



Youth Services in England: The State of the Nation





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- helping councils tackle their challenges and take advantage of new opportunities to deliver better value for money services.

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We aim to set the political agenda and speak in the national media on the issues that matter to council members.

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Executive summary

This publication provides a 'state of the nation' snapshot of the state of youth services within England. It is produced by the National Youth Agency (NYA) as part of its **Routes to Success** programme with the Local Government Association (LGA)¹. The NYA believes that there is a real need for a paper of this kind to not only illustrate the scale of the challenges that local authority services for young people continue to face, but also to highlight the ways in which the sector is working innovatively in delivery of youth services.

From the NYA's work with local authorities it is clear that major revisions are underway in the way councils and their partners deliver the vital youth services that support young people's well-being. In a number of areas, there is a particular focus on early intervention with vulnerable young people or on targeting limited resources to support the most vulnerable. It is clear that, whilst in a few places services are taking the difficult decision to no longer offer services for young people, in many more there was a strong ambition to find new ways of delivery that go some way to meeting young people's needs.

It is possible to identify some overall trends, although there are exceptions among individual authorities. These trends include:

- Reconfiguration of services in the context of reduced budgets and the need to achieve greater efficiencies
- A move towards integrating services and adopting locality-based delivery
- A greater focus on targeted work and, in some cases, moving delivery of all open access work outside the local authority
- Open access provision increasingly delivered by external providers, including voluntary, community, faith and private sectors, and other council departments
- The development of commissioning processes and budgets, accompanied, in some instances, by support for VCS capacity-building
- Recognition of the need to make more effective use of data collection and recording to plan services and demonstrate achievements
- Some strong commitment and effective approaches to supporting young people's voice and influence, but indications that this focus has been lost in some authorities
- Some moves towards generic staff roles across services for young people. Decline in number of opportunities for development
- The establishment of neighbourhood or district arrangements bringing together a range of partners to assess needs and coordinate provision

It is likely that these trends will continue as we move into the next spending review, due by Summer 2013.

Purpose

This publication provides a 'state of the nation' snapshot of the state of youth services within England. It is produced by the National Youth Agency (NYA) as part of its **Routes to Success** programme with the Local Government Association (LGA)². The NYA believes that there is a real need for a paper of this kind to not only illustrate the scale of the challenges that local authority services for young people continue to face,

but also to highlight the ways in which the sector is working innovatively in delivery of youth services.

This report sets out:

- The policy context within which NYA works
- The current financial environment facing the youth sector
- Key trends and learning from the NYA's work with local authorities through the

- **Routes to Success** programme delivered on behalf of the LGA
- Short local authority case studies

Policy context

Positive for Youth, a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19,³ published in 2011, is the Government's policy for young people and youth services. Within it the Government confirmed that the statutory duty on local authorities to secure access to a local offer is to remain. The duty, contained in Section 507B (inserted into the Education Act 1996 by section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and brought in by the Labour Government) required "Every local authority in England must, 'so far as reasonably practicable', secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to sufficient educational and leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being.'

In March 2012 the Coalition Government confirmed that it would retain the duty on local authorities and published a streamlined version of guidance to accompany this. However, this new guidance does not make clear the Government's expectations for what a good or sufficient offer should look like. The document simply states:

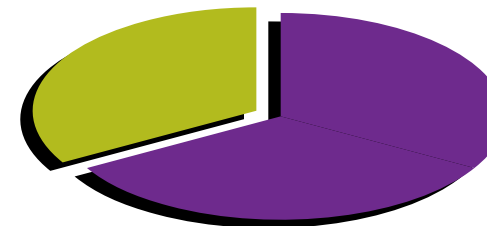
"Local authorities are responsible for securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, a local offer that is sufficient to improve young people's well-being and personal and social development. A sufficient local offer will result in positive feedback from young people on the adequacy and quality of local provision, and positive trends in data that are indicative of local young people's well-being and personal and social development."⁴

Positive for Youth arrives at a time of severe difficulties for the youth sector. The large reduction in overall grant from central government to local authorities and the cuts to the Early Intervention Grants mean that the sector is facing a number of challenges as the diagrams below and overpage demonstrate.⁵

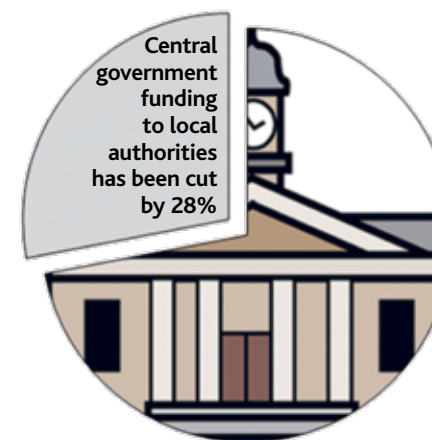
At least eight out of ten heads of Young People's Services say they are facing budget cuts



Two-thirds of voluntary and community organisations who provide youth services have seen their income reduced in the last 12 months



... Amidst this background there are still over 70,000 professionals engaged in supporting young people in informal education settings, with an additional 500,000 engaged in some form of voluntary work ...



From the NYA's work with local authorities it is clear that major revisions are underway in the way councils and their partners deliver the vital youth services that support young people's well-being. In a number of areas, there is a particular focus on early intervention with vulnerable young people or on targeting limited resources to support the most vulnerable. It is clear that, whilst in a few places youth service budgets were simply being reduced, in many more there was a strong ambition to find new ways of delivery that go some way to meeting young people's needs.

The financial environment

Currently, all local authorities are required to report annually to the DfE on expenditure

on children's services. This annual return, known as 'Section 251' return includes planned expenditure on both universal and targeted services for young people and other associated area including substance misuse and teenage pregnancy services. The information presented below is the most up-to-date information that is available and illustrates the most accurate national picture of expenditure on youth services available.

