back on track

successful
learning provision
for disaffected
young people

good practice guidelines

Mary Marken with Sue Taylor

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Note

These guidelines are based on a study commissioned and
funded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).
They reflect the views of the Learning and Skills Development Agency.
The DfEE is expected to respond in due course to the Agency's
recommendations, set out in the following publications:

- *Back on track: successful learning provision
  for disaffected young people. Full research report.*
- *Back on track: successful learning provision for disaffected
  young people. Summary report and recommendations.*

Both publications are free and available from the above address
subject to availability. Alternatively they can be downloaded from
www.LSagency.org.uk

Contents

Introduction

Purpose

These guidelines will enable you, either as an individual or as part of a group, to reflect on the way that you work with disaffected young people. The guidelines provide a framework of principles, and are designed to help you to evaluate your practice and plan for improvement.

We hope that these guidelines will interest practitioners who work with young people in a variety of settings, including:

- learning mentors, form tutors and year heads in schools
- curriculum managers, lecturers and those with tutorial responsibilities in further education colleges
- youth workers and managers of youth service projects
- careers officers
- personal advisers in the Connexions Service
- youth offending teams
- other practitioners in both voluntary and statutory services.

Six principles of good practice

The guidelines begin with a statement of organisational and professional values that underpin successful learning provision. These are relevant to everyone who helps to provide learning opportunities for disaffected young people. We then describe six key principles of good practice. We believe that these summarise the range and characteristics of provision that should be in place as an entitlement for young people in any locality.

PRINCIPLE 1 Strategies for targeting and recruiting young people, initial assessment and guidance

PRINCIPLE 2 Programmes and interventions that motivate, engage and encourage progression

PRINCIPLE 3 Strategies for monitoring individual progress and assessing achievement

PRINCIPLE 4 Effective links, partnership and multi-agency approaches

PRINCIPLE 5 Resources conducive to good practice

PRINCIPLE 6 Good procedures for management and accountability

You may find some of the principles more relevant to your area of work than others. For example, 'Strategies for targeting and recruiting young people' are likely to be of particular concern in youth work settings, while 'Effective links, partnership and multi-agency approaches' are central to the work of the Connexions Service. Principle 2 will interest all those with a responsibility for designing learning programmes, whether in school, college or other settings.

Background

Evidence of good practice

The principles of good practice result from a study of effective working with disadvantaged and disaffected young people, undertaken by the Learning and Skills Development Agency. The study was commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment in December 1999 and completed in July 2000. It involved case study visits to 20 schemes (summarised at the end of this publication) that work with young people, including those who are:

- aged under and over 16
- not in education, employment or training
- offenders or at risk of offending
- excluded from education
- in the care of local authorities.

The schemes cover a range of contexts, including:

- schools
- further education colleges
- youth service
- careers service
- New Start programmes
- community-based initiatives.

A survey of young people was also conducted using focus group discussions and interviews with young people currently or recently engaged in a scheme, as well as with those not involved in any kind of learning provision.

Policy context

Two important policy developments add weight to the guidelines. The first is the report published by the Social Exclusion Unit in 1999: *Bridging the gap: new opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training* (Cm 4405, the Stationery Office Limited). This report looked at the reasons why a significant minority of 16–18 year olds do not participate in education, training or employment, and proposed an action plan to 'improve the chances of *all* young people to succeed'. The action plan included developing 'a set of key principles for effective working'. This was the task undertaken by the Learning and Skills Development Agency. The DfEE is examining how to embed these principles within arrangements for funding, inspection and professional development.

The second key policy dimension is the Connexions strategy and the Connexions Service, launched in February 2000. The Connexions strategy aims to:

- give all young people access to the highest standard of education and training, and the best possible support in the transition from adolescence to adulthood
- develop opportunities for learning outside school.

Both this strategy and the Connexions Service emphasise multi-agency partnership to deliver a coordinated network of opportunities and support to young people in general, and in particular to those most at risk of under-achievement.

Related to this, from August 2000 schools have had greater freedom at key stage 4 to:

- offer different qualifications in design and technology, modern foreign languages and science
- disapply two national curriculum subjects to provide time for extended work-related learning, or to enable pupils to develop particular curriculum strengths, or to consolidate learning when they are not progressing as well as they might.

These measures recognise the importance of the school curriculum in pupils' engagement with education and the value of flexibility in its delivery. They allow scope for schools to develop multi-agency partnerships in order to provide alternative educational opportunities in response to the needs of individual pupils.

Using the guidelines

The guidelines can be used at several levels:

- by individual practitioners, as a stimulus to personal reflection and action
- by teams, as a basis for a shared 'stock-take' of current practice and policy, and to plan changes in ways of working
- by organisations, as a policy and evaluative framework, or for staff development
- in cross-sector staff development and training sessions, to promote shared understanding and joint working.

