

Quality Standards for Positive Activities

(DRAFT)

Introduction

What are Positive Activities?

Positive Activities are activities which young people choose to undertake in their leisure time and which actively contribute to Every Child Matters outcomes (“be healthy”, “stay safe”, “enjoy and achieve”, “make a positive contribution” and “achieve economic well-being”) by providing structured opportunities for skills acquisition and for personal and social development.

Sustained participation in Positive Activities can:

- improve outcomes for young people,
- help young people to develop resilience to the negative pressures they can face
- enable young people to gain skills and evidence learning
- create a sense of belonging within communities.

What is the purpose of these Quality Standards?

Aiming High for Young People (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/>) set out to transform opportunities for young people by increasing their participation in high quality Positive Activities. These Quality Standards build on the commitments in *Aiming High*. They have been developed with the help and support of practitioners and young people and their parents/carers and reflect research evidence of how the benefits of Positive Activities to young people can be optimised. They will help to improve the outcomes achieved by young people, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable, through their participation in Positive Activities by setting out the characteristics of good quality provision.

Who are they for?

The Quality Standards are aimed at commissioners and providers of Positive Activities, including volunteering/community service providers. They are also designed to help young people and their parents/carers to understand the quality and breadth of Positive Activities to which they are entitled and to empower them to demand high quality provision.

Additionally, they may interest organisations (including local authorities) involved in other kinds of activity, e.g. work-related learning.

Commissioners

By commissioners we mean agencies that are responsible for planning and securing Positive Activities provision.

All local areas have a Children's Trust Board through which local partners, including from the third sector, are brought together to improve outcomes for children and young people. Each Children's Trust Board produces its "Children and Young People's Plan" which sets out how Children's Trust partners will work together to meet local priorities and targets for services for children and young people. The Plan also provides the framework for local commissioning. Commissioning arrangements vary from area to area but local authorities and schools have key roles to play working through their Children's Trust co-operation arrangements.

- Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient provision of Positive Activities for young people (including those with learning difficulties up to the age of 24) in their local area, as set out in Section 507B of the Education Act (1996).
- All schools in England are expected to offer access to a wide range of extended services. These services may be provided on-site or schools may provide access to services offered by other schools/centres.

Other partners within the Children's Trust may also commission Positive Activities, for example the Police, who work with youth workers to provide high quality positive activities in neighbourhoods where crime and anti-social behaviour are high.

Some Positive Activities are also commissioned nationally, for example by vinspired and by Sports England.

Providers

By providers we mean **any** organisation or group that delivers Positive Activities for young people: not just those that are in receipt of funding from Children's Trusts and their partners. This covers a wide range of organisations; from local authorities and schools that deliver Positive Activities "in-house" to voluntary sector providers, private providers, sports clubs and leisure centres, youth clubs, Scouts, Guides and Cadet Forces, community groups and arts organisations such as museums, libraries and music or theatre groups. The standards are designed to be applicable to all providers.

[Case studies are in preparation looking at the application of the standards to different types of organisations.]

How should young people and their parents/carers use these standards?

Aiming High sought to empower young people (and their parents/carers and local communities) to influence services provided for them. The Quality Standards help to make commissioners and providers of Positive Activities accountable to young people and their parents/carers by setting out for them what they should expect from Positive Activities and by emphasising their role in influencing the content and planning of activities.

[Materials will be produced separately, based on these standards, to alert young people and their parents/carers to

the benefits of Positive Activities and to the quality of provision that they can expect to receive. Local authorities, and others, will be encouraged to add local content (e.g. on how to access information on the local offer and how to complain about provision) to these materials which will be available on-line in a format which allows for local input.]

What kinds of activities are covered by these standards?

Positive Activities are structured, leisure-time activities that promote skills acquisition and personal and social development. (Personal and social development may include the development of self awareness/self esteem; communication skills; interpersonal skills; the ability to explore and manage feelings; the ability to understand and identify with others; values, i.e. the ability to recognise what is right and wrong; problem solving skills; negotiation skills; the ability to plan ahead and the ability to learn from experience.)

They can include activities such as:

- homework or special interest clubs
- coaching in sporting or physical activities
- learning opportunities presented by facilities offering residential, weekend or holiday time services
- volunteering activities (which generate non-formal educational benefits)
- arts and cultural activities (e.g. structured learning in a museum or gallery).

These standards relate to **all** Positive Activities (including Youth Work) for young people aged 13 to 19 – and those with learning difficulties up to the age of 24 – irrespective of how they are funded.