Overall expenditure on Services for Young People⁶

The following areas fall under expenditure for 'Services for Young People':

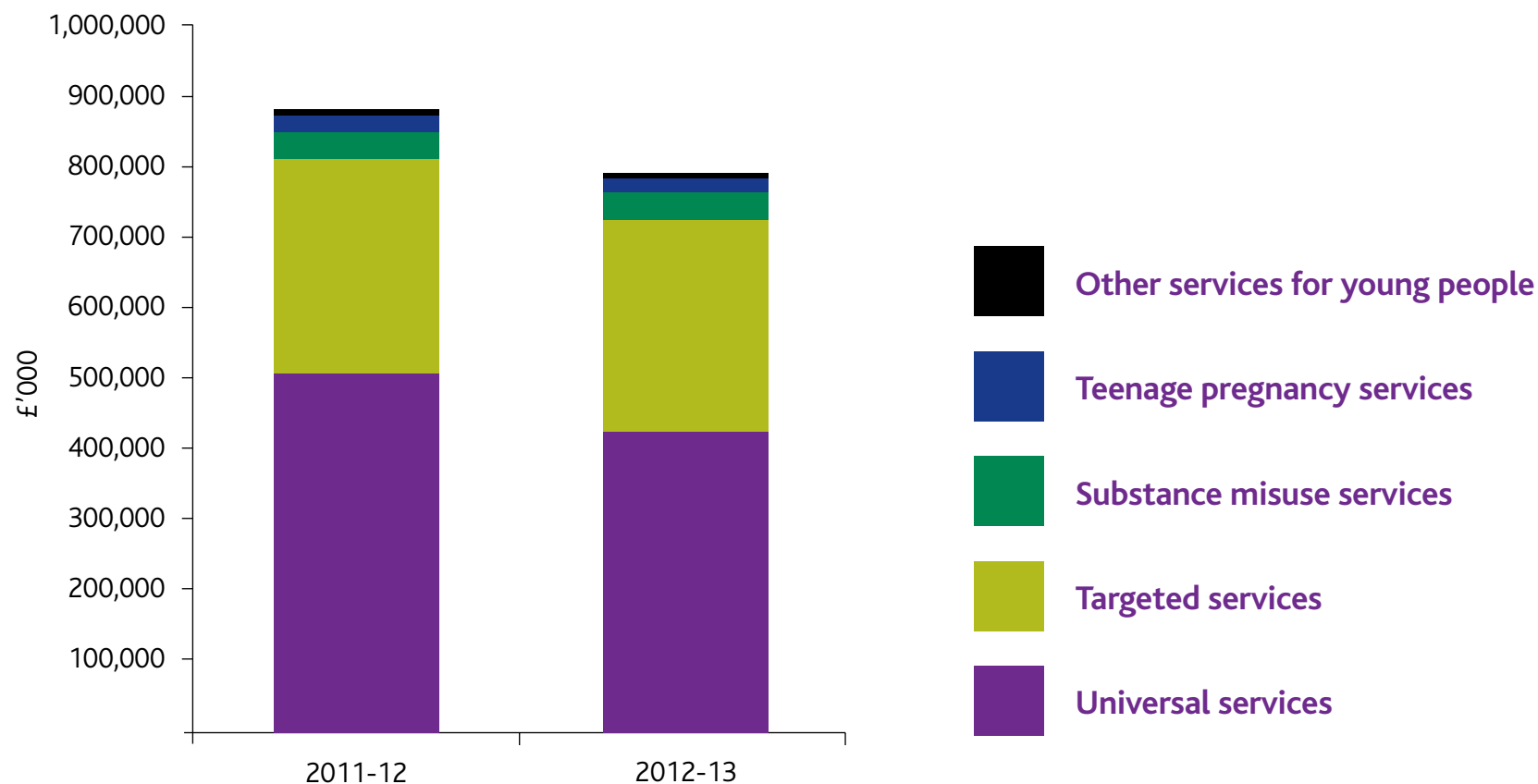
Fig. 1 Planned Expenditure (Gross, £'000)

	2011-12	2012-13	% change
Universal services for young people (including youth work, positive activities and IAG)	508,653	419,002	-17.6%
Targeted services for young people (including youth work, positive activities and IAG)	298,646	308,288	3.2%
Substance misuse services (Drugs, Alcohol and Volatile substances)	44,109	36,793	-16.6%
Teenage pregnancy services	22,654	17,711	-21.8%
Other services for young people (includes discretionary awards and student support)	9,310	9,520	2.3%
Total Services for Young People	883,372	791,314	-10.4%

Planned expenditure (gross) on total Services for Young People is 10.4% lower in 2012/13 from 2011/12.

Areas that have seen the biggest decrease include teenage pregnancy services, universal services for young people and substance misuse services.