The questions presented in this book can be applied to all four levels. Application at the level of the team and the organisation will provide the greatest scope for effective working, as it will enable change that is not possible at the initiative of the individual alone.

In the following sections we first set out the professional values that support successful practice. We then outline the principles of good practice. For each principle we indicate the key elements and suggest questions to help you review and develop your practice. You may like to adapt the questions, or ask additional questions, in order to examine specific aspects of your practice in more detail in the light of the principles.

You might wish to prioritise from the six principles those that relate most closely to your profession and the setting you work in, for more detailed examination.

Values underpinning successful practice

Core values

- **The young person is treated as an individual and is central to every aspect of the programme or intervention.**
- **Staff have a positive regard for young people and treat them with respect.**
- **Young people are actively engaged as partners, conveying a sense of 'mutuality' about the work.**
- **Staff have high expectations concerning young people's achievement, coupled with realism and honesty.**
- **All staff show a continuing commitment to high quality.**
- **The treatment of both young people and staff exemplifies good equal opportunities practice.**

These core values underpin successful provision for young people. In particular, the quality of relationships between staff and young people is fundamental. This reflects the importance young people themselves attribute to the nature of the relationship.

The significance of relationships between staff and young people can perhaps be better understood if you consider the young people who neither participate in education or training, nor have a job – the nine per cent of 16–18 year olds who were the focus of *Bridging the gap*. In this report, the Social Exclusion Unit indicated that the risk of non-participation in education, training or work is higher for young people if their parents are poor or unemployed, if they are members of certain minority ethnic groups, and if they are in circumstances that create barriers to participation – for example, if they are homeless.

Many will have had poor experiences of authority – through parenting, through school, or through their interaction with statutory agencies. They are unlikely to have experienced consistent, fair and sympathetic treatment from adults. Against this background, the experience of being listened to and having clear boundaries is crucial.

Our survey of young people demonstrated that those taking part in schemes regard the treatment they receive from staff and the general ethos of the organisation, programme and services as their overriding consideration. This is summed up in their much-quoted demand to be treated with 'respect'.

They were clear that consistent and impartial discipline was part of this ethos of respect. Young people need and want boundaries. Having transparent rules, knowing the associated system of rewards and penalties, and being confident that these will be consistently and impartially applied were expected – and failure to apply them was seen as weakness.

Young people were also clear about how this 'respect' was demonstrated in practice.

- Not being treated as 'inferior' or 'junior', but as equals, as adults. Being on first-name terms was the rule in the provision that they praised most highly.
- Being seen as an individual and having opinions heard and respected.
- Mutuality: 'do as you would be done to, treat them right and they'll treat you right'; a joint venture.
- Staff not behaving in the manner of a critical parent: offering comments as to an equal rather than criticising; not holding them up to ridicule or public criticism.
- Good manners.
- A shared culture and rules of behaviour: good behaviour applies to staff, who thereby earn respect, as well as to young people individually and in their relationships with each other and the group.
- Staff believe in the strengths, abilities and potential of young people, want them to succeed and will 'go the extra mile' to help make sure it happens. As one practitioner put it: 'treating them like the top kids for the first time ever … they've been let down so many times, nobody here will let them down'.

This ethos translates directly into the learning process and how it is handled. It can be summed up as a 'learner-centred' approach.

These values are *mutually* demanding for staff and young people. They emphasise high expectations and commitment to high quality. Some young people in our survey remarked on how the commitment shown by staff to their achievement became reciprocal: young people's own attitudes towards their ability to learn and achieve changed.

the six principles

Strategies for targeting and recruiting young people, initial assessment and guidance

Young people who are disillusioned with the education system or have already become disengaged from it, are not a 'captive audience'. Making initial contact and establishing a relationship in which they have sufficient trust and confidence to take the next step can be difficult and may be prolonged.

> *I felt confused at the very beginning, the first couple of times I was here,*
> *because it was a big change and I didn't really understand what was going on.*
> *But as it was explained to me in more detail I started to like the idea.*

Principle 1 recognises and addresses this.

Key elements

- **A clear policy on the priority target group(s) to reach**,
  linked to differentiation of programmes

- **Effective strategies to reach young people**

- **Effective strategies to engage young people**

- **Systematic initial assessment and guidance**
  Initial assessment of needs and potential linked to guidance,
  as a first step in a process of continuing assessment.

● A clear policy on the priority target group(s) to reach

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When talking to a new colleague or a member of the community, how would you describe the young people you or your project aim to work with?

On what basis have you prioritised these young people?
Do your priorities reflect local needs? The aims of your project or agency?

