***Positive for Youth - Young people’s role in its development***

***Introduction***

Young people have been involved in the development of *Positive for Youth* from the very beginning. Their involvement has been invaluable. They have offered many helpful suggestions and comments on both the content and the style of the documents that have been produced.

The most significant issues and points of feedback that have been raised by young people through the development of *Positive for Youth* are summarised in an annex to this note, together with the action that was taken as a result. The points of feedback made are not in priority order.

The process through which young people have been and will continue to be involved is described below:

***Shaping the Government’s view on the role of young people***

Following the general election in 2010, Ministers from the Department for Education and Department for Communities and Local Government asked their officials to work together to develop policy on the role of young people in society. In particular they wanted to develop options for how to empower young people and increase their democratic engagement. Through this work, groups of young people and many individuals were consulted in writing and face-to-face on what they wanted in their communities, the barriers they faced to making the views heard, and what the Government might do to improve youth voice.

This work showed strong overall support for the concept of youth empowerment. Young people made clear their readiness to be active, empowered citizens within their local communities. The barriers that they highlighted to their active role in their communities included a lack of social interaction with adults due to society’s negative perceptions of young people, and an inability to act due to bureaucracy.

***Young people’s advisory group***

In February 2011, The Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Tim Loughton MP, convened a group of young people who represented a large number of voluntary and youth participation organisations. This group helped the Minister understand further the issues that young people face, and informed the planning of the first *Positive for Youth* summit.

***The Positive for Youth summit***

In March 2011, Tim Loughton MP co-hosted a *Positive for Youth* summit with the Young Chair of the British Youth Council. This brought together over 50 young people with youth professionals and Ministers and officials from seven Government departments to identify and debate the key issues faced by young people today. This helped to develop a shared understanding of young people’s concerns and the support and services they need.

***The Positive for Youth consultation***

Building on the *Positive for Youth* summit, from June to September 2011, the Government consulted on a series of discussion papers on individual issues and on an ‘overarching narrative’. These papers were co-produced with a range of partners from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Nearly 200 responses were received – may of which represented the views of many more young people who were consulted by a wide range of voluntary organisations and local authorities. Responses to the consultation helped to test the vision and content of *Positive for Youth* statement. A list of respondents and summary of their responses is available from the *Positive for Youth* website at [www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth](http://www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth).

***Young people’s event***

In October 2011, around 100 young people met to discuss a summary of the planned content of the *Positive for Youth* statement. Their feedback was used to help produce a draft of the full statement.

***Cross-sector workshop***

In November 2011, young people and LA, charity, and business leaders came together to read and discuss a draft of the *Positive for Youth* statement. Their feedback helped to refine the statement and endorse its overall vision and message.

***What Positive for Youth means for young people***

In response to feedback from young people, a short note has been written to explain clearly what *Positive for Youth* means for them. This note was ‘youth proofed’ by a number of young people who had been involved in discussions about the draft statement. This note is available is available download from the *Positive for Youth* website at [www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth](http://www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth).

***Young people’s role in the future***

Working with the British Youth Council, the UK Youth Parliament, and the National Council of Voluntary Youth Services, the Government will build on the existing youth participation arrangements that informed the development of this statement to establish a national scrutiny group of representative young people. It will advise Government Ministers directly on young people’s needs and the impact of Government policy on young people and their families, including progress on the Policy for Youth vision and commitments. The Group will work closely with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families.