Fig. 2 Planned Expenditure on Services for Young People



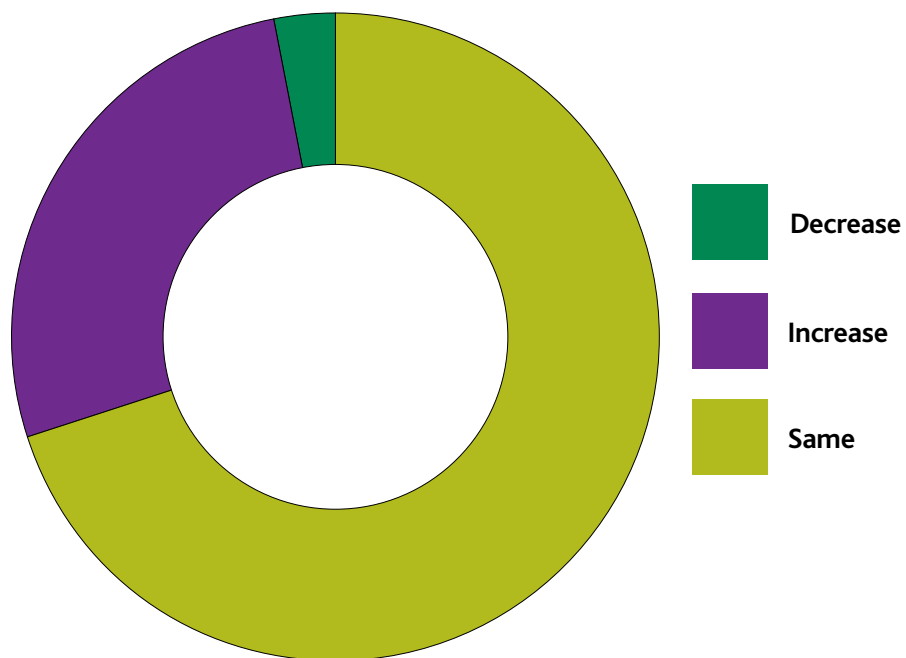
At a local level, 77% (117 out of 152) of all single and upper tier local authorities reported a planned decrease in planned expenditure on Services for Young People.

Planned expenditure on universal services in England fell by 17.6% between 2011/12 and 2012/13, with the majority of local authorities reporting a decrease in planned expenditure.

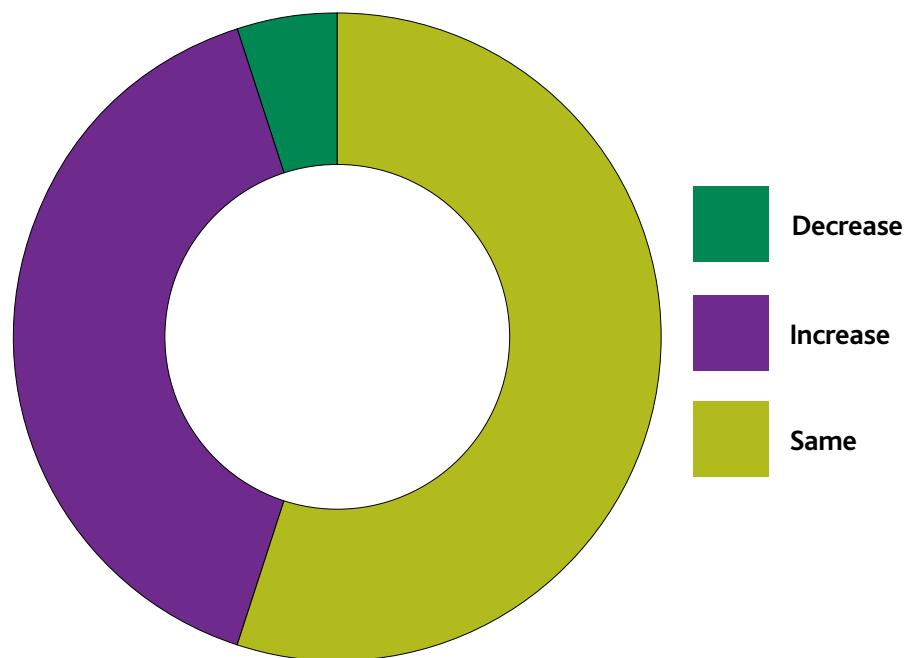
In contrast to universal services expenditure, planned expenditure on targeted services increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13 by 3.2%. This increase was particularly noticeable in local authorities based in the North East region.

Fig. 3 Proportion of local authorities reporting a planned increase/decrease in expenditure on universal/targeted services between 2011-12 and 2012-13

Targeted



Universal



Youth Services in 2012-13: initial findings from the NYA's Tailored Support programme

The NYA as part of its on-going work with the LGA, will by the end of 2012-13 have worked with just over a third of local authorities providing free support tailored to their needs to help improve and develop their services for young people. This report is based on information collated from approximately 40 local authorities. While it does not provide comprehensive information on these authorities, it seeks to provide a general overview and highlight key trends.

Funding

- Widespread reductions in funding, but considerable variation in the scale of cuts across the country
- Efficiency savings have been gained through a number of actions, including reductions in management posts and restructuring, for example the creation of multi-agency teams

Almost all the authorities have reported reductions in funding between 2010 and 2014, resulting in loss of staffing, particularly at management level and provision. Many are required to make further cuts in the current and future years.

Cuts in funding vary considerably but overall reductions of around 30 per cent were commonly reported

At one extreme, one authority is losing three-quarters of its funding over two years and another has its annual budget reduced from £3 million to £1 million. At the other end of the scale, one authority had retained resources for youth work during 2010-11 and 2011-12, but is planning budget reductions in 2012-13.

Three authorities reported having made savings through reducing management posts,

but now have reasonably secure funding for the next two years. While reductions were equally spread across all council services in some authorities, in at least two, priority has explicitly been given to meeting statutory responsibilities, with the youth service taking a larger share of reductions. However, one of these authorities has succeeded in gaining large-scale European funding to support international youth work during 2012-15, putting the service in a much stronger position.

One authority reduced its youth activities budget by approximately 35% in 2011-12, with this reduction said to be achieved by efficiency savings with no reduction in youth work sessions. The same authority had also saved £1 million in management costs through creating multi-agency teams delivering targeted youth support in April 2011.

In West Berkshire youth work sits within Children and Young People's Services, where provision is undergoing a significant period of change as it responds to a 25% reduction in budget and work is refocused from essentially a universal service to targeted provision. There has been a large-scale redeployment process and all but three youth work buildings closing. Leadership and management of some locally based universal provision has transferred to the voluntary sector through the Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People. Berkshire Connexions are commissioned to deliver services across the region. There are seven youth work priority areas each led by a full time worker. The teams are developing outcome measures in line with the demand for an increased focus on providing evidence of the impact of youth work.