What do you know about the young people you wish to work with? Numbers in the area? Gender, ethnicity and any disability, learning difficulty or special needs? Where do they 'hang out'? What agencies or community networks are they likely to be in contact with? What makes them tick? How might they view you, your project and your agency?

● Effective strategies to reach young people

Yeah, there was a lot of help and support … from the course, travel expenses and things like this, that's helping you as well because when you're young, and you haven't got any money, this course is so brilliant, they're helping you to get to the course.

Given what you know about the young people you wish to work with, there are a number of options to establish contact. A key issue is the extent to which your project already does, or will in the future, work through other agencies in establishing contact and/or make direct contact.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

If your project is working through other agencies, clarify your mutual expectations and ways of working. Questions to ask include:

- Will the other agency simply inform young people about your existence and encourage them to approach you? Or, will they refer young people to you?
- On what basis are young people referred? Is it with their agreement? Is there an element of incentive or compulsion involved? If so, what are the implications for how they will initially perceive you and your project? What are the implications for how you will approach them?

If your agency is engaged in direct contact, to what extent do you reach out to priority young people, for example, through outreach and detached youth work strategies? To what extent do you attract them to you?

If the emphasis is on attracting young people to your agency, what is it that will attract them?

How can you translate this into attractive information? Image? Publicity? Incentives?

If the emphasis is on reaching out directly to young people, do you know where they can be accessed? On the street? At home? Do they need publicity about when and where you will be available?

● Effective strategies to engage young people

Whether young people are referred by another agency or refer themselves on a completely voluntary basis, it is necessary for them to commit themselves to a process of change. This is a fragile process that requires awareness and care from staff and may extend over a considerable period of time, depending on the young person. The goal is to enable the young person to make a positive commitment to learning and change.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Can you recall an adult and/or an organisation that influenced you as a young person? What was it about them that you admired or respected?

Thinking about the young people you want to work with:

- How do you ensure that the initial contact does not put them off? Who will welcome them and how?
- What do they need to know about the agency and the programme in order to feel confident that the programme is what they need and that they will be supported to undertake it?
- How will you and they know that they are sufficiently engaged, before moving to the next stage? What differences will you notice in their behaviour to indicate readiness?

● Systematic initial assessment and guidance

QUESTIONS TO ASK

How do you currently assess the starting points – the skills, knowledge, interests, aspirations and achievements of the young people you are working with? Could you describe this process simply and clearly to a new member of staff or to a young person?

Do all staff use the same framework and process? And record and share their findings?

Do your arrangements have sufficient flexibility to take account of the crises and setbacks that young people can experience in their day-to-day lives?

CASE STUDY

42nd Street

42nd Street, operating in the Manchester area, offers services to 14–25 year olds with a wide spectrum of problems, including depression, isolation, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, family problems, self-harm. The agency takes care to avoid too narrow a definition of its target group in its literature, preferring the term 'stress' so that young people who may not see themselves as 'mentally ill' can still seek help. In addition to self-referral, the agency is engaged in outreach work to contact hard-to-reach young people, including those in remand centres. It provides a six-session 'taster pack' to give an insight into the individual and group work on offer. Engagement and assessment can happen at the same time: the process is flexible and can take place in a range of settings.

CASE STUDY

REACH

REACH in East Sussex – working with 'Refusing, Excluded, Accommodated, in Care and Homeless' – emphasises early identification through work with younger children and support for the primary to secondary school transfer period. Referral criteria are strict and overseen by a strong multi-agency steering group.

Programmes and interventions that motivate, engage and encourage progression

It's a bit like a relationship; sometimes it can drag on but other times it can be brilliant.

Those who work with young people do so in a variety of settings – youth centre or project, on the streets as a detached youth worker, in a careers office, in the classroom at school or college, as part of a social work or youth offending team, to name a few. The appropriate type of programme and intervention will vary according to the setting. This will range across informal and formal approaches. The former create and utilise opportunities for young people to interact socially with others in order to learn and change. The latter emphasise specific content.

Underlying all of these approaches is the need to enable young people to learn and change in ways that improve their quality of life and their life chances. So, irrespective of setting or professional discipline, it is important to think consciously about what you are doing with young people as part of a progressive learning process.

When they split it [the programme] up and they didn't do it all in one go, it actually made more sense because you had more time to concentrate and think what you were doing. But if it was all in one, you wouldn't have time to think about it, would you?

Principle 2 covers both the content of programmes and interventions and their delivery, which includes learning styles and techniques, and the provision of individual support.