Quality Standards for Information, Advice and Guidance, which alongside Positive Activities and Targeted Youth Services form Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) can be accessed at <http://www.cegnet.co.uk>.

How will take-up of the standards be encouraged?

Many commissioners and providers have already taken steps to improve the quality of Positive Activities. The Quality Standards provide an opportunity to build on best practice. By demonstrating that all the Quality Standards are being met, commissioners and providers of Positive Activities can be confident that provision is high quality and contributes to the achievement of the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes which underpin all work within Children's Trusts.

All commissioners and providers of Positive Activities are encouraged:

- to benchmark their performance against the standards
- (where the standards are not, currently, being met) to take steps to improve performance.

We expect commissioners and providers to welcome the opportunity to assess their provision against best practice. However, local authorities also have a statutory duty to have

regard to the Quality Standards, both as commissioners and, if appropriate, as providers of Positive Activities. Additionally, providers will be encouraged to use the standards to improve their provision by the tendering requirements of commissioners who will want to fund Positive Activities provision that meets the Quality Standards. And both commissioners and providers of Positive Activities will be held to account for the quality of their Positive Activities provision by young people (and by their parents and carers) who are being given an increasingly strong voice in the commissioning and delivery of the services provided for them.

Adherence to these Quality Standards can also influence local inspection decisions. For example the Comprehensive Area Assessment process looks at how well local authorities are working with other public bodies to meet the needs of the people that they serve and the social development of pupils is emphasised in Ofsted's school inspection processes.

We expect that providers of quality awards will want to adapt their offer to reflect these standards and would strongly encourage both commissioners and providers of Positive Activities to seek external assessment of their adherence to the standards so that they can demonstrate the quality of their provision to their delivery partners and to users of their services.

Supporting materials will be made available separately to help commissioners and providers to learn from effective practice and to review their performance against the Quality Standards.

Overview of the Quality Standards

There are six Quality Standards.

Achieving outcomes for young people

Standard 1: Positive Activities reflect young people's needs and interests

Standard 2: Young people are aware of the Positive Activities available to them

Standard 3: Young people are helped to achieve positive outcomes through Positive Activities

The planning and delivery of Positive Activities

Standard 4: Positive Activities are planned, commissioned, developed and evaluated collaboratively

Standard 5: Positive Activities promote and provide equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes

Standard 6: Positive Activities are safe

Under each standard, "evidence indicators" describe in more detail what is involved in commissioning and providing high quality Positive Activities and "guidance notes" help commissioners and providers benchmark their performance against these indicators.

Standard 1: Positive Activities reflect young people's needs and interests

Evidence indicators

- C1.1** Commissioners ensure that young people are closely involved at all stages of the design and delivery of Positive Activities.
- C1.2** Commissioners ensure that Positive Activities are available where and when young people want and need them, including Friday and Saturday nights.
- C1.3** Commissioners ensure that young people are provided with a range of Positive Activities from which to choose.
- C1.4** Commissioners ensure that the provision of Positive Activities reflects the needs of **all** young people.
- C1.5** Commissioners consider transport links when making decisions on the location of provision.

- P1.1** Providers ensure that young people participate actively in all stages of the design, delivery and evaluation of Positive Activities.
- P1.2** Providers encourage young people's sustained participation in Positive Activities by tailoring activities to meet their needs and interests.
- P1.3** Providers have regard to the needs of young people arising from their family circumstances when providing Positive Activities.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for commissioners
C1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should use a variety of mechanisms to ensure that the voices of young people, in particular those who would not normally be likely to engage, are heard in the planning, design, development and evaluation of provision. Young people's involvement should include activities related to the assessment of need; the agreement of priorities; the allocation of budgets; communications with young people and decisions about the Positive Activities to be provided/their location/changes to provision. Young people should be given feedback on their influence on decisions.
C1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should consider the level of demand from young people for activities and ensure that Positive Activities are available at times which reflect the preferences of young people. Vulnerable young people are most at risk of engaging in anti-social or harmful behaviours on Friday and Saturday nights and Commissioners should ensure that a strong offer is available at these times in deprived areas and areas of high crime/anti-social behaviour.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for providers
P1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should apply the notes at C1.1 above to the engagement of young people in the design and delivery of provision. It is particularly important that Providers ensure that the voices of the vulnerable and disadvantaged are heard in the design and delivery of provision.
P1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should regularly review the activities they offer with participating young people. (They should also consider diversifying provision, e.g. by providing Positive Activities at different times, in order to reach new groups of young people.)
P1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems experienced by parents or siblings (e.g. offending, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence) and general parenting capacity can impact profoundly on individual young people. Providers should consider how they might provide support to families/parents to help address issues where these are causes of young people's problems. Providers should consider providing childcare where participating young people are themselves parents.