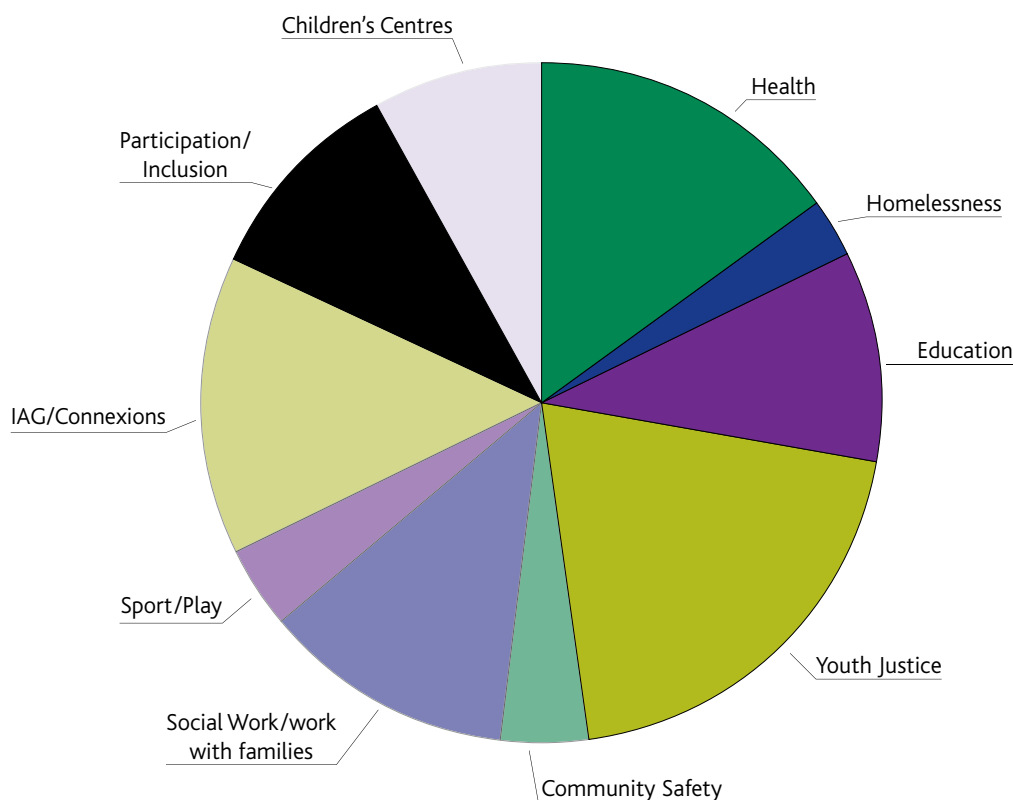
The focus of the **Routes to Success** Programme was to support the changing focus of youth work from a universal to a targeted model of delivery, assist with equipping teams to respond effectively and develop an outcomes focused evaluation framework

Service delivery

- Move towards service integration is reflected in delivery arrangements

- Increased focus of resources on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable young people
- Variation in local approaches to delivering or securing targeted and open access provision
- Neighbourhood management arrangements are being established in some local areas

The move towards service integration is reflected in delivery arrangements, where staff from a wide variety of backgrounds are working together in locality or area-based services, often with a specific focus on prevention and early intervention as the pie chart below illustrates.



In one area for example an authority's Early Intervention Service uses multi-disciplinary teams to deliver hub-based services across seven broad delivery themes: early years and parenting; health and wellbeing; education, employment and training; youth justice and anti-social behaviour; integrated assessment processes; community development; and workforce development. Working to a generic job description with specialisms, hub workers are expected to carry out targeted work with children and young people, work with families and deliver open access sessions. Another authority, also focusing on early intervention and prevention, restructured children's services to establish six multi-disciplinary locality teams. These teams cover 0-19 services and include youth workers alongside children's centre staff and locality social workers.

Liverpool City Council's Youth Service has reduced from a core budget of £7 to £4.1 Million. This has led to re-structures and changes and it was thought timely to re-assess and re-affirm not only the principles and purposes of youth work within Liverpool but also how best to move forward in the current economic, legislative and political climate. There was a need to have an accurate and validated analysis of how the service is performing, particularly with regard to equality and diversity of the opportunities it provides for young people's support and development, as well as the professional development of staff to be able to best provide that support.

Local authorities are increasingly focusing their resources on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable young people. This can be seen in the reported budget increase in planned expenditure of 3 per cent.

One shire authority has agreed proposals to prioritise funding to support the most vulnerable young people in the county, with provision likely to be delivered both by the local authority and third sector partners. Youth workers and Connexions personal advisors will work as part of integrated locality teams, working with vulnerable young people aged five to 19 in a whole family approach. Another authority has refocused its service in order to offer more one-to-one support to vulnerable young people and high-risk families, allocating staff to the family intervention project and family support within

substance abuse services. In one authority, youth work had been commissioned to the local Connexions service in 2007, but both youth work and Connexions were brought back in-house in April 2012. As part of this process, the service has identified the need to focus on meeting the needs of more vulnerable young people and those at risk of poor outcomes.

In Peterborough, tailored support provided by the LGA's **Routes To Success** Programme aimed to help the service develop targeted services. Head of Service Allison Sunley is clear about the benefits of the support: "it has enabled us to raise our game, provided professional developments for and ratcheted up the skills of the management team in the effective monitoring of services and allowed staff to focus through developing a needs analysis, on evidence where services should be concentrated to make the most impact. As a result we are now delivering fantastic youth work."

She identified the key elements of the support: "The ability to have a strong, critical friend was a very positive experience. The skills of the associate were very appropriately matched and they were very clear and very challenging". The programme provided the service with opportunities to be reflective and self-critical and through the robust challenge of the NYA."