Key elements

Content:

- **A clear rationale for the programme or intervention**
- **Effective arrangements for assessing needs and potential, and determining an appropriate plan of action**
- **As far as possible, matching the content of the programme or intervention to the individual young person**
- **A 'mix' of elements to reflect individual requirements**
- **Clear and realistic progression routes for each young person**

Delivery:

- **An ethos of respect for young people**
- **Effective ways of reinforcing motivation and commitment**
- **Effective individual support**

● A clear rationale for the programme or intervention

The key questions to ask will vary according to the setting and the extent to which your style of work emphasises the content or the process as its starting point.

If you start with a set learning programme – as is likely to be the case in a school or college setting – how do you introduce this and discuss the goals, to allow young people to locate their own starting points within it? How flexible can you be in delivering the programme to take account of their needs and potential, and the issues they identify?

If you start with building a relationship and an understanding of the young person – as is likely to be the case in informal youth work settings – how do you introduce the idea that this is a setting in which young people can learn? How do you motivate them to want to learn?

How will you know that your work with a young person has been successful? What changes do you expect in them over 3 months? 6 months? 12 months? How do you maximise the chances of those changes taking place?

● Effective arrangements for assessing needs and potential, and determining an appropriate plan of action

How can you feed back to young people your assessment of their needs and abilities in ways which build their confidence and challenge them to look ahead?

How can you encourage and incorporate their view of themselves and what you are offering within your plan of action?

How can you break down the plan of action into realistic steps, with clear targets at each step?

● **As far as possible, matching the content of the programme or intervention to the individual young person**

Sometimes it goes too fast. It depends how fast you learn what you're doing. Then you can always ask them for more help on it and they'll come and do it with you. Or other people can help you out.

Because we might be doing something that's not easy for some of us to understand. Say if it's all reading and some of us can't read properly, they'll just change it into a way that they can do it, make it simple for you.

The importance of encouraging and incorporating the views and starting points of the young people has already been emphasised in earlier questions. You may find it helpful to think of some additional points:

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Identify one way in which you could increase the flexibility of what you are offering. What added benefits would this have? What are the resource implications? How can you make it happen?

● **A 'mix' of elements to reflect individual requirements**

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Which activities or approaches are designed to improve:
- self-esteem and confidence
- personal and social skills
- learning skills
- practical and employment-related skills
- literacy and numeracy skills
- creativity
- knowledge and understanding of important life issues
- planning, organisation and team-work skills?

In which area is it most important for you to enable young people to improve, in the time that you have available?

● # Clear and realistic progression routes for each young person

QUESTIONS TO ASK

In what ways are you encouraging young people to progress beyond what you have to offer – into a job or further education and training, or into voluntary work or pursuit of a specific interest?

In what ways are you helping the young people to widen their expectations and challenge stereotypes, through a range of options?

● # An ethos of respect for young people

More understanding, so nobody like telling you what to do and that, they let you, let you get on with your thing a bit.

We had to make up rules for like the two weeks, we all had to pick rules and that, you had to stick by the rules … no swearing, no taking mickey out of other people and that, they are very sensitive to that.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

How do you measure up against the criteria used by young people to assess 'respect' (see the section 'Values underpinning successful practice', page 5)?

Can you identify one way in which you could give more power to the young people you work with?

● # Effective ways of reinforcing motivation and commitment

They were telling us how good we were doing, take us in one at a time and tell us what we were doing and what we were good at. They didn't judge and we didn't get embarrassed, like some teachers say 'Oh how could you get so low a mark?' … they didn't do that to us. They kept us equal.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your performance in:
- incorporating feedback from individuals into your design of what is on offer
- flexibility of curriculum and learning strategy
- having a learner-centred, non-authoritarian, democratic and participatory learning style
- balancing individual and small-group learning
- emphasising activity rather than passivity in learning.

In the light of your answers, can you identify three actions to improve your effectiveness?

● **Effective individual support**

There's a lot of emotional support, if you have a problem you could talk to somebody. There's help with absolutely everything; if you want something done, they'll show you how to do it or push you in the right direction, show you what avenues to take, give you advice. It was very helpful.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

How much do you know about the lives of the young people you are working with? List the issues or circumstances that they are having to deal with that might prevent them staying involved and progressing.

How can you support them with any or all of these – either directly or through involvement of family, community or other agencies?

CASE STUDY
Opex Plus

A system of ongoing individual support is a central element of the Opex Plus programme in Leeds. Clients have a personal adviser throughout, giving personal support at important times. In one example, the adviser accompanied the young person on the first day of a placement as a hospital porter, since it was judged that with support on day one he would make a success of the placement. Attention is given to matters of detail, such as access to a wardrobe of clothes for use in interviews.

CASE STUDY
Dalston Youth Project

The Dalston Youth Project in London is a one-year programme aimed at diverting 14–19 year olds away from crime. It opens with a residential in the Ashdown Forest in Sussex – specifically chosen for its contrast to an inner city area. The project offers basic skills, communication and IT skills through a programme accredited by the London Open College Network. In addition to daytime sessions for those not in full-time education, training or employment, there are evening and weekend discussion groups using drama and video. Regular, weekly mentoring is a key aspect of the programme.

