

Youth Taskforce Action Plan

give respect, get respect – youth matters



A commitment from
The Children's Plan



department for
children, schools and families

Contents/March 2008

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Schools and Families

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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

I said in the Children’s Plan that I wanted to make this country the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in. The Youth Taskforce, whose Action Plan we are publishing today, will have a critical role to play in delivering that commitment for teenagers.

Most young people enjoy their teenage years and make a successful transition to adult life. But for some young people adolescence is a time when earlier difficulties escalate, or new problems emerge, and they and their families need more support. A significant minority of young people can get into trouble with alcohol or illegal drugs, persistent truancy, or other unacceptable or anti-social behaviour – causing serious problems in their neighbourhoods.

The Youth Taskforce will concentrate on this group of young people. It will specialise in working with local partners – children’s services, the police, schools, and community safety teams – to ensure that across the country every area has an effective approach for dealing with young people who are in difficulty.

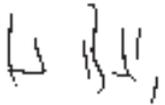
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I want the approach of the Taskforce to combine **tough enforcement** where young people's behaviour is unacceptable; **support** to help young people overcome problems when they have arisen; and **prevention** to ensure we are dealing with emerging problems before they become serious and entrenched.

Focusing on just one of these is not enough; we need all three together if we are to improve young people's lives and successfully deal with the problems that concern communities.

In approaching its task, I want the Taskforce to learn from the best and most innovative work that has been done in recent years with young people and families, whether by central Government, for example through the Respect programme or the teenage pregnancy strategy, by imaginative and successful new approaches in local authorities, or by local third sector organisations, who often know young people well. The specific proposals in this Action Plan have been drawn up with these different innovations in mind.

Only by bringing together expertise and commitment from all of these sources can we hope to realise for all teenagers the wider vision of the Children's Plan. I look forward to working with all our partners over the months and years to do just that.



Rt Hon Ed Balls MP

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

1. Our vision for young people, building on success

Our vision for young people

In *Every Child Matters*¹, we set out a number of ambitions for young people, which are widely shared by teenagers themselves, by parents and by practitioners. We want all young people to enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years that prepare them for adult life and help them make the most of their talents.

The Children's Plan² explained in more detail what the Government will do to enable local areas to deliver on these ambitions over the next few years. Improving school standards, narrowing the gap in achievement at school, reforming the curriculum, supporting parents better, and an ambitious programme to expand positive activities and the quality of youth facilities all have a critical role to play.

Most young people enjoy their teenage years without encountering any serious difficulties. Some experience temporary setbacks at school or in other aspects of their lives, which they can overcome with help from their families and others. However, a minority can get into serious trouble, including anti-social behaviour, and this can damage communities. For these young people we need to enforce boundaries of acceptable behaviour as well as deal with underlying causes. This means both strong challenge and support if they are to make a successful transition into adulthood.

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This aim of this document is to set out how we will support a more effective local response to this last group of young people and to those who are at risk of joining it. The problems described do not affect all teenagers who are in serious difficulty but they are closely related and have a common set of causes – like family breakdown, poor parenting and behavioural problems.

The response we need must combine a ‘triple track’ of:

- **tough enforcement where behaviour is unacceptable or illegal;**
- **non-negotiable support to address the underlying causes of poor behaviour or serious difficulties;**
- **better prevention to tackle problems before they become serious and entrenched, and to prevent problems arising in the first place.**

Some of this response is already in place and delivering change for teenagers and communities. As a result we are already making progress on some long-standing challenges. For example, drug use by young people is decreasing, from 7% in 2005 to 4% in 2006³, falling more sharply for vulnerable young people from 21% to 11% between 2003 and 2006; the number of young people who have drunk alcohol in the last week has fallen from

27% in 1996 to 21% in 2006; and the national teenage pregnancy rate is now at its lowest level for more than 20 years⁴.

Another is anti-social behaviour, where significant progress has been made since 1997,⁵ including through the Respect programme. Public perceptions of anti-social behaviour being a problem have fallen, including in the most deprived communities where problems are most serious⁶. In addition to Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), we have worked to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour with Individual Support Orders (ISOs) and with Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), which have worked with the most challenging families to reduce problem behaviour and get vulnerable children back in school, improving their key skills and physical and mental health. Parenting programmes have greatly helped parents to improve their children’s behaviour. Over 99% of parents taking part in Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders (PEIPS) rated them as helpful or very helpful⁷.

Work to tackle anti-social behaviour in communities is now an established part of central and local policy, and year-on-year local services are making more use of the tools and powers now available to them⁸.

However, there is still more that can be done, which is why the Government will be stepping up the drive for change in every part of the country, including through neighbourhood policing and management. Prompt enforcement action is vital but is not yet always combined with the equally firm support needed to change behaviour. We will work to ensure that systematic prevention and early intervention programmes to prevent problems arising or escalating are in place everywhere.

Some local authorities are tackling problems affecting young people more successfully than others. For example the recent national reduction in teenage pregnancy rates of 13.3% between 1998 and 2006 masks significant variation in progress between local areas, even those facing similar levels of deprivation. The best performing areas show reductions of over 30%⁹. If all areas performed as well as the best 25%, the national reduction would be nearly twice what we achieved this year – increasing our confidence in meeting the 2010 teenage pregnancy target. A similar picture of variability between areas shows up on other issues too.