C1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should secure a variety of Positive Activities, including residential and volunteering provision, which meet the needs and interests of young people locally and which provide appropriate opportunities for structured learning. Commissioners should work in close collaboration with other commissioners of Positive Activities. Commissioners should work with local sports and cultural bodies and others, to ensure that young people have access to, and shape, high quality sports and artistic activities which reflect young people's interest in sport and creative/artistic activities and which promote healthy lifestyles, and arts and cultural activities.
C1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should ensure that the needs of specific and diverse groups are met, in particular the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are parents) who may need additional help, and therefore resources, to overcome barriers to participation. The local Positive Activities offer should reflect the diversity of the community.
C1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should work with transport providers to ensure that safe, affordable and reliable transport is available to help young people with specific needs (e.g. young people living in rural locations, young people with disabilities and young people with caring responsibilities) get to, and from, activities.

Standard 2: Young people are aware of the Positive Activities available to them

Evidence indicators

- C2.1** Commissioners ensure that young people and their parents/carers are aware of the Positive Activities available locally and know how to access them.
- C2.2** Commissioners maintain up-to-date and accurate information on Positive Activities and services for young people locally and share this information widely.

- P2.1** Providers give commissioners accurate and comprehensive information about their activities.
- P2.2** Providers ensure their staff are aware of other provision locally and that they signpost young people to the activities and services that best meet their needs.
- P2.3** Providers promote Positive Activities to young people.

Evidence indicator	Detail for commissioners
C2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should review the provision of information on Positive Activities available locally, including provision commissioned by others, and should work collaboratively with providers and others to ensure that it is comprehensive, accurate and accessible. Young people, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged, should be involved in the design and delivery of information about Positive Activities. Information about Positive Activities should be available in a variety of forms including in different languages to reflect local needs and in young people friendly formats (e.g. using mobile technology and social media.)
C2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should develop local systems for collecting, managing and sharing information about Positive Activities with young people, parents/carers, providers, Connexions services and other interested parties.

Evidence indicator	Detail for providers
P2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should ensure that commissioners have up to date information about their offer so that young people have the information that they need to make choices.
P2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should ensure that their staff are aware of other Positive Activities provision locally so that they can direct young people to the opportunities that will best meet their needs. They should also know how to refer young people to other local services (e.g. to Connexions for information, advice and guidance about education and training opportunities or to help address personal issues).
P2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should reach out to young people from different backgrounds to help to develop young people's awareness of the Positive Activities on offer and the benefits of participation.

Standard 3: Young people are helped to achieve positive outcomes through Positive Activities

Evidence indicators

- C3.1** Commissioners provide funding for Positive Activities that provide structured opportunities for skills acquisition and for young people's personal and social development.
- C3.2** Commissioners help young people to develop and achieve by providing them with Positive Activities that are fun and enjoyable and which encourage participation and engagement.
- C3.3** Commissioners help providers to monitor and evaluate their provision and to develop a stronger focus on outcomes (including accredited outcomes) and costs.
- C3.4** Commissioners ensure that Positive Activities are available to support young people at key transition points.

- P3.1** Providers challenge and stretch young people and encourage and support them to set and achieve personal goals.
- P3.2** Providers use Positive Activities to provide structured opportunities for skills acquisition and for personal and social development.
- P3.3** Providers ensure that their staff and volunteers are able to recognise when young people would benefit from early preventative support and know how to refer these young people to the agencies that are best placed to help them.
- P3.4** Providers challenge risky behaviour and help young people to understand and manage risk.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for commissioners
C3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Positive Activities should contribute to the achievement of Every Child Matters outcomes. When considering which activities to support Commissioners should consider the extent to which activities target specific skills and develop these skills through structured programmes of active (i.e. “doing”) forms of learning. Structured programmes of learning incorporate a planned set of activities which develops skills sequentially. Positive Activities should provide young people with the opportunity to establish mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers.
C3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people need to be engaged in Positive Activities. Activities that are enjoyable and require concentration are most engaging.
C3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Outcomes” includes hard outcomes, such as qualification or other accredited achievement or employment, and softer outcomes such as improved personal and social skills (e.g. self-esteem, confidence and the development of life skills).
C3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people face additional pressures and barriers at key transition points (e.g. in moving from school to college or from education into work.) Positive Activities have an important role to play in helping young people to manage these transitions.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for providers
P3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should have high expectations of young people, encouraging them to raise their aspirations by providing opportunities to try out new things (e.g. to take on leadership roles and to mentor other young people) and to take risks within a supportive environment. Providers should make extra and tailored support available to young people with learning difficulties and disabilities to help them achieve their potential. Young people should be involved in setting personal goals from Positive Activities. Where activities result in outcomes valued by third parties (e.g. employers) young people should be helped to demonstrate achievement.
P3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should provide structured Positive Activities (see guidance note to C3.1) including opportunities for young people to establish mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers, to develop their emotional and self-management skills and/or improve educational participation and attainment/achievement.