Strategies for monitoring individual progress and assessing achievement

The extent to which priority is given to each element of this principle will depend on your agency's remit and the nature of the relationship with the young person. If you are working with young people in youth work settings, with an emphasis on social interaction in leisure time and at the choice of the young person, it may only be appropriate and feasible to find informal ways of identifying and acknowledging progress. However, there may be much more scope to offer young people rewards for achievement other than qualifications.

Irrespective of setting, it is important to note that perhaps the most critical element in helping young people re-engage in education, training or employment is the provision of support when they make the transition from one programme to the next stage.

Key elements

- **Regular reviewing and recording of progress with individuals, designed to recognise development in learning and behaviour**

- **Timely opportunities for accreditation**

- **Rewards for achievement other than qualifications**

- **Follow-up of young people who opt out**

- **A final review in order to determine next steps**

- **Well-managed and supported transition to the next stage**

- **Tracking of young people's destinations following completion**

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Which of the above elements is it appropriate and feasible for you to incorporate within your programme or way of working?

What steps can you take to improve your current arrangements to support young people on to the next stage for them – either directly or by involving another agency?

How can you find out what happens to young people once they leave you, in ways that are in keeping with the values and remit of your agency?

CASE STUDY
Second Wave

Second Wave, in London, employs a variety of forms of assessment including observation of practical assignments, a learner's journal, audio and video recordings, one-to-one and small-group presentations, tutor assessment, peer assessment and self-evaluation. The central purpose is to support the learner's efforts to identify his/her own progress. 'Throughout the programme, it is important to introduce participants to ways of recording the work they do; of sharing their knowledge and skills with other learners; and of presenting their ideas for the development of that work. This includes the skills necessary to become a successful independent learner.'

Effective links, partnership and multi-agency approaches

This principle focuses on strategic and operational coordination at local level. *Strategic links* ensure that local services work together for the benefit of young people, make professionals aware of the roles and responsibilities of individual agencies and services, and overcome any gaps in provision and improve quality.

Operational links provide appropriate support and services for young people while on a programme, for example, housing, health and therapeutic services, social workers and probation officers. Such links ensure successful transition from one stage to the next and re-engagement with education, training, employment or constructive alternatives. Finally, they offer 'safety nets' for young people who are unable to complete a particular programme and need a change of direction.

It is also important to highlight the power of 'networking', which can be done effectively by one organisation to further its objectives in collaboration with other agencies.

Key elements

- Coordinated, inter-agency strategies for intervention with disaffected and disengaged young people

- Support from a range of agencies and professions matched to individual needs

- Effective links between organisations to enable progression and to provide 'safety nets' for those in difficulty

QUESTIONS TO ASK

If you are responsible for, or a participant in, joint strategic groups, what improvements have these made in the delivery of services to young people? What joint initiatives or new provision have been generated? Can you identify one way in which effectiveness could be improved?

Consider the key issues facing the young people you work with. Which other professionals or agencies would they need to access in order to tackle these? What role can you or your agency play in supporting them to do this?

Is there a local agency that you have been meaning to contact in order to explore the scope for collaboration? Set yourself a deadline to do so.

To what extent and under what conditions would your agency be willing and able to share information to build a shared database as envisaged in the Connexions Service plans?

CASE STUDY
County Durham Partnership Scheme for Young People

The County Durham Partnership Scheme for Young People developed a number of projects to respond to the problems of low attainment at school. PIEL (standing for 'Positive Intervention and Enrichment Links'), focuses on primary, secondary and special schools in the most needy areas, providing college-based link courses for school pupils, mentoring, counselling and weekend and holiday activities. PIEL is supported by a range of services, which include counselling, assessment and advice for children, parents and teachers. A mentoring scheme is supported by private companies.

CASE STUDY
Base 51

Base 51 is a drop-in centre in Nottingham, run by a charitable organisation working closely with local agencies and projects from the voluntary and statutory sectors. It liaises with such projects to provide individual and group packages of support for vulnerable under 18s. Its outreach work targets under 16s and links them with practical, medical and emotional support services either at Base 51 or at other voluntary and statutory agencies. Partners include the City Council Education Department, Social Services, Housing, Leisure and Community, the Health Authority and the Police Authority.

Resources conducive to good practice

This principle sets out the main elements of good practice associated with resources, of which staffing and funding are the two most important. The quality of staff is critical to success. The study on which these guidelines are based revealed that multi-disciplinary working – either within staff teams or through collaboration with colleagues from other agencies – is a success factor. Building shared values is a crucial aspect of this approach.