The new drug strategy, launched in February 2008, acknowledges that local patterns of drug and alcohol use amongst young people differ across the country and

encourages a local needs-led approach to addressing these issues through mainstream and specialist children's services, supported by additional Government funding. The Tellus2 survey results show a wide variation in the prevalence of frequent drug or alcohol misuse¹⁰, and the new national indicator will help areas to set locally relevant targets to reduce this.

Working with the Home Office – which retains responsibility for the overall response to anti-social behaviour – and others including the Youth Justice Board and local partners, the Youth Taskforce will help to ensure that young people and their families get the right package of intervention, challenge and support to change behaviour. The role of the Youth Taskforce will be to drive consistent and coherent action on these issues in relation to young people, and to work with front-line local services, taking account of local priorities, to implement what works.

Building on the work of the Respect Task Force and its predecessors, it will be a powerful driver to improve outcomes for some of our most deprived and most problematic young people. The new Taskforce will work with local partners to drive forward a better response to those young people in serious trouble. Wherever possible,

and consistent with local priorities, we will focus resources in areas of high need and where Taskforce focus will add value. It will help local areas draw on lessons from others who are making good progress on youth delivery.

This Action Plan sets out the issues that the Taskforce will focus on initially and the actions we will take to address them. They include:

- **improving our response to anti-social behaviour and other serious problems, through a combined approach of setting clear boundaries and challenging unacceptable behaviour, supporting young people and their families, and systematic prevention through the targeted youth support reforms.**
- **action to ensure parents are able to fulfil their responsibilities and ensure a ‘whole family’ approach to young people’s problems**
- **making sure that positive activities quickly reach the most vulnerable young people in the most deprived areas, and that communities receive support to tackle anti-social behaviour**
- **working with Government Offices and other bodies to drive up Local Authority performance.**

In doing so the Taskforce will help local services deliver the new **Youth Public Service Agreement¹¹ (PSA)** – aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy, substance misuse among young people, the numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time, the numbers of 16-19 year-olds not involved in employment, education and training, and increasing the number of young people participating in positive activities. It will also support delivery of the **Home Office’s safer communities PSA¹² to tackle anti-social behaviour.**

The Taskforce will bring an innovative and imaginative approach to these problems, working directly with young people, parents and front-line delivery agencies, as well as engaging strategically with local partnerships and with regional and central Government.

This Action Plan sets out **18** commitments it will deliver, and a total funding package of up to **£218.5m** that will support its work.

2. A deeper response to anti-social behaviour by young people

Anti-social behaviour is a serious problem and a key concern for local communities. We expect local agencies to tackle it wherever it occurs, and we know from current Local Area Agreement discussions the importance local areas and communities place on this.

Local councils, the police and social landlords are making good use of the strong package of measures that the Government has developed:

- more than 25,000 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)¹³ and almost 10,000 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)¹⁴ have been issued. Just under half of ASBOs are issued to young people.
- Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) have worked with the most challenging families to reduce anti-social behaviour and get vulnerable children back in school, improving their key skills and physical and mental health. They have worked with over 1,500 families.

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The use of these tools and power has had a positive impact on anti-social behaviour:

- **evidence shows that overall 65% of people stopped anti-social behaviour after just one intervention, often just a warning letter. This figure rose to 93% after three interventions – typically a warning letter, followed by an ABC, which would be followed up by an ASBO if behaviour did not change¹⁵.**
- **perceptions of anti-social behaviour as a problem have fallen¹⁶, including in the most deprived communities where problems are most serious.**

And by April 2008, every area will have a neighbourhood policing team to respond to local concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour. These teams will also help build trust between the police and young people.

Anti-social behaviour is caused by adults as well as young people – indeed teenagers are more likely to be victims of anti-social behaviour than others. Nevertheless, behaviour by some young people continues to cause serious problems in some communities. ‘Young people hanging around’ is still the highest public concern about anti-social behaviour¹⁷. In some cases this reflects anti-social behaviour; in others it can be mistrust within

communities or between generations that drives this fear. Both must be addressed.

We know that risk factors – including school exclusion, poor parental discipline, and drug and alcohol misuse – can be major contributory factors for a young person, getting involved in anti-social behaviour and disorder. Accepting the importance of these underlying problems does not excuse poor behaviour by young people – anti-social behaviour must be tackled not tolerated. But if we are to change that behaviour addressing the underlying causes, as well as challenging the behaviour itself, must remain an important part of our approach.

We have done much already. We have introduced tools designed to ensure young people and their families get support – with serious consequences if they do not take that help. These include parenting orders to help tackle broader family problems and Individual Support Orders (ISOs) which can be issued alongside an ASBO to ensure young people take the help they need to change their behaviour.

Over 4,000 parenting contracts and 1,000 parenting orders have now been issued¹⁸. However, we are concerned that young people are still not getting the

right package – fewer than 10 per cent of relevant ASBOs have an ISO attached¹⁹.

Through the Youth Justice Board we have invested in projects, such as Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs), and Youth Inclusion Projects (YIPs), which intervene early with young people who are at risk of offending. We will invest **£99m** over the next three years to support these.

We can do more though to make sure that services provide persistent and assertive support needed to grip the problems involved in serious anti-social behaviour.

We can also do more to ensure that every area of the country has a systematic and joined-up approach to identifying and intervening early with at-risk teenagers to stop problems in the first place. We want to see enforcement services such as police and community safety teams work more closely with Children's Trusts to achieve this. The Youth Taskforce will act to accelerate the targeted youth support reforms, so that they are in place everywhere by the end of this year, building on the lessons from the areas that have already made the most progress.

