocacy project, a carers' advice service, a prison advice service and a community legal education project. The Youth Advice Service was set up 5 years ago and now provides advice on benefits, debt, housing, consumer rights and employment, and has operated mainly through outreach venues throughout Stockton District. It has worked closely with the local Connexions Service, Extended Schools and the Youth Offending Team to build up referral relationships.

Stockton Connexions provides a wide range of help, including information, group work, advice, individual guidance, in-depth support and access to personal and social development to all teenagers aged 13-19.

Thamesmead Connexions (Bexley and Greenwich) and Cross Street (formally Thamesmead) Law Centre

The Connexions Service is for all 13-19 year olds (up to 25 with special needs) who could benefit from the support and guidance of a Personal Adviser. Personal Advisers assist young people with all kinds of life issues such as school, home, relationships, sexual health, drugs and alcohol and homelessness.

Cross Street (Thamesmead) Law Centre offers free legal advice in Housing, Employment and Welfare Benefits. The Law Centre campaigns to promote the rights of tenants, improve benefit take-up, combat poverty, increase the rights of individuals in the workplace, and protect the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers. After analysis showing low numbers of young people using the Law Centre, and consultation with young people and youth agencies, the Law Centre set up a weekly outreach service at Connexions. This has been running for several years with great success.

Tower Hamlets One Stop Shop and Tower Hamlets Law Centre

Tower Hamlets Law Centre has 30 years experience in advising and representing people needing legal advice. It offers specialist legal advice on welfare benefits, housing, immigration and education. It leads a Law Centres Consortium Youth Homelessness project across 12 North and East London boroughs, and a pan-London Law Centres education law and SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal) project. Tower Hamlets Law Centre advisers deliver advice services for young people at the Tower Hamlets One Stop Shop.

Tower Hamlets One Stop Shop is run by a partnership between London East Connexions and Tower Hamlets youth service and provides 13-19 year olds with general advice on a range of issues including housing, education, careers and health.

Two E Advice and Information Service and Streetlegal

Two E Advice and Information Service is part of Enfield's Youth Support Service and provides a free and confidential service for young people aged 13 to 21, which includes advice on any issue relevant to their lives. Young people are also able to access family mediation, Connexions Personal Advisers, free condoms, Chlamydia testing and a drugs and alcohol advice. In 2004 a free legal advice service was established at Two E provided by Streetlegal.

Streetlegal is a legal service for children and young people aged 8 to 19 in North London. Based at Islington Law Centre, Streetlegal is an outreach casework service operating out of youth advice services and Connexions Centres on a combined drop-in and appointments basis. The project takes referrals from Connexions, youth workers, the Youth Offending Team, teachers, local voluntary and community groups, as well as self-referrals from children and young people themselves. The project offers legal advice and representation to children and young people on housing and homelessness, employment, school exclusions, child abuse and welfare benefits appeals. Streetlegal also aims to empower young people by educating them about their legal rights and by involving them in the development of the services to meet their needs.

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