

A more Integrated and Strategic Approach to Improving Places for Young People to Go

Introduction and purpose

1. *Aiming high for young people*¹ set out the Government's vision for improving the range and quality of places for young people to go. This vision includes an expectation that new investment, including that available through the new **myplace** programme, is supported in every area by an integrated capital strategy overseen by local authorities.
2. In preparation for the launch of **myplace** – £190m of DCSF capital investment in world class places for young people to go, delivered by the Big Lottery Fund, this paper has been developed with stakeholders and experts from across local government and the third sector, to explain how we think local authorities and their partners can best meet this expectation. Drawing on the approach and terminology developed for schools capital programmes, including Building Schools for the Future, it recommends the development of a 'strategy for change' which sets out local plans for improving places for young people to go. The DCSF will not require local authorities to submit such strategies or carry out any assessment of them, but we do expect that the principles set out in this document will guide local authority planning in line with existing duties.
3. We will continue to identify and promote leading practice in this area through the arrangements we are putting in place to support the delivery of **myplace**. This paper should therefore be read as initial guidance to help local authorities develop a strategy for improving places for young people to go.

The need for a more strategic approach

4. The investment of over £290m² of DCSF funding over the next three years and the reinvestment of unclaimed assets from dormant bank accounts will offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve places for young people to go. To make the most of this opportunity it is essential that this investment is underpinned in every area by an integrated and strategic long term plan for creating a diverse network of high quality, dynamic and attractive places to go that reflects local circumstances and the views, needs and aspirations of young people.
5. Developing such a plan will require visionary and ambitious thinking about how to maximise the potential of all available funding and existing assets across the public, private and third sectors in every local authority area.
6. This strategic planning should therefore be driven by the active participation of young people and take place in partnership with a wide range of local partners from across the public, third and private sectors within children's trust arrangements. It should consider the need for both large ambitious projects as supported by **myplace** – delivered on behalf of DCSF by the Big Lottery Fund, as well as smaller neighbourhood level facilities, particularly in the most deprived areas, including those that can be delivered through the Youth Capital Fund.
7. This approach is consistent with the more strategic approach to asset management

¹ See www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/index.shtml

² £190m via **myplace** delivered by the Big Lottery Fund and £102m via the Youth Capital Fund

promoted in the recent guidance *Building on Strong Foundations*³, and with statutory guidance on local authorities' statutory duty, created through a recent amendment to the Education Act 1996, to secure access for all young people to facilities in which they can access positive activities.

Developing a strategy for change

What do we mean by a strategy for change?

8. A strategy for change is a plan of action for moving from the current situation towards the achievement of a long term vision. Applying this to places for young people to go will mean developing a vision and planning for the infrastructure that will best enable the delivery of:
 - a. a wide range of attractive, structured, positive activities available throughout the whole week at times that suit young people;
 - b. co-located multi-agency services delivered both from within places that young people want to go to, and on an outreach basis, ensuring that targeted services for vulnerable young people are delivered in the context of an offer that is universal and attractive to all;
 - c. opportunities for young people to build relationships with, and learn along side, others from different socio-economic, cultural and faith backgrounds, as well as adults and older generations from the wider community;
 - d. mobile resources to provide a flexible response to young people's needs and reach out to areas without dedicated youth facilities; and
 - e. access to these activities, opportunities and services through extended schools.
9. Central to the development of the vision and the plan of how to get there, must be the active participation of young people themselves in decision making.
10. Based on a detailed understanding of the current nature and quality of places for young people to go and young people's views and needs, a strategy for change will set out local partners' approach to delivering the infrastructure needed for their long term vision for local youth provision. This should cover the delivery of a diverse range of places to go: ranging from ambitious flagship projects, as supported by the new **myplace** programme, to smaller scale projects, particularly in the most deprived estates and communities, including those that can be delivered through the Youth Capital Fund and the additional investment made in that Fund following the Youth Task Force Action Plan to enhance provision in these areas. The Strategy should describe how best use will be made of the relative strengths of all local partners, including the third sector, in delivering the vision.
11. The strategy should consider the infrastructure needed to deliver positive activities for young people including sports, arts, music, cultural and youth work based activities, as well as the full range of information, advice, guidance, counselling, health and other youth support services. These activities and services may be delivered by a wide range of partners from public, private and third sectors.
12. Developing a strategy for change may not only result in proposals for capital investment, but also for service redesign. For example, it may be that making existing places accessible to young people – particularly those that are not

³ See www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/assetmanagement

dedicated to youth provision, for example libraries or schools – requires a change to opening hours, working practices, or cross-agency working arrangements, rather than significant capital investment. This process should therefore be a further catalyst for the redesign, integration and co-location of services.