The importance of matching the skills and experience of different professionals to the range of tasks undertaken at various stages in a project or programme was emphasised. It is important to recognise the intensive nature of much of this work, often requiring a one-to-one relationship with a young person. Staffing ratios may need to be particularly high in the early stages of a young person's engagement with a programme. Though costly, this can help to prevent longer term disengagement and thus avoid high social costs later on.

Funding was identified as the second critical issue. In particular, the compartmentalisation of funds – with poor connections between different sources of funding, operating against different timetables – makes it difficult for schemes to plan beyond the short term and to manage their funding in a rational way. Individual schemes may not be aware of the range of funding opportunities available, in time to submit applications. In this context, partnerships become all the more important.

Key elements

- **Staff in place with appropriate skills, values and attitudes**
- **Effective staff development, training and support arrangements**
- **Adequate staffing levels**
- **Accessible venue(s)**
- **High quality learning environment**
- **Good funding arrangements**

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Assess strengths and weaknesses in your or your agency's approach
to multi-disciplinary working.

Can you identify a specific action that you could take to address this issue?
It might be participation in an appropriate training course, inclusion of certain aspects
of multi-disciplinary working in your staff development programme, or making contact
with a new partner.

Are you aware of any qualifications that you or your staff could work towards?

To the extent that you have responsibility for staffing and funding issues,
what aspect is it most important to improve? How might you do this?

CASE STUDY
East Leeds Family Learning Centre

**East Leeds Family Learning Centre has a multi-disciplinary team of staff who bring skills
and experience from education, training, careers and regeneration backgrounds.**

Good procedures for management and accountability

Two questions relating to management and accountability came to the fore in our survey of young people: how the case study schemes engage young people in decisions, and how they respond to feedback.

> *Some people did complain – this is going a bit slow at certain times, but that was definitely lack of communication between students and the tutors. But then everyone would get together and have a meeting and it would all be sorted out if there was a little bit of a slow patch, or if people weren't pulling their weight we'd all have a meeting. Yeah, everybody would talk together, it wouldn't just be – oh the staff has to make changes – everyone would reason it out and see that maybe the students have to make changes as well. Everybody has to help each other. So it was good in that way.*

As this quotation shows, communication and feedback are key aspects of good procedures for management and accountability. At a broader level, our study emphasised quality assurance as an indicator of effectiveness, with a focus on quality in programme delivery as well as on measuring and tracking outcomes for young people. Some practitioners in the study were keen that performance measures should be 'fit for purpose', rather than borrowed without adaptation from quality assurance systems used by organisations whose role is not comparable. Stress was also placed on the need to create qualitative criteria to identify behaviour and attitude changes to sit alongside quantitative data on retention and achievement.

Key elements

- **Management recognition of, and support for, the work**
- **Quality assurance, including standards and indicators to enable benchmarking**
- **Budgetary control** *through robust financial systems*
- **Reporting to partners** *through formal and informal procedures*
- **Long-term planning** *which links strategy and operation*

What information do you routinely collect and what does this tell you about your effectiveness and areas for improvement?

What information do you routinely collect on:
- the characteristics and starting points of the young people you work with
- the level of participation in your programme (such as trends in recruitment and attendance, and how these relate to different target groups)
- how young people view and experience the programme, staff and agency?

How do you evaluate the impact of what you are doing, either in terms of changes of attitude or behaviour, or in terms of achievement and progression?

CASE STUDY
MITWOW (Moving into The World of Work)

MITWOW, based in Oldham, has a system for tracking young people's progress after leaving. This is part of the young person's contract with the project. From their initial referral through to their exit strategy meeting, they are told of how they will be contacted by the project once they have left.

Case study schemes

42nd Street

Scheme: Community-based

Target group: Mental health problems and age 14–25

Targets 14–25 year olds in Manchester, Salford and Trafford experiencing stress and mental health problems. Undertakes community-based individual counselling, group support and outreach work.

Acorn Initiative
(is now under contract to TEC, which has altered remit)

Scheme: Youth/TEC/careers partnership

Target group: Unwaged and not receiving any learning support and age 16–17

A support service to assist young unemployed people aged 16–17 in North Nottingham-shire to develop, either by gaining employment, entering further education or finding voluntary work. Provides one-to-one support programmes offering taster experiences in work and training, coupled with personal skills development.

Base 51

Scheme: Independent voluntary project operated by a charitable company called HINT

Target group: Disengaged and age 12–25

Drop-in centre in Nottingham for young people aged 12–25, providing a café, creche and access to services including one-to-one support programmes, groupwork, counselling, mediation, medical treatment and other facilities.