We know that anti-social behaviour is sometimes associated with drinking by young people²⁰ – and in particular with drinking in public places like parks or town centres. There is already a series of actions set out in the Government's Alcohol Strategy, "*Safe. Sensible. Social*", which look to reduce the sale of alcohol to under 18s and give parents more information on the risks of drinking by their children. However, more needs to be done to reduce the level of drinking by young people and tackle the problems that this all too often causes, so we are looking at what more might be done in the forthcoming Youth Alcohol Action Plan, which we committed to produce in the Children's Plan.

Our approach will not only help reduce anti-social behaviour, but will also help tackle other problems such as crime, truancy and substance misuse. Anti-social behaviour and crime are closely related. They often have common causes and, for some young people, one can lead to the other²¹. A number of the measures in this Action Plan will also help to prevent youth offending.

Building on the specific proposals in this document, as well as consideration of the wider issues necessary to tackle youth offending (including the role of the universal services, the criminal justice system and the secure

estate), the Government will bring forward later in the year a Youth Crime Action Plan. This will set out our proposals to reform our overall approach to youth offending and to secure reductions in the numbers of young people who come into contact with the criminal justice system and those who go on to offend.

We know that young people can be victims as well as perpetrators of both anti-social behaviour and crime²² – and that both issues are a significant concern for young people. The Youth Crime Action Plan will also look at what more can be done to protect young people and to support them when they are victims.

ACTION 1: Establish 20 Intensive Intervention Projects as an extension of the Family Intervention Project model that will turn around the lives of up to 1,000 of the most challenging and problematic young people every year. Even high-performing areas can struggle to meet the complex needs of their most problematic teenagers. We also know that, despite the good work of Youth Offending Teams and YISPs, some of those engaged in more serious anti-social behaviour are not being made to change their behaviour and address their other problems.

We have seen Family Intervention Projects address similar problems among the most challenging families, where the assertive and persistent approach, with support coordinated by a key worker, has proved very successful.

We will spend **£13m** over the next three years to establish 20 pioneering schemes to apply these principles to the most anti-social young people, making them improve their behaviour and take the help they need to turn their lives around. Young people will be given a contract which outlines the consequences for them, and where necessary their families, of not changing behaviour, in exchange for intensive support such as drug treatment or literacy training to help them address the causes of their bad behaviour and other problems they face. This could include interventions like an ASBO or parenting order. The projects will involve up to 1,000 young people and their families each year and will be established by April 2009. We expect that the projects will be run by a variety of both statutory and third sector providers. We expect these projects to:

- significantly reduce anti-social behaviour
- reduce crime
- improve participation in education and training
- tackle substance misuse
- reduce homelessness

ACTION 2: Establish 52 Challenge and Support Projects to stop poor behaviour from escalating. Prevention is better than cure, so we aim to nip problems in the bud wherever possible. We will work with local partners in the police, local authorities, Youth Offending Teams, voluntary sector housing and schools to invest **£13m** over the next three years to reinforce our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour by setting up 52 Challenge and Support Projects in areas where crime and anti-social behaviour are a problem. The projects will be up and running by October 2008, and will involve more than 15,000 young people and their families each year.

These projects will help services like the police, youth offending and community safety teams and Children's Trusts to share information and agree solutions that will stop anti-social behaviour and improve young people's lives.

We expect the projects to significantly reduce anti-social behaviour involving young people, and reduce first time entrants to the criminal justice system in the areas in which they operate.

ACTION 3: Help every local authority area to deliver the targeted youth support reforms by December 2008. The Youth Taskforce will put additional resources and emphasis to reforming support and services for at-risk teenagers throughout England. We expect local authorities to work with their partners to reform and integrate local support services for young people. This will enable them to systematically identify vulnerable young people early, provide swift support to stop problems from escalating, and ensure young people receive joined-up, effective support and challenge through multi-agency teams.

The Taskforce will identify and promote best practice to help all local areas reform their services by December 2008. This year we will spend **£5m** on providing expert support from the Training and Development Agency (TDA) to help local areas. We will target TDA resource at areas with high levels of need, with related targets in their Local Area Agreement, and which face the greatest challenges in implementing the reforms.

ACTION 4: Ensure anti-social behaviour is tackled. Anti-social behaviour must be addressed through effective use of the tools we have put in place, including warnings and dispersal notices, and by communicating that action to the public. The Home Office will invest **£61m** over the next three years through the Area Based Grant to fund local councils to support this – for example through dedicated anti-social behaviour teams. In addition the Taskforce will put around **£13m** into this grant over the next three years to continue to support existing good practice. The Area Based Grant is a new non-ringfenced general grant, replacing over 40 former specific grants from seven Government Departments. Working with the Home Office, the Taskforce will provide expert advice and support to local practitioners. We will also invest more than **£1m** over the next three years to provide support through the website www.respect.gov.uk, the Respect Actionline and expert practitioner time to tackle intractable local problems. We know from feedback that practitioners value these resources highly and make use of them. For example the Respect Actionline receives thousands of calls a year from practitioners wanting expert advice on tackling problems.

ACTION 5: Evaluate the effectiveness of support measures alongside anti-social behaviour enforcement action. Alongside enforcement action to address anti-social behaviour we expect young people to be offered support to change their ways. Sometimes support is offered on a voluntary basis, sometimes through tools including ABCs, Parenting Contracts and Orders and ISOs which require offenders to take help. Working with the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and others we will carry out an evaluation of the use and effectiveness of different approaches to tackling the causes of bad behaviour. The evaluation will be carried out in the 52 local authority areas that are receiving funding to establish Challenge and Support Projects. We will publish interim findings in 2009.