**Annex**

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| **Feedback** | **Response** |
| Young people felt that the media was a key stakeholder missing in the list of those who have a role to play in creating a society that is positive for youth. | The Government is clear that it not its role to tell the media how to operate. However, it does believe the media should take seriously the impact that their work has on the lives of young people. In response to young people’s feedback, the media were added as a specific group to the list of those in Section 3 who have a key role to play in creating a society more positive for youth. The Government will support young people to speak up in the media through the work of the British Youth Council. |
| Young people’s peers are a significant influence that needs to be recognised more. | Greater reference was made in a number of places within the statement to the importance of young people’s peers and how they become increasingly influential as young people grow older and develop more significant relationships outside of the home. Young people can be positive role models and mentors to each other. |
| Young people were not clear how the material they saw would make a real impact on the lives of young people | The statement aims to provide details on both national policies and the changes we want to see to local delivery. It aims to describe the concrete impact of these changes. A specific additional note has also been written to describe what *Positive for Youth* means for young people. |
| Young people were concerned that the statement would describe what is already happening and say nothing new | The statement aims to be a comprehensive summary of existing policy from across all relevant government departments. For the first time it brings these together into a single vision for how to help all young people to succeed. It also sets out clearly some important principles for what a good local system of support would look like, and provides important messages to councils about their role in improving the lives of young people.  The statement provides details of the new investment that the Government is making to promote youth voice, to broker more support from businesses for charities that work with young people, and to support councils to improve their offer to young people. |
| Young people were concerned about how progress towards the positive for Youth vision would be measured. | The Government will publish nationally data to show progress in improving positive outcomes for young people. This won’t be a centralised performance framework. Local authorities will want to define their own measures of success drawing on data available locally.  The Government will continue discussions with young people and voluntary organisations to monitor and review progress – including through the new national scrutiny group of young people. |
| Young people were concerned about when the vision of a society that is positive for youth will be achieved by and how it will be funded. | The Government can not create a society that is Positive for Youth on its own. A wide range of others including parents, communities, councils, schools, charities, and businesses have a key role to play.  The Government can not therefore set out a timetable or project plan – but believes that by developing and setting out a shared vision, everyone can be clear about the part they have to play.  Achieving the *Positive for Youth* vision isn’t solely about public funding – for example many communities support young people independently of the state. However, councils do have a key role, and they have funding from Government from the Revenue Support Grant, the Early Intervention Grant, and from 2013 the Public Health grant to address local priorities for young people. |
| Young people were concerned as to how all the people with a role to play will be supported to do so and what will happen when they don’t. | Parents have access to free helpline and web advice services. Business will have a new Government-funded service to help more of them get involved to support charities that work with young people. Voluntary sector bodies will be supported through the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, with funding from the Government through the Catalyst consortium as the Government’s strategic partner for the voluntary youth sector.  Government funding will mean that councils will have access to support to improve their offer to young people and to involve young people in making decisions and auditing the quality of services. The Government will act to address any well founded long standing concerns about the quality of local services for young people. |
| Young people asked how the vision would be implemented consistently, and Government’s role in this. | The Government believes local people are best able to make decisions about local services. it won’t tell each area what services to fund or delivery. This means the offer to young people will look different in different areas. However, the *Positive for Youth* provides a common reference point, and a set of principles for what a good system of local support for young people will look like. |
| Young people noticed that the draft statement did not talk about their spiritual wellbeing and development. | Reference to spiritual development and the role of parents and families in supporting this has been added to the statement. Positive for Youth also recognises the significant contribution that many faith-based organisations make to the lives of young people. |
| Young people were concerned about how the key messages of the statement would be communicated to young people | An additional note has been written and ‘youth-proofed’ by young people to explain directly to young people what Positive for Youth means for them.  The executive summary of the statement has also been ‘youth-proofed’ by young people. |
| Young people were concerned that the narrative on health and crime was based on stereotypical views of young people – including a presumption that all teenage pregnancies are unplanned. | Young people were involved in looking at a draft of the Positive for Youth statement before it was published to check that there was no patronising language or unhelpful stereotyping. The text on teenage pregnancy was amended and references made to young people as victims not just as perpetrators of crime. |
| Young people asked that all terms were clearly defined. | Attention has been paid to remove the use of acronyms and to ensure that language is unambiguous. |
| Young people were keen to ensure that the different circumstances of their peers were recognised and that all groups are offered an equal chance to succeed in life. | The statement makes clear the Government’s unequivocal commitment to equality of opportunity and the need for all organisations to show similar commitment. It also makes specific reference to:   * action against homophobic bullying; * equal treatment for young men and young women, including support for them as young parents; and the Government campaigns against abusive relationships and negative body images; * action to address health inequalities among the most vulnerable people of all ages through the Inclusion Health programme, focusing initially on homeless people, gypsies and travellers, and sex workers; and * encouraging commissioners to take account of the particular needs of specific groups, e.g. travellers or asylum seekers, young people in rural areas, or young people who grow up in families in which a parent serves in the Armed Forces. |
| Young people were keen to see more on work experience in the document. | The vision and Section 4 of the statement were amended to reflect the importance of work experience and what the Government is doing to improve and promote opportunities for this. |
| Young people were concerned about how they could be kept safe on-line as part of overall safeguarding. | Positive for Youth makes clear the Government’s overall desire to improve arrangements for protecting young people from harm, including on-line safety. Following the Munro review, it is supporting a range of national activity to improve safeguarding. This includes better guidance for parents and work led by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, which brings together 180+ organisations to improve on-line safety. Its Board is jointly chaired by DfE and Home Office ministers. |