Authorities appear to vary in their approaches to delivering or securing targeted and open access provision. At least two authorities currently have a clear split between targeted and open access provision, while a further six local authorities plan to commission all open access provision from the voluntary, community, faith and private sectors. One authority, for instance, has a team of in-house staff from different professional backgrounds undertaking targeted interventions with young people through casework, one to one work and some group work, while all positive activities work is delivered by the voluntary sector. Another plans to divest itself of all open access youth clubs over three years, and has set up a 'divestment fund' to enable communities to take over the running of existing provision or start up new provision. Similarly, one authority has created a £600,000 'Big Society Fund' providing start-up funds to local community

groups to develop provision.

In Spring 2011, Southwark Youth Services was facing a savings target of more than £1.1m, as part of budget reductions across the council. "We knew we were going to have to re-structure the youth service to develop our universal youth offer, at the same time as re-focusing grant provision to the VCS", says Patrick Shelley, Head of Youth Services. "We had undertaken a range of analyses into the needs of young people, views of staff, and views of key partners to inform this but were finding it hard to bring all these together into a coherent narrative". It was at this point that the NYA consultancy support began, which included a needs analysis and a VCS stakeholder workshop. The overall outcome was that Southwark was able to make a selection between the options available and begin the restructure.

In contrast, one local authority intends to continue to provide open access work – which councillors consider critical for effective early prevention – in-house, and is continuing to invest in new youth centres. This authority tested VCS and private providers' interest in offering open access provision, but found little interest among these groups in offering mainstream provision.

While young people's services in Nottinghamshire have consistently performed well, the authority sought the NYA's support to further improve its quality and cost effectiveness, through exploring alternative methods of delivery and market testing. Three events were held over the six months: an event for key stakeholders from the VCS and private sector to test their potential role as providers of open access services; an event for young people involved in the county's participation structures to gain their views on services; and an options appraisal workshop. The stakeholder event found that, contrary to expectations, the VCS and private organisations were not interested in offering mainstream provision, although they were keen to provide targeted services. The young people consulted were generally positive about the service, highlighting the value of relationships with youth workers, but identified the need to improve the website and publicise the youth offer more effectively, particularly provision for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young

people. The service is now taking this forward with young people. The options appraisal workshop involved a small number of participants including the lead elected member, VCS representative, and service managers. After looking at current provision and delivery options, they decided that the current model, through which open access services are delivered in-house, continues to be appropriate unless circumstances change.

In other authorities, locality teams or youth centres are responsible for offering a mix of provision including open access and targeted services. One authority, for instance, has set up five locality teams which are expected to provide positive activities, targeted youth support, IAG, volunteering and active involvement opportunities plus meeting locally determined priorities. In another authority, delivery has been split, with targeted youth support retained in-house and centre-based work commissioned out. However, all youth centres are expected to work with vulnerable young people, for instance through contacting and supporting NEET young people in their area. Other authorities are still considering the balance between open access and targeted work, and the extent to which the former could be commissioned externally.

In three authorities youth workers form part of early intervention and prevention services. In one of these, the integrated youth support service became part of a new Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Service in April 2012, with youth work and Connexions staff working with education welfare officers, social workers and family support workers. The PEI service works alongside a Specialist Family Support Service working at higher levels of need to ensure that early intervention prevents escalation to the Specialist Family Support Services. Another authority includes two early prevention teams within its youth service provision.

Some authorities are delivering early intervention and targeted youth support through multi-agency teams including youth workers. One authority has 40 full time equivalent youth workers based in multi-agency teams, while another has created eight multi-agency support teams, based on the coordination of a range of services including the youth service, rather than a co-located or unified model.

Some authorities have set up – or are in the process of setting up – neighbourhood management arrangements involving a range of statutory, voluntary and community partnerships to coordinate and in some cases commission youth provision. Two authorities are supporting neighbourhood forums. In one, five neighbourhood panels are planned, chaired by neighbourhood managers (managed through Neighbourhood Services rather than Children's Services) which are intended to build community engagement and take on responsibility for commissioning and monitoring services. In the second, youth advisory boards responsible for securing provision are being set up in seven districts.

One authority, which plans to end all direct delivery of open access work is seeking to support the development of youth partnerships in each of six districts to coordinate local provision. Another authority, which has retained direct delivery of both positive activities and targeted support, introduced six local area partnership (LAPs) during 2011-12, bringing together statutory, voluntary and community partners to coordinate planning and delivery of services. The integrated youth support service – particularly through its detached youth workers – plays a key role in the LAP forums both at strategic and delivery levels.

These neighbourhood arrangements also reflect an increased focus on work with young people as part of their communities, and in some cases a return to the language of 'youth and community work'.

Bournemouth has an integrated service delivered through five zone areas, with the intention to become autonomous using devolved budgets to secure services which are more responsive to local need and more accountable to the local area. The NYA provided support in developing governance arrangements, particularly effective engagement of the local community as part of the big society and the localism agenda. This included facilitating a stakeholder event.

Some authorities also highlight the importance of community cohesion and intergenerational work within their work. One authority supports a range of activities

to encourage engagement with the wider community and improve community perceptions of young people. In one authority, proposals for change include the development of community hubs bringing together youth provision with other services.

Partnership and commissioning

- Many authorities seeking greater engagement of external providers, particularly the VCS
- At least 20 per cent of authorities either currently commission out open access provision or intend to do so
- Some authorities have set up new funds to which potential external providers can bid
- A number of authorities are seeking to encourage the development of consortia among the local VCS

Many authorities are seeking greater engagement of external providers, particularly through the voluntary, community and faith sectors, in delivering positive activities and targeted support.

There is a high level of political support for the youth service in Merton but there is also a need to reduce the costs of the service over a three year period. As a result the youth service undertook with support from the LGA **Routes to Success** Programme, a 'transformation' of the service to minimise the loss of services by exploring and developing partnership arrangements with the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

In many cases councils are increasingly looking to more robust partnership or commissioning arrangements with the VCS. In one authority, for instance, the integrated support service has reallocated resources to ensure that there is a detached youth work team and centre-based youth work provision in each locality to ensure a 'core offer'. This is delivered through a mixed economy of providers, including community

associations and with consortia of third sector partners. These provide some of the positive activities core offer and can be commissioned to provide additional support where there is an identified need for greater resource or specialist provision.