Case study

Turning young people's lives around

T3 service is a community based young persons substance abuse service provided by CRI and commissioned by the Leeds drug action team. D is a 16 year old male with a history of violent and threatening behaviour. He was often under the influence of alcohol and excluded from school. His family had a culture of alcohol use and his parents had stopped trying to support him. D was referred to T3 by the Leeds youth offending team after police were called to his parent's home where he had become violent.

Following an assessment a multi agency intervention and support plan was developed, coordinated by the Youth Offending Team. Interventions focussed on medical and psychological support to stabilise behaviour alongside intensive one to one key worker contact. The allocated T3 key worker worked persistently with D and his family to put in place clear boundaries for behaviour and address alcohol issues. It was the assertive style – spelling out the serious consequences of further violent and criminal behaviour, and never giving up on D and his family, even when progress was slow or when appointments were missed – that was critical to making progress.

D has recently moved into a specialist independent living unit with the support of his key worker and is attending a full time college course.

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Case study

Targeted Youth Support Reforms – a joined up response

S was bullied at school and dealt with it by behaving badly in lessons, resulting in an exclusion from school. He had built up a reputation at school as someone who gets into trouble. He has a close family member who is in prison and tends to mix with older young people.

His school completed an assessment using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process. This showed that S worried about being beaten up in his neighbourhood and he had been involved in drug misuse and dealing. He had been chased by the police but so far has not been arrested. He had a real problem sleeping and had on occasions talked about committing suicide.

A multi-agency team met in the school to identify and address his needs. S was allocated a lead professional, a Youth Inclusion and Support Team (YIST) worker who helped him to improve his behaviour and co-ordinated a package of support for him, delivered by the team. This included regular support from child and adolescent mental health services and action by the school to address the bullying.

S was also encouraged to engage in positive activities by the team. He now takes part in amateur dramatics and goes to army cadets twice a week. He is attending school, his behaviour is improving and he has not been in trouble with the police.

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3. Helping every parent do their best for their child

The Children's Plan made clear that the state does not bring up children – parents do. But many parents have told us they would welcome additional help²³ and when parents are failing to meet their responsibilities for their children's behaviour, they must be made to do so. Over the last decade, services for families have changed enormously. More families are now getting the information and help they need through Sure Start Children's Centres, Parent Support Advisers in schools, Nurse Family Partnerships and Family Intervention Projects (FIPs).

Whilst good children's services are critical, adult's services also have a crucial role to play in determining children's achievements and future life chances. When parental problems are not addressed the impact for both themselves and for their children can be severe and enduring. All too often adult's services fail to consider the parental roles and responsibilities of their clients. Earlier this year the Government launched a new approach to local services, to improve support for the most disadvantaged families. The *Think family* report²⁴ set out our desire for a cultural shift so that services consistently *'think family'* and consider the family context to children and young people's problems and needs.

To take this forward a further **£16m** will be spent on Family Pathfinders to test and develop 'think family' on the ground. The Pathfinders will target families with multiple and complex problems such as worklessness, poor mental health or substance misuse which can lead to poor outcomes for children and families.

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We also need to do more to help and where necessary challenge every parent to do the best for their child. Local authorities are expected to take a more strategic and joined up approach to design and delivery of parenting support services, as part of their wider goals for children, ensuring parenting support is effectively addressed in Children and Young People Plans. We have trained over 2,000 staff to deliver evidence based parenting programmes, and we have set up a new National Academy for Parenting Practitioners²⁵ to train, develop and support practitioners in this sector.

Parenting support can help to tackle anti-social behaviour as well as other problems²⁶. Most parents do a great job. For those parents who do not take their responsibilities seriously, we have introduced powers to make them do so.

Government's approach to preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour through parenting and family support is based on:

- **setting clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour with young people and families**
- **intensive, assertive working with the most anti-social families through FIPs**

- **support to parents of young people involved in or at risk of anti-social behaviour – including parenting contracts and orders to make them take help if they do not do so voluntarily**
- **intervening early to support parents of 8-13 year-olds at risk of poor behaviour or other difficulties**

For each of these elements, we have set up programmes that have already proved effective in targeted areas. We are expanding these programmes to include more areas and more families. The Youth Taskforce will support this expansion, led by the Families Group in DCSF – helping local areas to get the best out of investment, and ensuring that good practice happens everywhere.

As part of our commitments to improve parenting and family support through the Respect programme, we have already:

- **established 65 Family Intervention Projects to work with persistently anti-social families.** Families receive a targeted package of support and sanctions, outlined in a contract between the family and services. The packages are coordinated by key workers who use assertive working styles to ensure that families engage. Evidence shows that in 85% of

families, complaints about anti-social behaviour had stopped or lessened; whilst in 80% of cases, tenancies had been stabilised and homelessness reduced. The projects are also shown to improve school attendance, tackle risky behaviours among young people and increase participation in education and training²⁷. They deliver lasting results – in seven out of ten families, positive change was sustained²⁸. Through these projects, we have already worked with over 1,500 families.

- **put in place 77 parenting practitioners** to deliver parenting programmes to the parents of young people involved in or at risk of anti-social behaviour. These experts have had contact with over 1,000 families. In total, over 4,000 parenting contracts and 1,000 parenting orders have been issued²⁹.
- **set up 18 Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders (PEIPs)** for the parents of at risk 8-13 year olds to ensure they receive a coordinated package of parenting support at an early stage. Over 99% of parents recruited to a parenting programme in these pathfinder areas have rated it as very helpful or helpful³⁰. Over 3,000 families will have completed a course by April this year.

