

Supporting young people

An evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas

In July 2010, Ofsted published *Supporting young people: an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas*. It reports on the progress made in what has become known as integrated youth support.

This handout summarises the key factors that contribute effectively to change and improvement. It aims to promote discussion and aid planning in local authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations, commissioning agencies and other providers of youth support services.

Key success factors

An integrated youth support strategy that includes:

- an objective and lead role taken by the local authority in ensuring that, in addition to its own services, the voluntary, community and private sectors help to shape provision
- clear leadership from the local authority in promoting a commissioning policy which nurtures new and different providers
- a recognition of the need to balance targeted services with a range of more universal constructive activities
- the involvement of young people in reviewing and designing the services provided for them
- relationships with district or borough councils that promote close working links between youth support practitioners and departments for leisure, sport, culture and community safety
- establishing clear priorities and deploying limited resources accordingly
- establishing cross-agency posts, for example, a health service manager in the senior leadership team of children's services, to strengthen links between youth support and health
- contributions from the manager of young people's services to inform the senior management team of children's services
- strong links across youth support, social care, schools and 14 to 19 developments in education and training
- workforce development to enhance the specialist roles and skills of practitioners in integrated settings.

Effective commissioning through local authorities by managers who:

- are objective and alert to the need to maintain support for youth provision that is well-rooted in communities
- consult the voluntary and community sectors at key points
- analyse the effectiveness of current arrangements and the risks to the delivery of current services before making any changes
- monitor provision effectively and decommission services that are no longer necessary or good enough
- develop the capacity of local providers and potential new ones, in particular those that have limited experience in negotiating large contracts and employing staff
- revisit previous assessments of need, particularly to sharpen responses to the more intractable problems, such as teenage pregnancy.

Involving young people as partners through:

- structures which give young people from a range of backgrounds regular access to officers and elected council members
- meaningful participation and decision-making by young people in the day-to-day work of youth projects
- involvement of young people in recruiting and selecting staff and designing services
- council departments and services that look to participation from young people to inform planning.

Targeted youth support that includes:

- multi-agency arrangements encompassing the full range of statutory children's services, as well as the voluntary and community sectors
- teams which capitalise on the knowledge about young people's backgrounds, their educational attainment, family situations and other factors in order to source or broker services to meet their needs
- practitioners who are flexible and willing to work beyond traditional service boundaries to secure the best support for young people
- practitioners who have had support and training to enable them to work confidently and effectively within multi-agency settings
- assessment arrangements that avoid duplication across agencies and enable young people to have access to the appropriate levels of service
- systems that accommodate the needs of young people of all ages, including those over the age of 16.

Provision of positive activities:

- that focus clearly on helping young people to develop a wide range of personal skills and relationships
- that encourage young people to avoid risk-taking behaviour, take on new responsibilities and learn
- that are supported by workers who are skilled in developing relationships with young people and promoting their active engagement and learning.

Supporting young people: an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas includes further details and case studies of effective practice. The report is available on Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090226.

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