In Cumbria, the original impetus for participation in the programme was a number of changes which had taken place locally in terms of streamlined Children's Trust governance arrangements and significant new structures within the Council itself. There is now a greater focus on district delivery and an improved joined up approach to services which span the 0-19 age group. Cumbria was already operating a commissioned service but in the light of those changes and the forthcoming re-tendering process for contracts from April 2012-2014, the Local Authority wished to reflect on whether current processes and standards were still fit for purpose. To that end they focused on three key aspects initially – Quality, Value for Money and the Voice of Young People – in particular those who are vulnerable.

At least two of the authorities involved have an explicit aim to secure rather than provide services. One authority has had a fully commissioned youth service for the past three years, and has recently issued two-year contracts to a consortia of five organisations led by the former Connexions service. Another authority has recently decided to commission out all provision based on the four key strands of open access, targeted youth support, voice and influence, and anti-social behaviour.

At least 20 per cent of authorities either currently commission out open access provision or intend to do so in the future.

Medway Youth service is part of the authority's Integrated Youth Support service together with Youth Offending Service, Medway Trust/Connexions and Extended Services. The IYSS faces 30% reductions over the financial years 2011-13. Other changes are taking place such as the contribution of three posts to a new intervention/prevention team and the outsourcing of the Watersports Centre. These challenges have led to a refocusing of provision and in addition to consideration

of commissioning and outsourcing of services. The **Routes to Success** programme therefore offered an excellent opportunity to undertake a thorough options appraisal and clarify the 'commissioning readiness' of the service.

Other authorities have identified the need to develop a local market and increase the capacity of VCS potential providers. One authority currently commissions out Connexions and some aspects of Youth Offending Services, and is now seeking to develop a local market and commission a wider range of services in future. In one authority, there is an expectation that locality areas will become increasingly autonomous and will use devolved budgets to purchase services from the local authority or elsewhere. The model for commissioning youth centres in another authority includes an allocation of full-time and part-time staff employed by the service combined with a requirement that the centre will match the part-time hours.

A number of authorities have set up new funds to which potential external providers can bid, with amounts ranging from £1.2 million in a large metropolitan authority, £200,000 in a small shire authority and £138,000 in a unitary authority. They have developed various mechanisms for allocating funding, including dividing money equally between district forums, developing resource allocation models based on youth population and levels of need or deprivation, and open bidding to an authority-wide fund.

While the funds in two of these authorities are intended to support all open access provision, the third authority aims to build the capacity of the VCS to deliver one-third of evening provision by the end of 2013-14. This authority has also invested in two new posts, one focusing on capacity building for the VCS, and a second focusing on the recruitment and support of youth work volunteers. Other authorities provide financial support to voluntary youth sector umbrella bodies; for instance through a £40,000 contract for 2012-13 for training and mobile outreach to build local groups' capacity to develop projects, and £110,000 transitional funding to enable an umbrella body to support VCS youth groups to continue to make provision while new arrangements are introduced.

A number of authorities are seeking to encourage the development of consortia among the local VCS. This is seen to have various benefits, including reducing the practical demands of managing multiple contracts; engaging the VCS in determining local priorities, and encouraging them to identify potential areas for collaboration based on their capacity and strengths.

One authority's commissioning process is intended to result in five-year agreements with nine consortia. Seven area-based contracts will each cover structured positive activities, IAG, targeted support, opportunities for decision-making and links to other services. There will also be two city-wide contracts, one for a virtual IAG service and one for specialist provision for young people facing specific challenges. This arrangement is intended to replace the current 65 contracts and commissions with a more integrated service offering clear pathways for young people. The commitment to five-year funding (three years with a possible two-year extension) offering a total of over £20 million also seeks to provide security and a basis for longer term planning.

In another example one council has set up 10 local area management committees, with membership from key stakeholders including councillors, partners and the VCS which are responsible for commissioning open access youth provision. These arrangements, reflecting the localism agenda, have revealed potentially different expectations among elected members and local authority officers about what kind of youth provision should be offered. Another authority has re-established a cross-party youth service advisory group to oversee a service review and long-term developments.

Partnership working

- The value of partnership working to local authority youth services is clearly evident from the NYA's engagement in recent months
- Several authorities are focusing on improving partnership arrangements, including the authority/VCS relationship

Councils stress the importance of partnership working. One authority currently commissions voluntary, community and faith organisations to provide youth services on a one or three-year basis, and is seeking to expand its partnership arrangements to minimise the impact of budget reductions. Another is developing a more enabling and facilitative approach to commissioning, through which it will work with providers to confirm agreed priorities, and ensure that young people are involved in the process.

The NYA worked with Sefton to help them make the move to commissioned services. Jacqueline Kerr, Service Manager, Early Intervention and Prevention (11+), is clear that the **Routes to Success** team's involvement led to strategic benefits for the Service. "We have ended up with a balanced commissioning strategy which incorporates both the requirements of good commissioning, with a realistic appraisal of the capacity and strengths of the local market. As a result we have enhanced credibility for the commissioning process".

"Throughout the redesign of our Youth Service, we have sought to learn and build on what works. Young people have been very clear what they expect and wish to prioritise. The NYA has helped us to compare and contrast this with approaches nationally, and worked with us to develop an intelligent and productive process, which has enabled a broad group of youth providers to inform and develop our commissioning model".