ACTION 6: Continue to deal with the most anti-social families. We will sustain and expand the successful national network of FIPs with ongoing funding of £18m over the next three years. These projects will work with over 1,500 families every year.

ACTION 7: Ensure that parenting support is used to address young people's anti-social behaviour. We will provide ongoing funding of around £12m over the next three years to enable Respect Parenting Practitioners to continue to deliver high quality parenting support as part of the approach to tackle anti-social behaviour. They will work with over 1,000 families every year.

ACTION 8: Invest up to £60m to expand the successful Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders. These projects have improved the support available for parents of children aged 8-13 at risk in 18 areas across the country. They have almost halved the number of parents who classified their children as having significant behavioural difficulties³¹. We will expand this programme over the next three years to the majority of local authorities, to ensure that more parents receive the support they need to help with their child's behaviour. These projects will reach over 18,000 people each year.

Case study

Tackling anti-social behaviour through parenting support

Single Mum, K had five children aged from 13 to 2. The eldest children were 'running riot', known to the police, and increasingly involved in low level crime and anti-social behaviour. J, the 8 year old boy was regularly sent home for severe disruptions at school.

K asked a local policeman for help, and he referred her to the Respect Parenting Practitioner. The RPP used an evidence based parenting programme, kept in close contact with the school, and involved K's mother as support for K. As a result

- J stopped disrupting class. Now when he is feeling stressed he goes to the allocated school room, and J's teachers have seen a big improvement in his concentration and reasoning.
- K has gained much more confidence and is using all the parenting strategies discussed with the RPP. Ks relationship with all of her children has improved
- K dealt with her 13 year old son's truancy by herself, contacting the school and thinking of suitable consequences if truancy continued and then sticking to it.
- the 11 year old daughter has stopped smoking.

K says she now feels much more in control and able to establish boundaries.

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“They used to just run around like lunatics. Now I have them settled down and when I say ‘no’ I mean ‘no’. Now they know that ‘no’ means ‘no’.”

(single mum, K)

Case study

Turning families around

Family C were at about to lose their home when the Nottingham Family Intervention Project (FIP) started to work with them. The household was in disarray – 4 of the 7 children had not been to school for 18 months and 2 more were at the point of permanent exclusion, the home was filthy both inside and outside and the family's anti-social behaviour was causing havoc in the local community.

The family history had been extremely problematic. Both parents had previously been in prison, during which time the children were placed into foster care. There was also a history of domestic violence in the family and Health Services had raised concerns about the physical development of 2 of the girls.

Through the first assessment undertaken by the FIP key worker it became clear that the accommodation was not suitable for a family of this size. There were not enough bedrooms for the children and there was not enough space to do all the washing and cooking for the family. The key worker worked closely with the Local Authority Housing Accommodation to find suitable accommodation and ensure that they could remain in the tenancy if they agreed to change their behaviour.

The key worker established a strict contract for the family and worked assertively to ensure that each family member attended the support needed to help them change their behaviour. She took the children to school in the morning and picked them up to make sure they went to their appointments with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and Health Services. The key worker also worked closely with Mother C to build her self esteem and confidence. This included accompanying her to Mental Health appointments and providing intensive parenting support to help her establish some boundaries in the house and be able to manage her budget.

After 6 months of working with the FIP, Family C had stopped their anti-social behaviour and the children were attending school, the household was clean and rent was paid on time.

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“After 6 months of working with the FIP, family C had stopped their anti-social behaviour and the children were attending school, the household was clean and rent was paid on time.”

4. Positive activities, safer communities

We set out in *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*³² the importance of enabling all young people engage in constructive activities in their leisure time. Evidence shows that participation in high quality activities helps young people: improve attitudes to, and engagement with, school; build social and communication skills; avoid taking risks such as experimenting with drugs or being involved in anti-social behaviour or crime; improve their self-confidence and self-esteem; and overall be more resilient to challenges and set backs. Well supported activities also provide opportunities to increase community cohesion by bridging gaps between young people from different income, ethnic and faith groups.

The strategy recognised that much has already been achieved following the Government's substantial investment in this area:

- overall, around four in five 14 year olds participated in positive leisure activities³³
- more young people are volunteering than any other age group³⁴
- there has been an increase in the level of young people participating in school sports: 85% of 5 to 16s did so in 2007 compared to 62% in 2004³⁵

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Our focus on providing young people with direct influence and involvement over local decisions about the opportunities available in their area is showing good results. The first two years of the Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds led to almost 1 million young people participating in activities designed by their peers.

But there remain clear challenges:

- roughly a quarter of young people do not participate in any activities, with disadvantaged young people being significantly less likely to be engaged in the same range of opportunities that many others get through parents who value, and can afford, such activities. As a consequence they are likely to be further disadvantaged and at greater risk of poor outcomes.
- there remains significant variation in the quantity and quality of places to go and things to do across local areas. In particular, there is a compelling need to improve the quality of youth facilities following evidence from young people, parents and communities that there are either insufficient or unsatisfactory places where young people can engage in activities and access services.

In *Aiming high* and the *Children's Plan* we set out our response to these problems, building on the reforms already taking place locally. This signalled our commitment to provide the resources and direction necessary to support local authorities and their partners both statutory and third sector in: raising participation, tackling barriers to access, and improving overall quality.

We have published alongside this action plan the next steps in implementing *Aiming high*. It is essential that local authorities and their partners recognise the importance of

delivering the strategy to reducing and preventing youth anti-social behaviour, particularly the investment in delivering our commitment to a new and improved place to go in every community.