Birmingham Rathbone Society

Scheme: Charitable organisation

Target group: Moderate learning difficulties, at risk and age 14–18

Offers vocational training, Learning Gateway Lifeskills option and a 12-week Alternative Curriculum option for year 10/11 pupils at risk of disengagement.

Career Direct

Scheme: Careers service, working with schools, colleges, training providers and employers

Target group: At school and at risk of underachievement, disengagement or unemployment and age 13–16

Career Direct evolved from a Careers Club in Schools project in the Plymouth area. It targets pupils in year 9/10 who are at risk of underachievement or disengagement, and year 11 pupils who are not motivated to continue in education or training and are at risk of being unemployed. Programmes are negotiated with schools.

County Durham Partnership Scheme for Young People: PIEL and LAC

Scheme: Led by County Durham SRB Partnership.
Multi-agency partnership working with schools and others

Target group: Disaffected and underachieving children including those looked after
by Social Services. Primary and secondary age range

Positive Intervention and Enrichment Links (PIEL) works with comprehensive schools
and their partner primary and special schools to support young people who are
disaffected or disillusioned with school. PIEL provides access to alternative, more
supportive learning opportunities, including vocational link courses at local colleges.

Looked After Children provides intensive support for young people in social services
care, through counselling, groupwork, access to education coordinators in children's
homes and named links in schools.

Dalston Youth Project

Scheme: Community-based, managed by Crime Concern

Target group: Offenders, truants, age 11–14 and 14–18

Education and mentoring project in London aimed at diverting young people from crime.
One-year programme of basic skills, IT and communication skills. Also provides evening
and weekend discussion groups using drama and video and a key stage 3 programme
for local schools to prevent truancy and exclusion.

East Leeds Family Learning Centre

Scheme: Local authority (Department of Training)

Target group: At risk, disengaged and age 14–16

The overall aim of the Centre is to contribute to local area regeneration through
work with unemployed adults and by tackling underachievement in schools.
Provides a complementary curriculum for the disengaged and for at-risk school pupils,
in addition to family learning opportunities.

INCLUDE Project (at New College Nottingham)

Scheme: National charity/FE

Target group: Multiple problems, excluded, disengaged and age 13–15

INCLUDE contracts with New College to provide 'Bridge' alternative education
programmes for 13–15 year olds. These involve a combination of work experience
and personal and social education.

MITWOW (Moving into the World of Work)

Scheme: Multi-agency partnership in Oldham led
by Youth and Community Education Service

Target group: Disengaged, at risk and age 16–25

Targets 16–25 year olds who are disaffected and marginalised through their education,
home life and life experiences. Offers a 13-week roll-on roll-off education and
training programme, one-to-one mentoring, supported work experience, groupwork,
outdoor education.

Nelson and Colne College

Scheme: FE college working in partnership

Target group: Disaffected, disengaged and age 14–19

Nelson and Colne is a major provider of mainstream post-16 education and training in east Lancashire. Also provides learning opportunities for young people who are disaffected or disengaged. Offers a range of programmes in partnership with other agencies and services.

New Start, Blackburn with Darwen

Scheme: Multi-agency partnership led by Council Education and Training Division. Delivery via ON-TRACK Enterprises

Target group: Disengaged and age 16–19

A DfEE second round New Start project, targeting 16–19 year olds not engaged in education, training or employment, with a focus on the most disadvantaged and socially excluded young people. The programme offers group training sessions on basic skills, life skills, working with others, etc; individual training sessions planned around trainee's interests; and a personal adviser offering one-to-one support.

Opex Plus

Scheme: Multi-agency, including careers service and City Council. Led by TEC

Target group: Not in education, training or employment and age 16–18

Integrated support package to help young people find training or employment. Initial support and peer work is followed by assessment and development training lasting up to 12 weeks, then placement with a training provider. Transition to employment is supported by a careers adviser. Based in Leeds.

REACH (Refusing, Excluded, Accommodated, in Care and Homeless)

Scheme: LEA (Education Welfare Service) in multi-agency partnership including social services

Target group: At risk – school refusers, excluded pupils, young people in care, homeless. All ages, mainly secondary, with support for primary-secondary transfer

This scheme aims to reintegrate pupils into education; to provide rapid intervention in response to school exclusion; to support and advise families and to facilitate effective interagency communication.

Activities include a drop-in centre, a twice-weekly school lunchtime club, group activities, visits and residentials. Based in East Sussex.

Sandwell Education Business Partnership

Scheme: Education Business Partnership

Target group: Age 14–17

Supports the Youth Link programme, targeted at 14–17 year olds who are at risk or excluded from school. Clients undertake activities to improve basic skills and confidence. Vocational guidance and work tasters are offered.