Several authorities are focusing on developing local markets and improving partnership arrangements, rather than developing full commissioning models. This has included developing the authority/VCS relationship as well as improving communication and coordination among VCS organisations in the local area. In one authority, consultation events were held in six market towns during July 2012, bringing together a range of participants including police, youth service, other council departments, the VCS, town/parish councils and schools. In another the VCS is strongly represented on its youth service review working group, comprising the relevant assistant director, head of service and three voluntary sector representatives, which is seeking to secure improved coordination among local VCS organisations. In the same authority, consultation with

stakeholders has identified partnership between business, further education and the VCS as a potential area for development, particularly in helping young people gain experience of the world of work.

Monitoring and quality assurance

- Services acknowledge the need to provide more or better evidence of how they are contributing to their authority's broader priorities
- Over half of services have recognised the need for developing an outcomes framework
- Some authorities are looking specifically at data collection and recording, whilst others are seeking to improve senior officers and elected members' understanding of youth work and its strengths

Over half of services have recognised the need for developing an outcomes framework.

North East Lincolnshire Young People's Support Service like many authorities has faced financial cuts and currently offers a mixed model approach to service delivery. The authority was keen to engage with the **Routes to Success** programme to continue to drive up performance and improve outcomes for young people. With peer support from Liverpool Youth Service acting as a 'critical friend,' the programme examined the coherence and impact of integrated provision on the lives of young people in the area. This included monitoring the traffic of young people between different types of provision; and the quality of co-ordination and collaboration between different service providers. At the end of the process a report outlining strengths and possible areas of development was produced.

The authority is clear about the benefits of being involved: "We felt being involved in the peer review was a really important process. The report was detailed and gave

us specific areas to develop – that is important as we wouldn't have ownership if we were given a detailed action plan. The service has shared the report with management and practitioners and is now taking forward the findings”.

Services acknowledge the need to provide more or better evidence of how they are contributing to their authority's broader priorities, such as community safety and educational attainment. Several authorities are seeking to improve senior officers and elected members' understanding of youth work and its strengths, in some cases in the context of the new 'Right to Challenge' provisions of the Localism Act 2011. Other areas of work identified included developing more consistent approaches to recording impact and 'telling the stories' about the effectiveness of youth work in their area.

Some authorities are undertaking work to ensure that they collect and record appropriate data, both on communities and on young people to help plan and assess provision. In one authority, which has a post responsible for collecting youth service and Connexions data, work is underway to bring together output and outcome data, particularly seeking to identify the flow between targeted and universal work. The hope is that this approach will help make a business case that open access work is needed to support targeted and specialist provision, based on evidence rather than assertions.

Young people are a priority for Wolverhampton City Council and whilst the youth service is relatively well funded, the service has not been immune to budget cuts. It has had to start thinking about how the service might look in the future, considering savings and new ways of working, including the role of the local VCS. Against this background, a member led scrutiny panel review of the youth service is currently underway, looking at value for money, income, the re-provision of open access from the council to the VCS, and the impact of a proposed city centre Youth Zone development. In light of this, the council requested tailored support to assist in assessing the service's strengths, areas for development and value for money. With the help of the NYA's tailored support, feeding into the scrutiny review, the authority wants to ensure that the service is fit for the future.

For many authorities, demonstrating impact is in the context of commissioning arrangements or ensuring consistency across integrated services.

In Oxfordshire it was agreed that NYA support should focus on developing a robust outcomes framework which would be used consistently across the EIS, drawing on the Young Foundation's work and the notion of 'distance travelled' as a result of children and young people's involvement with the service. The NYA facilitated two service-wide workshops involving over 60 staff. The workshops were followed by further discussion looking at how approaches being developed nationally, such as the NPC Well-Being measure and Triangle Outcome star might be used in Oxfordshire. The NYA support has produced three main strands of on-going development: a working model to demonstrate the impact of the EIS over time; a process for use in one-to-one, group and open access work; and a revised performance management framework including impact measurements.

Solihull requested support from the NYA to help managers review current outcomes and develop performance criteria which will support stronger reporting to demonstrate the value and impact of youth work, in addition to support for the management of change, and transition into new ways of working. The NYA facilitated sessions for the SMT focusing on performance criteria and developing an outcomes framework, and two development days for centre managers looking at the vision for the service and how to take this forward.

One integrated service, for instance, has agreed an outcomes framework based on a capability cluster model and identified three preferred methods for recording outcomes across all settings, agreed by both staff and young people.

Dorset asked the NYA for support related to measuring outcomes for youth work provision and assessing value for money. The stakeholder events successfully brought together service managers, commissioners, and VCS organisations (with which the authority has well established support and communication mechanisms). A draft outcomes framework has been produced, which draws on

national drivers including Positive for Youth and the Young Foundation's work as well as locally determined priorities, and this is being tested out with young people to see what outcomes make sense to them.

While some support has focused specifically on developing quality assessment or the outcomes framework in order to improve practice and delivery, this was often underpinned by an acknowledgement that services needed to work harder to secure better understanding of youth work and its potential contribution to local authority priorities.

Leicester is one of few areas in the country to have had an Elected City Mayor since May 2011. The Mayor published a 100 Day programme that included a Pledge to improve Leicester's Youth Service into a Gold Standard provision, responding to the needs of their communities. It was proposed to establish a 'Gold Standard Task Group' to support the production of achieving a Gold Standard Youth Offer. The NYA agreed to produce the draft terms of reference for the group; develop and present a model which locates youth work within the context of the youth offer.

In a number of authorities, elected members were described as being supportive of youth work, but needing greater understanding of the national policy context and what their service was seeking to achieve.

In other instances, youth work was seen to have strong political and popular support – due to youth workers' high profiles in local communities – but other professionals' understanding and recognition was more limited. Strong quality assurance processes were seen as particularly important when commissioning or management of in-house services is undertaken by local authority teams with limited experience or understanding of youth work.