The commitments in Aiming high are underpinned by a major investment of £679m over the next three years. There is also an additional £160m, which was announced alongside the Children's Plan, to improve places to go and things to do for young people. Over the next ten years, this investment, and the reinvestment of unclaimed assets from dormant bank accounts, will deliver new and improved facilities for young people in every part of the country.

The BIG Lottery Fund has been identified as the preferred delivery agent for both Government and unclaimed asset funding. From this year local authorities, private bodies and third sector organisations will be able to bid for investment from them to ensure that all young people in their area can access positive activities.

As mentioned above, public concern about 'young people hanging around' remains high³⁶, particularly in the poorest areas. In these neighbourhoods and estates, young people and adults often say that there should be

more 'things for young people to do' to help them stay out of trouble³⁷ and improving safety on the streets. We have published the Staying Safe Action Plan³⁸ which sets out cross-Government work to improve children and young people's safety over the next three years.

In these communities, there are many facilities – abandoned pubs, housing stock, youth clubs and community centres – which have fallen into disrepair. Often parents and other adults want to do more for young people and get involved when they have the chance. When this happens, it increases young people's involvement in positive activities and reduces anti-social behaviour and crime. It has a wider effect too, as volunteering by adults – often local mums and dads – helps to build their self esteem and can also offer a route back into paid work and out of poverty³⁹.

Where there are facilities in local communities, they are not always open at the right times. A small mapping exercise in anti-social behaviour hotspots showed that facilities are often closed on Friday and Saturday nights – just when incidents of anti-social behaviour are highest.

A lack of contact between young people and older generations can create tension around issues like anti-

social behaviour. Teenagers often report feeling unwelcome in their communities; they are often themselves victims of anti-social behaviour⁴⁰ and feel that there is safety in numbers. Other people may feel intimidated by groups of young people. Bringing members of the community and young people together helps to foster community spirit and enables people to tackle a much wider range of community priorities⁴¹.

The Youth Taskforce will support the overall vision of *Aiming high* by working with 50 local areas to target work and resources on the most deprived areas to increase young people's participation in activities, provide facilities and bring young people and the community together.

ACTION 9: Invest £22.5m capital funding to improve youth facilities in areas where crime and anti-social behaviour are particular problems. We will increase current Youth Capital Fund allocations to support community-led initiatives to get youth facilities up and running quickly in the 50 most deprived areas where they are needed most. This investment will be channelled through the Youth Opportunity Fund to ensure that young people, their parents and local people shape the activities offered in these areas. Local Authorities will have to demonstrate

imaginative proposals that have local community involvement and help build sustainable communities.

ACTION 10: Increase young people's participation in positive activities. The Youth Taskforce will work with the same 50 areas to help them:

- map and publicise what provision is already available for youngsters. Often young people and the community are unaware of what is already on offer. This will help local authorities deliver on their statutory duty to publicise positive activities.
- ensure that activities are open at the times and places when they are most needed
- bring young people and communities together to actively shape and drive activities in their local area.
- make the most of the opportunity provided by capital investment over the coming years. The Taskforce will help local areas to take a strategic approach to facilities for young people: making the best use of existing buildings or facilities and ensuring that other potential partners like private bodies and third sector organisations are involved.

ACTION 11: Develop and implement a Community Audit tool to help local communities, young people and services resolve tensions. By involving young people and the wider community to agree what is acceptable behaviour, we can broker a shared sense of place and common standards of behaviour. This will be done as part of the development of Community Charters, guidance for which was published by Communities and Local Government in January 2008⁴². It can also be done through Neighbourhood Action Plans developed by neighbourhood policing teams to enable communities to identify their priorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Neighbourhood Policing Youth Toolkit can help do this. Setting the boundaries for local action – such as where positive activities should be situated or that a dispersal notice will be issued if further anti-social behaviour continues – helps manage neighbourhood life. For example, a community may decide that football in the park is acceptable, or that whilst small groups are manageable large groups gathering in shopping parades intimidate others. This gives young people, the community and services like Police Community Support Officers, neighbourhood wardens and housing managers a way of auditing concerns and complaints about behaviour in the area and challenging unfair perceptions.

The tool will give local people a better way to agree together how to handle disputes about unacceptable behaviour.

ACTION 12: Help local authorities and partners promote interaction between young people and other sections of society. We expect local councils to take the lead in promoting intergenerational activity, bringing together young people and other members of the community to build trust and understanding, to develop community solutions to issues which concern both and to resolve tensions. Many local councils and their partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors are already doing this, for example using participation forums. To support this work further we will:

- report to Ministers by July 2008 with a summary of what is happening locally to bring young people and other sections of society together and suggest options for further work
- encourage innovation and spread best practice in this area.

- Produce a practical 'How to' guide to help local services break down the barriers between young people and other sections of society, for example how to involve young people in local media debate and to celebrate the achievements of young people.

ACTION 13: Run a national award scheme to recognise and celebrate those young people who successfully turn round their lives, or who make a significant contribution to their communities. As well as supporting local areas to work better with young people, the Taskforce will run a national communities award to celebrate the contribution young people make to their communities and the achievements of young people who turn their lives around. This will link with wider cross-Government work to celebrate and support communities in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, which will help local people to feel confident about their local services.