P3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and volunteers should be able to recognise underlying risk factors for poor outcomes and know how to broker services to deliver early preventative support. • Risk factors which providers should consider when judging the need for early preventative support include offending, early pregnancy, unprotected sex and substance misuse. • Providers should provide access through Positive Activities for health workers to advise and support young people and, in doing so, should have regard to the Department of Health's "You/re Welcome" quality criteria – http://www.bspar.org.uk/downloads/other/youre_welcome_stds.pdf.
P3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must understand what motivates risky behaviour and should challenge young people's views and opinions in a supportive way that helps to build self-awareness, confidence and esteem and which helps the young person to find alternative activities.

Standard 4: Positive Activities are planned, commissioned, developed and evaluated collaboratively

Evidence indicators

- C4.1.** Commissioners engage other statutory agencies (including the Police and organisations from neighbouring areas as appropriate), providers, young people and communities to inform the planning and commissioning of Positive Activities.
- C4.2** Commissioners work with a wide range of providers to encourage the development of a diverse market for the delivery of Positive Activities that meets local needs.
- C4.3** Commissioners ensure that decisions about the commissioning of services are transparent and that documents and records of decisions are available to the public.
- C4.4** Commissioners take action to improve services in response to monitoring/review/evaluation findings.

- P4.1** Providers engage closely with the planning and commissioning of Positive Activities.
- P4.2** Providers make the best use of resources by seeking out opportunities to collaborate with other providers.
- P4.3** Providers take action to improve services in response to monitoring/review/evaluation findings.
- P4.4** Providers require staff and volunteers delivering Positive Activities to demonstrate appropriate knowledge, skills and competence and to work to relevant professional standards.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for commissioners
C4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should involve all partners in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — developing a vision for Positive Activities; — assessing need/agreeing priorities; — making decisions about the Positive Activities to be provided and on fees/charges; — making the best use of community assets, e.g. school premises; — allocating budgets; — commissioning provision; — ensuring that the local Positive Activities offer is integrated with other IYSS functions; — regularly and systematically monitoring, reviewing and evaluating Positive Activities; — making decisions about changing/terminating provision; — making decisions about how to communicate information about the local Positive Activities offer to young people; — ensuring that resources are used effectively and activities provide value for public money (having regard to the sustainability of provision). <p>The Police will have a particularly important role to play in advising commissioners on Positive Activities provision in high crime areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should ensure that provision reflect the aims and priorities of the local Children and Young People’s Plan. Commissioners must ensure that there is a clear and agreed process for ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided, particularly when investment and procurement decisions are being made. See also Standard C.1.1 “Commissioners ensure that young people are closely involved at all stages of the design and delivery of Positive Activities”.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for providers
P4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should be involved in all stages of commissioning (see C4.1) and should share their knowledge and understanding of young people and local places with commissioners.
P4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should work with local and national networks of voluntary and community organisations and with other providers of positive activities.
P4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers identify development needs and offer continuing professional development opportunities to raise the aspirations of staff and improve their performance.
P4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should ensure that all staff and volunteers are working towards the ‘Common Core’ of skills and knowledge for the children and young people’s workforce – http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/deliveringservices1/commoncore/commoncoreofskillsandknowledge/ Providers should ensure that staff and volunteers working with young people possess the skills to identify young people at risk and can help these young people to access the support that they (and their parents/carers) need. Providers should ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills to support young people with learning difficulties and disabilities or know where to get help with meeting these young people’s needs. Providers should ensure that their staff have the skills and knowledge to deliver the content of the Positive Activities that they are providing.