13. Where the need for capital investment is identified, the nature of the capital projects that result will vary according to local need. They may be refurbishments or new-builds, small community facilities or large multi-purpose facilities, mobile or fixed facilities, dedicated youth facilities or multi-purpose facilities, or a combination of all of these.
14. We would encourage all capital projects to follow the same set of principles that will underpin the criteria governing investment decisions within the new **myplace** programme. This means that all projects should:
- a. respond to local needs, and be driven by the views and aspirations of young people who should be active participants in making decisions about the new facility – building on the systems created through the Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds;
 - b. demonstrate partnership working, bringing together local authorities and their partners, particularly the third sector, (via children's trusts and Local Strategic Partnerships) and the cultural and sporting sectors to support and work with young people;
 - c. have sufficiently robust management and leadership arrangements and ongoing revenue backing, whether from grant funding or income generation, to be both viable developments and financially sustainable after the initial capital investment is complete;
 - d. be able to show that their development is consistent with a strategic approach to asset management and development across the local authority area;
 - e. strive for excellence in building design, particularly in relation to accessibility and environmental sustainability.
15. We would expect the strategy for change to be embedded within the Children and Young People's Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy as a key contribution to improving young people's outcomes and improving community cohesion, and to be fully endorsed by children's trusts, published and periodically updated.

Local authorities' leading role

16. The Government has placed a statutory duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure time activities (i.e. positive activities) for the improvement of their wellbeing, and sufficient facilities for these activities. Statutory guidance⁴ states:

"the needs assessment carried out by local authorities in support of this duty should include an assessment of the capacity of local facilities and infrastructure to support the planned offer of positive activities...this strategic planning should be informed by the views of young people and appropriate third and private sector partners, as should the design and building of individual capital projects."

⁴ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/thingstodo/

17. It is therefore local authorities that we expect to take the lead in developing a strategy for improving places for young people to go. Given the breadth of opportunities, activities and support services that need to be considered, it is essential that they take a genuinely cross departmental approach.
18. Current best practice demonstrates that sponsorship for the strategy by senior staff within a local authority is essential, including from the Director of Children's Services, Director of Culture (or equivalent), Director of Finance and Director of Planning and/or Asset Management. Service managers will also need appropriate support from technical colleagues to develop and deliver the capital strategy.

Working in partnership

19. Working in partnership will help to develop, and to generate commitment to, a single local vision that includes a far more ambitious use of available assets for young people than has previously been the case in many areas - including schools, colleges, youth centres and projects, leisure centres, libraries, museums, Connexions Services and a wide range of other public, private and third sector buildings and spaces, including those benefiting the wider community.
20. This is consistent with the Government's expectation that local authorities take a more corporate and strategic approach to asset management. This means working together with their children's trust and Local Strategic Partnership partners in order to make best use of the assets in an area to achieve the goals of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
21. A significant proportion of local places for young people to go are often owned and operated by third sector organisations – many of whom are often uniquely placed to offer innovative, attractive and effective activities and support to young people. This ranges from numerous smaller scale community facilities through to some of the most ambitious, leading edge youth facilities – often driven by the inspiration and innovation of third or private sector providers working in partnership with local authorities. Yet currently the extent to which third sector and private sector organisations influence and feature in local authority plans is variable.
22. It is therefore vital that a strategy for change reflects the role of both large and small third sector organisations and assets in delivering the local vision for youth provision. Third sector partners will need to know how to engage with the process of developing the strategy, including by publishing the name of the lead local authority contact. Local authorities should be aware of the need to support and co-ordinate input from local third sector organisations and also draw on the strengths of relevant national and regional third sector organisations and networks.
23. Other relevant national and regional organisations should also be engaged to help align all efforts, and make best use of available funding streams. This should include working with public bodies such as Regional Development Agencies, Sport England, the Arts Council, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the local Children's Fund, and the Learning and Skills Council.
24. The engagement of head teachers will be crucial to engaging schools in developing the strategy. This will help to realise the potential of school buildings to engage young people in positive activities, in the context of schools capital programmes, including Building Schools for the Future, and the delivery of extended services.

The role of young people

25. The views, aspirations and needs of young people should drive the development of the strategy, which should help increase their stake in their community and sense of ownership over their physical environment.
26. Young people should not be simply consulted, but involved as active participants in making decisions about new and improved places to go and the services offered through them. This should involve working closely with a wide range of young people from the most marginalised to the most engaged, including working with relevant youth participation councils or forums, and seeking their active participation in the development and sign-off of the final strategy.
27. Youth Capital Fund arrangements and investment should be an integral part of a wider strategy for improving places for young people to go. The Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds have already gone a long way in empowering and involving young people in local investment decisions. Continued and increased investment over the next 3 years will ensure that in every local authority area, young people will be empowered to improve places to go through direct control over capital resources. *Aiming high* set out how we expect to see this approach increasingly mainstreamed across local authority budgets to give young people direct influence over a greater proportion of both revenue and capital expenditure.
28. Drawing on the local Children and Young People's Plan needs assessment, strategies should consider the preferences of, and barriers faced by, different groups of young people in accessing activities and services. For example, while many young people may be comfortable taking part in activities on school sites, others may not; and the cost and availability of transport to activities can be as great a barrier as that of the activities themselves. Safety is also a major issue for some young people. A strategy for change should respond to these diverse needs and seek to put in place the infrastructure needed to ensure that all young people, including those who are disabled or in care, have access to positive activities and wider support services.
29. Local partners should also draw on the wealth of materials and guidance available on involving young people specifically in architectural and design projects and in wider service design – including that developed around regeneration projects, capital investment in schools, and in relation to specific services (for example, the *Fulfilling Their Potential* guidance for public libraries⁵). Where projects are multi-use facilities benefiting the wider community, measures should be taken to ensure the voices of young people are heard.