Second Wave

Scheme: Community

Target group: Disaffected young people with arts interest and age 13–24

Youth arts provision in London including evening and weekend workshops, summer schools, young volunteer programmes, productions and platform events.

Shropshire Learning Gateway

Scheme: Careers service in partnership with CCTE, youth service, social services, Youth Offending Team

Target group: At risk, not in learning and age 16–17

Offers a two-week assessment course followed by a 12-week life skills course.

Stoke on Trent YMCA Foyer

Scheme: Charity/multi-agency

Target group: Disengaged and age 16–18

12-week lifeskills course for unemployed residents with few or no qualifications. A modular programme covering world of work, lifestyles, outdoor and leisure activities forms part of an assessment process to enable the young person to make decisions about the future. Residents can progress into other courses such as basic skills, parenting, IT.

Tyneside Careers Club

Scheme: Careers service working in partnership e.g. with voluntary organisations such as YMCA, Fairbridge

Target group: Unemployed and age 16–18

Previously a Job Club, this is viewed as the most successful of a number of Careers Clubs run by Tyneside Careers. Now classed as a training provider, the Club provides a 13-week Open College accredited programme with a set curriculum entitled *Stop, Look and Achieve*, covering confidence building, jobsearch skills, interview techniques and career action planning.

WAC Performing Arts and Media College

Scheme: Partnership with local FE college

Target group: Unemployed with arts interest and age 16–22

Range of provision for 5–25 year olds in London. For example, the ARCO Plus programme is targeted at unemployed 16–22 year olds with few or no qualifications. It combines arts provision with key skills development. Strong emphasis on IT and performance skills; web-page design, digital video and music technology are options as well as performing arts subjects.

Useful publications, contacts and websites

Publications

Burke T and others. *Moving on up: how youth work raises achievement and promotes social inclusion.* DfEE Publications, 1999.

Burrill M. *Connect: a guide for voluntary organisations and community groups on working with excluded young people.* Community Development Foundation, 2000. Available on loan from the National Youth Agency, tel 0116 285 3700.

County Durham Educational Trust. *Re-connect: samples of work with young people not involved with education, training or employment.* County Durham Educational Trust, 2000. Available on loan from the National Youth Agency, tel 0116 285 3700.

Huskins J (publisher). *From disaffection to social inclusion. A social skills approach to developing active citizenship and lifelong learning.* John Huskins, 1998 (enquiries to 3 Somerset Street, Kingsdown, Bristol BS2 8NB).

Kinder K and others. *Three to remember: strategies for disaffected pupils.* National Foundation for Educational Research, 1995.

Marken M. *Youth work works.* Produced for the Standing Conference (now the Association) of Principal Youth and Community Officers by the National Youth Agency, 2000. Available from Eric Watts, e-mail eric.l.watts@btinternet.com

Merton B, Parrott A. *Only connect. Successful practice in educational work with disaffected young adults.* DfEE Publications, 1999.

Morris M and others. *Disadvantaged youth: a critical review of the literature on scope, strategies and solutions.* Department for Education and Employment Research Report RR169. DfEE Publications, 1999.

National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. *'Doing something positive': youth activities work with disengaged young people.* Nacro, 2000. Available on loan from the National Youth Agency, tel 0116 285 3700.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. *Wider opportunities for work-related learning at key stage 4. Experiences of the first year of use of the regulations under Section 363 of the Education Act (1996).* QCA, 1999. Available on the QCA website (www.qca.org.uk).

Social Exclusion Unit. *Bridging the gap: new opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training.* Cm 4405: the Stationery Office Limited, 1999.

Contacts and websites

British Youth Council
2 Plough Yard
Shoreditch High Street
London EC2A 3LP
Tel 020 7422 8640 Fax 020 7422 8646
www.byc.org.uk

Connexions website
www.connexions.gov.uk

Learning and Skills Development Agency
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF
Tel 020 7840 5400 Fax 020 7840 5401
www.LSagency.org.uk

National Youth Agency
17–23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD
Tel 0116 285 3700 Fax 0116 285 3777
www.nya.org.uk

Young Adult Learners' Partnership
National Youth Agency in partnership with
NIACE – the National Organisation for Adult Learning
Contact NYA (see above)
or visit www.niace.org.uk/research/yalp

These guidelines offer useful suggestions on good practice
for anyone helping to provide learning opportunities for
disaffected young people. Based on the Learning and
Skills Development Agency's 'Back on track' study of
learning provision for disaffected young people, they are
supported by examples from case study organisations and
quotations from young people. Six principles of good practice are
described, from strategies to reach and engage young people,
through to accountability within a project or programme.
Each principle has a brief introduction and a summary
of the key elements, followed by 'Questions to ask',
helping the reader, either as an individual or as a member
of a group, to review practice and plan for improvement.