C4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should encourage new providers (for example arts, sports and culture bodies) and stimulate the market so that new and different types of activity are provided.
C4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners must ensure that competitive tendering processes are compatible with UK and EU law and that decisions are not influenced by the interests of “in-house” provision.
C4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should encourage continuous quality improvement and help providers improve the quality of activities. This should involve publishing information on the quality of activities. Commissioners should have regard, when reviewing monitoring/evaluation findings, to how they might improve the coherence of provision, reduce duplication and plug gaps. Commissioners should measure the progress of groups of young people in their areas that are seen to be at greatest risk of negative outcomes, using locally developed predictive tools for this where appropriate. Commissioners should have a workforce development strategy for the delivery of Positive Activities which is responsive to local needs and conditions and which reflects the aims and priorities of the local Children and Young People’s Plan.

Standard 5: Positive Activities promote and provide equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes

Evidence indicators

- C5.1** Commissioners have regard to the diversity of the local community when commissioning Positive Activities.
- C5.2** Commissioners have regard to the needs of disabled young people and young people with additional learning needs when commissioning Positive Activities.
- C5.3** Commissioners ensure that Positive Activities contribute to community cohesion by providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to build relationships.
- C5.4** Commissioners encourage the development of provision from a range of providers based in different communities.

- P5.1** Providers encourage participation by young people from a range of backgrounds.
- P5.2** Providers ensure activities promote equality of opportunity and challenge stereotypes and are sensitive to the needs of individual young people.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for commissioners
C5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should require providers to provide details of their policy on equality of access and on their complaints procedures. Issues which commissioners should have regard to when considering the diversity of the local community include socio-economic mix, family structure, race, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation.
C5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should have regard to the expectations set out in <i>Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families</i> (AHDC-DfES/HMT, May 2007) including by providing short break provision.
C5.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should consider ways of bringing together young people from different socio-economic backgrounds and of different race, gender, religion or belief, disability and/or sexual orientation to help them to value and to understand the benefits of diversity.
C5.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should collaborate with people outside local boundaries as necessary to build networks that understand the needs of different communities.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for providers
P5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should have a written strategy which sets out their approach to reaching out to young people of different backgrounds (with regard to socio-economic, race, gender, religion or belief, disability, and sexual orientation). Progress in implementing this strategy should be reviewed regularly.
P5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers ensure that their employees are aware of their duties and responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 Providers ensure that their offer is culturally sensitive. (This may involve providing single sex environments for certain activities or having regard to dietary requirements.) Providers should have clear policies to protect children from racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and for dealing with bullying and stereotyping. Providers should ensure that their staff and volunteers understand and respect young people as individuals (acknowledging their rights, responsibilities and aspirations) and support their development. Providers should ensure that activities are age specific/ appropriate.

Standard 6: Positive Activities are safe

Evidence indicators

- C6.1** Commissioners emphasise the importance of safeguarding and health and safety within Positive Activities and set out clear expectations of their providers.
- C6.2** Commissioners support providers to meet their statutory requirements regarding safeguarding and health and safety.

- P6.1** Providers ensure that all statutory requirements regarding safeguarding and health and safety are met
- P6.2** Providers ensure that activities are provided in spaces that are suitable for the activities on offer and that they contain appropriate facilities and equipment.
- P6.3** Providers have in place, and actively implement, policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of young people, staff and volunteers including in relation to aggressive and inappropriately risky behaviour.
- P6.4** Providers ensure that staff and volunteers are recruited and selected safely and that legal CRB/vetting requirements are met.
- P6.5** Providers ensure that young people, staff and volunteers understand how to raise concerns and make complaints and that appropriate action is taken in response to issues raised.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for commissioners
C6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should follow current health and Safety Executive Guidance on managing the health and safety of their workforce and those affected by their work. Commissioners should assess the capacity of local facilities and the supporting infrastructure to deliver the planned offer of Positive Activities.
C6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners should provide access to training to help providers understand and meet their health and safety duties.

Evidence indicator	Guidance notes for providers
P6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must comply with legislation relating to safeguarding and to sensible and proportionate risk management of health and safety. Staff and volunteers understand and are effective in implementing the provider's policies for safeguarding young people.
P6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should consult young people when considering the suitability of facilities/equipment.
P6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people should be consulted about their safety concerns.
P6.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should check references and provide thorough inductions for staff and volunteers on working safely with young people.
P6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should ensure that staff and volunteers are alert to signs of child or sexual abuse, bullying and discrimination and that they understand the procedures to be followed when problems arise.