Links to other local strategies and plans

30. As set out above, the strategy for change should respond directly to the priorities identified in the Children and Young People's plan and Local Area Agreement, in the context of the wider Local Development Framework.
31. The strategy should also be fully embedded within wider local authority asset management planning, linking to the Corporate Capital Strategy and also with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In particular, this may highlight, for example, opportunities to realise efficiencies through delivering new places to go as part of wider town centre or other large scale redevelopment projects.

⁵ www.readingagency.org.uk/young/fulfilling-their-potential/

32. As part of a move towards more integrated planning of facilities and co-location of services for children and young people across the 0 to 19 age range, every opportunity should be taken to exploit the links between the strategy for improving places for young people to go and
- a. the Primary Strategy for Change and Strategy for Change for Building Schools for the Future and other school asset management plans;
 - b. plans for the development and delivery of extended schools; and
 - c. the strategic commissioning plans for 16-19 education and training developed by local authorities as part of local 14-19 Partnerships. These will include plans for capital investment in further education colleges and the development of other new facilities to deliver the entitlement within a local area. The details of this are set in the recent Government consultation paper *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*.
33. Plans for improving places for young people to go should co-ordinate with the local play strategy, creating a joined up offer for children and young people and maximising the potential of play-based activities to engage young people in more structured leisure time activities.
34. In order to ensure safe and affordable access to improved facilities, links should be made to the local community safety strategy and transport strategy.

Financing

35. The strategy for improving places to go must identify to the wider community and partners how projects will be funded, taking advantage of all available sources of funding.
36. Developing the strategy together with a wide range of local, regional and national partners will support the pooling and aligning of wider available funding streams – including the Youth Capital fund; bidding for DSCF investment and unclaimed assets funding from the Big Lottery Fund; utilising existing flexibilities across DCSF and other government funding streams; making best use of resources in the single capital pot; utilising gains from Section 106 agreements; and seeking co-funding from private sources.
37. Local authorities should draw on existing sources of advice and support for using all available resources effectively and creatively – including exploring the role of community development finance organisations to attract additional finances. They should consider whether the full potential of relevant public assets could be better realised through transfer to community ownership, as promoted by the Quirk review, particularly given that third sector led projects are often better able to draw in funding from social and private investors.
38. In addition to securing the capital financing needed to delivery new or improved facilities, it is essential that the revenue funding needed to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of each project is fully understood and accounted for. Evidence shows that a diverse co-funding model, with running costs being shared by the statutory, private and third sectors, including through social enterprise, is likely to increase the viability of the project.

Expected structure and content

39. Following consultation with partners, we recommend that a strategy for change contains the following or equivalent content:

Section	Description
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an overview of the local objectives for youth provision and how capital investment will be used to enhance delivery in response to local needs
Young people's Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an overview as to how young people have been active participants in the development of the strategy, especially in decision making
Baseline Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an analysis of the facilities currently available to young people in each local areas across the public, private and third sectors, including related community provision which could be used more effectively for young people • an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current youth provision, and how this is hindered and enhanced by the current infrastructure • an analysis of what needs to change, based on an assessment of the views and needs of young people and their communities, that highlights where capital investment is needed and why
Long Term Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a long-term (10 year) vision for the infrastructure that will best enable and enhance the delivery of the local offer of positive activities and the delivery of integrated youth support services for young people • An analysis of how to respond to the baseline problem analysis in the light of the long term vision that identifies priorities for capital investment over the next 10 years and ensures their long-term sustainability • A description of how this investment will support national policy objectives and local priorities as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan and other strategic plans • An explanation as to how this investment will contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Sustainable Community Strategy for the area, and how it aligns with the asset management strategy of the local authority and its LSP partners
Approach to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan for delivering the change required to move from the baseline position to the achievement of the long term vision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A shared analysis of the relative strengths and hence roles of key partners, not least young people (including through the YCF) and the third sector, in delivering the change ○ A financial strategy for securing the required capital investment and ongoing revenue support for new and improved places to go ○ Arrangements for governance, consultation, monitoring, risk assessment, evaluation and maintenance of the strategy over time ○ Approaches to building design and procurement ○ Arrangements for building capacity at all levels to deliver on the strategy
Initial Investment Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the specific projects to be developed in the short term, showing how these contribute to the long-term vision