Case study

'Clubs not pubs' – community led activities for young people

Blackburn's Wensley Fold was a very deprived ward with high levels of recorded crime and disorder incidents. Large numbers of young people were gathering in the street, causing a nuisance, experimenting with alcohol and drugs, committing crime and intimidating residents. Some young people in the area formed a gang.

Local residents approached the council in 2002 to ask why the local Community Centre was not available in the evenings. They were told it could be opened if its use could be supervised. This was how Action for Community and Town (ACT) started with local residents volunteering to run sessions.

ACT next rented, and then bought, a derelict public house based in the area, with help from the Community Safety Team. Young people helped with the renovations. The project now runs six nights a week, runs IT training, and is used by other agencies for outreach projects. Volunteers are to be trained to deliver parenting courses, and they are planning to create a community garden that will be run by local young people.

Crime and disorder in the area reduced in the years after the project was set up and this reduction has continued. Since 2004 crime locally has reduced by 27% and anti-social behaviour by 16%.

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Case study

Building relationships between young and old

Tile Hill in Coventry had considerable tension between the generations, with older residents complaining about young people's anti-social behaviour. Members of the local Safer Neighbourhood Group recognised the need to understand the underlying perceptions that were driving these tensions, if they were to address them.

Interviews with both groups showed that they shared a strong common sense of community and were closer in their views than they realised. They also wanted to remind each other that older residents were young once, and young people will become old one day.

A photo shoot involving local people was arranged to celebrate a football match which took place between young people and older residents – with the older people scoring a late winning goal. Older residents wore the current England team shirt whilst the young people wore an England shirt from 1966. An Asian resident wearing the England shirt also helped to challenge racial stereotypes.

The resulting leaflet was distributed to 1,500 homes in the area and local police officers and neighbourhood wardens were briefed on the campaign. This enabled them to talk to local residents, young and old, about the campaign and to reinforce the key messages of understanding and tolerance. Further opportunities to improve communication with young people were identified and delivered through training.

Steve Boyle, the area youth worker noted a significant reduction in tension between young and old after the campaign.

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“I was so pleased to see something which shows young people and local residents in such a positive light.”

*Colin Harrad,
local Residents Association*

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5. Improved delivery for young people everywhere

We have created the Youth Taskforce to help improve outcomes for some of our most deprived and challenging young people.

The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*⁴³ sets out how central Government will work in a new way with local areas. This includes a revised Local Area Agreement process through which central government and local partners will agree and manage a limited number of jointly agreed improvement targets for each local area.

Local areas will take more responsibility for improving their own performance and seeking the right help to do so.

The Youth Taskforce will work within this new framework. We want to make sure that the strong plans and good delivery we see in some areas can be achieved everywhere.

Key to our approach will be joining up the work of different agencies at a national and local level to improve services and outcomes for young people; building a high quality body of evidence about what work and spreading good practice.

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In doing this the Taskforce will work with, and complement the other forms of support available to, local areas as they start operating within the new Local Area Agreements. This includes support from new Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships, the local government's own improvement bodies, Government Offices, and the new Joint Improvement Support Plan arrangements.

The Youth Taskforce's focus will be on supporting local delivery for the most challenging young people. This will complement the work of national organisations like the National Youth Agency, which provides professional support to the Department and youth sector to help ensure that policy is successfully implemented.

ACTION 14: Targeted action in Youth Priority Areas. Working with Government Offices, the Taskforce has already started work with ten local authorities who need to improve their performance for young people, and where concerted action could make a real difference to teenager's lives.

This builds on existing successful approaches that have been used on specific outcomes, for example reducing the number of young people not in education,

employment or training (NEET) and teenage pregnancy. The new work aims to promote integrated action across the youth agenda – to make it more effective and reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on local authorities.

These sessions with local areas are proving very constructive, focusing attention on youth issues and galvanising action on the targeted youth support reforms. We are also using them to test ways of bringing together support more effectively. We will review lessons in summer 2008 and, if the approach has been successful, we will extend it to other localities.

ACTION 15: Disseminate good and innovative practice in improving youth outcomes. Local partners value quality advice and best practice information. There is a clear demand for more robust evidence about what works among both front line workers and strategic managers. Identifying and disseminating best practice will be an important part of the Taskforce's remit. To help meet this demand, the government is establishing a Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (CfEO) in Children and Young People's Services, which will be launched in July 2008. The CfEO will have significant analytical resources to build up evidence of systems and practice that have been shown

to work. This will help ensure that an impartial body, not involved in policymaking, rigorously tests good practice examples. In particular, it will be asked to focus on evidence of effective ways of intervening early before problems become serious, and providing integrated support to young people.

The Youth Taskforce will draw on this evidence to help local areas apply the principles in their particular situation. It will also run showcasing events for practitioners, to promote successful case studies and encourage practitioners to learn from each other.

ACTION 16: Train over 3,000 frontline practitioners by April 2009 and each year after that on effective ways of tackling anti-social behaviour and improving services for the most deprived and challenging young people. We will build on the effective approach of the Respect Taskforce and the Home Office by providing a package of best practice advice and training to frontline practitioners. Through work with specific local areas and events open to staff from all areas, we aim to train over 3,000 frontline practitioners a year with many others benefiting from best practice materials.

ACTION 17: Feedback the lessons from front line experience to inform future policy and strategy. In its work with young people and local service providers, the Taskforce will hear first hand when things are not working as well as they might. We will feed back this information to the heart of Government – highlighting changes that need to be made to policy and strategy, and ensuring that new policy reflects the reality of front-line delivery. We will bring in staff with specialist skills and front line experience, while retaining a single named lead for each area that we work with.

ACTION 18: Bring together the separate forms of challenge and support on different youth issues. Progress on each of the Youth PSA goals depends very much on progress across all areas. The evidence shows that the more risk factors young people have, the more likely they are to experience problems⁴⁴. Despite this, many of the programmes designed to improve outcomes for young people have had separate delivery arrangements, funding, performance management and client groups, which has reduced their overall impact.

To succeed, a wide range of local services need to prioritise the aims of the Youth PSA and collaborate more effectively than they do now. While there should be local control of priorities and the delivery strategy, focused support from the centre will be important too. In some cases, support could be even more effective if it were offered in a more integrated way. The Youth Taskforce will work with other support arrangements for the sector, to contribute to the overall aims of integrating and rationalising these to maximise collective impact. We will also clarify how these sources of support fit with the work of other organisations that local services may turn to for advice or information, like the Local Government Association and the National Youth Agency.

The DCSF is carrying out a further review of the strategic function and impact of Government Offices, and how to improve the impact and effectiveness of support for local authorities. We expect feedback from this in the autumn.

6. Developing this plan and working with partners

In developing this Action Plan, we consulted widely with professionals who work with, and on behalf of, young people – through consultation events for over 1,000 frontline practitioners, meetings and visits with key stakeholders and providers, and submissions to the e-mail address youth.taskforce@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

We consulted with young people to get their views through visits, a poll of over 1,000 young people and focus groups. The results of the poll are available at <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/ytf/actionplan>.

We also drew on the extensive consultation with practitioners and young people carried out as part of the process of producing both *Aiming high* and the *Children's Plan*.

The views of those who work with and for young people and of young people themselves are important to us. Across the breadth of youth policy, the Taskforce will feedback best practice and delivery issues from the frontline to policy makers across Whitehall. We will champion the needs and views of young people.

By completing and returning the freepost card at the back of this document, you can register as a friend of the Taskforce and receive updates on events, publications and other activity that may be of interest. You can also contact us at the e-mail address above.

A shared vision

Gordon Brown, Prime Minister

“We have high ambitions for every young person in the country, and through the reforms we have put in place are giving every young person the chance to be the best that they can be. However, a strong society requires that where individuals – including young people – overstep the boundaries of acceptable behaviour they are made to face up their responsibilities. Tackling the causes of bad behaviour helps to ensure lasting change. That is why we want to see young people who get into trouble made to take the help they need to mend their ways.”

Alistair Darling, Chancellor of the Exchequer

“Over the next ten years we are investing in improved facilities for young people across the country. But it is vital that we see improvements quickly in the most deprived areas where young people have most to gain from participating in positive activities and where anti-social behaviour is a problem for communities. This Action Plan will target investment next year to get facilities open in the neighbourhoods where they are needed most.”

Jacqui Smith, Home Secretary

“Communities need to see that anti-social behaviour is tackled not tolerated. Over the last few years we have made real progress and public concern about anti-social behaviour has fallen. Across Government there is action underway to ensure that local services have the tools to tackle problems when they occur. The measures outlined in this Action Plan are an important part of our approach and will help local services respond more effectively to anti-social behaviour by young people.”

Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor

“The best response to crime and anti-social behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place. Through the work of Youth Offending Teams and others we already have strong systems in place to identify those at risk of offending and tackle the problems they face. But there is more to do to ensure that we identify young people at risk and ensure the right services are working together to stop problems developing. The Youth Taskforce will help make that happen.”

Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

“Antisocial behaviour and crime are clear priorities for local communities. Central and local government are working together to get to grips with the underlying causes of bad behaviour. Often the best responses are when communities come together to identify problems and agree their own solutions. We need to do more to involve both young people and the wider community to share views and agree local action to address shared priorities.”

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health

“We are already delivering real change for young people – for example teenage pregnancy is now at its lowest level for 20 years. However, the most vulnerable young people face complex and multiple problems. It is only by putting in place systems that allow a range of local services to work together to identify young people at risk, assess their needs and respond effectively that we can tackle issues like substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, crime and young people not in employment, education or training. By supporting implementation of the targeted youth support model the Taskforce will help make this happen.”

Andy Burnham, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

“Taking part in positive activities like sport and the arts helps young people develop the skills that will help them manage the transition to adult life. We are investing in new and improved facilities over the next ten years. However, in many areas there is already much on offer – from local services, from private sector bodies and third sector organisations. Young people are not always aware of how much is available or

facilities may not be open at the times and places where they are needed. We need to do more to get the most out of the facilities we already have and this Action Plan outlines targeted work to make sure that happens.”

Edward Miliband, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

“Every young person deserves the best chance to develop their potential, whatever their background. Alongside action against anti-social behaviour, it is essential we invest in prevention to enable young people to make the right choices for themselves, for their families and for their communities. This Action Plan is building on the important work of Family Intervention Projects which help to tackle the behaviour of some of the most troubled teenagers and shows how more young people can make a positive contribution to our society.”

Beverley Hughes, Minister of State Children, Young People and Families

“There can be no excuse for bad behaviour. Where criminal or anti-social behaviour occurs we must take swift action to tackle it and bring respite to communities. Many young people involved in bad behaviour face other problems like substance misuse, low educational attainment and poor family background. Alongside sanctions we should offer support to address these problems but taking that help, and changing behaviour must be non-negotiable. Everyone has the potential to change and we do these young people, their families and communities no favours if we allow them to choose to ignore help. This approach is at the heart of our vision for young people and the Taskforce’s work to improve the lives of the most challenging young people.”

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