A significant restructure has been taking place at Reading Borough Council, with the merger of previously separate directorates into one directorate. In summer 2012, Cabinet agreed proposals for the 'Transformation of Youth Services', to

be phased in over the next two years, in order to focus on supporting the most vulnerable young people. This will mean a greater focus on work with vulnerable young people through street, project and one-to-one work, and support for building the capacity of the VCS to deliver more open access provision. Intensive personal advisers and youth workers have been merged and are based in Children's Action Teams, multi-disciplinary early intervention teams working across the 0-19 age range. The service sought NYA support for developing a framework for demonstrating outcomes for young people consistently across the broad range of youth work activities and methodologies.

One service has spent considerable time 'refreshing' the curriculum, underpinned by quality assurance, outcomes and the voice of young people, in order to secure commissioners' and providers' clarity about what should be provided for both open access and targeted work. The authority, which commissions out centre-based provision, has established a quality assurance team, and providers will be expected to achieve a local quality mark within the first year of contracts. An authority which decided to continue to deliver open access provision in-house has a set of detailed delivery standards which could form the basis for any future commissioning arrangements.

Surrey County Council is currently re-organising the delivery of its services for young people, to focus on the one in ten who require additional support to make a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Ambitious targets have been set and a wide range of services are being commissioned to deliver interventions enabling 16 to 19s to participate in education, employment and training and to reduce those entering the juvenile justice system. Surrey County Council is keen to ensure there are robust processes in place within the commissioning procedures to set and maintain high standards of provision for young people and youth work. The **Routes to Success** Programme assisted the council to develop a local quality mark, through an extensive consultation programme.

Workforce

- An increased focus on targeted service delivery is leading to a change in the balance of the workforce in some areas
- Greater integration in other areas means a move towards generic posts, although there is evidence that specialist posts are being retained
- Less opportunities for youth workers

Some services undergoing major change have attached high priority to preparing and supporting their workforce; for instance through developing a common induction process, carrying out a skills audit across the workforce and offering training on specific areas such as parenting support.

The greater focus on working with more vulnerable young people is in some authorities leading to a change in the balance of the workforce. Some are moving towards generic posts as part of their greater integration of services. In one recently integrated service, for example, while some specialist posts will be retained – mostly relating to statutory responsibilities – most staff will work across the range of disciplines. In another service, a generic professional youth support role is planned, combining the functions of youth workers, Connexions personal advisors and some specialist posts. Another authority is creating 20 integrated support workers (level 4 qualified) and two senior integrated support workers (level 5 qualified) working in locality teams, and will no longer employ part-time youth workers. Another service is also refocusing its staffing resources, replacing 2.5 FTE assistant youth support worker posts with an additional 1.5 qualified youth workers. In other authorities part-time staff remain key to local delivery; for instance in one service where full-time staff are required to work a minimum number of evening and weekend sessions each week as part of a 'core offer', part-time staffing is being restructured to support this offer.

Our work with councils and higher education institutions help us draw a picture of the impact of changes on the workforce. There is anecdotal evidence that some service providers, in the light of reductions in funding, are moving away from JNC

(Joint Negotiating Committee) terms and conditions which is creating a degree of confusion and tension around professional training routes and requirements. We also see a reduction in youth services that are supporting trainee youth workers through professional qualification which is having an impact on student placements within traditional youth work environments. This is also reflected in the declining number of opportunities for continuing professional development for youth work staff both in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Young people's voice and influence

- Making sure the voice of young people is heard in local decision-making is a priority for many authorities
- There are some doubts about the extent to which formal structures were representative of the full range of young people
- NYA's work has highlighted a range of approaches to involving young people, including commissioning and co-production, youth councils and participation structures

Positive for Youth stresses the government's expectations that the voice of young people is heard in local decision-making, including assessing the quality of services. It is clear that many authorities also see this as a priority.

The range of approaches used to involve and consult with young people are numerous and include formal mechanisms such as youth councils or shadow boards linked into council structures and scrutiny processes, a youth mayor role with a high profile across the borough and young inspectors.

In some cases however, doubts were expressed about the extent to which formal structures were representative of the full range of young people and some authorities are seeking to develop local arrangements which can link into more formal structures.

The NYA's work with local authorities has highlighted a range of approaches to involving young people in decision-making. They include:

Participation structures: In one authority a range of mechanisms are in place, including advisory groups in seven districts chaired by a member or deputy member of UK Youth Parliament; an authority-wide young people's board working with the Cabinet member responsible for youth services, used to check the council's policies and gain young people's views; specialist fora for disabled young people and those in care; and training 30 young people to act as mystery shoppers.

Well-supported and influential youth councils: In one city, youth council members have dedicated staff support, and youth cabinet members are mentored by children's trust members. There is also a young advisors team (part of the national initiative) which has worked on a range of issues including revising the children and young people's plan, and peer mentoring for young people involved in National Citizen Service.

Staff support: a dedicated 'voice and influence' team working across the integrated youth support service supporting a range of local democratic initiatives, including young people's involvement in Youth Area Action groups. In one authority involved in the programme, a participation coordinator working across the children's trust supports a range of youth engagement processes, including VIP (voice, influence and participation), a youth cabinet, young commissioners and young inspectors. Young people are involved in annual assessment of individual services, through scrutiny of their self-assessment reports and a meeting between individual service managers and a young people's panel, after which the panels gives RAG ratings on different services' success in implementing VIP and recommendations for further development.

Commissioning and co-production: In one authority a young commissioners group is involved in a range of activities including consulting young people, developing plans and strategies and assessing service bids. One local authority is training young people as commissioners and providing them with funds to distribute. Some authorities have also continued to involve young people in allocating funds, through

maintaining arrangements developed for distributing Youth Opportunity Fund monies. Two authorities which are developing neighbourhood partnership arrangements are seeking to embed young people's involvement in decision-making in these new forums, including commissioning and monitoring provision. In one case the authority is seeking to build on the Youth Opportunity Fund model introduced by the previous government, which it hopes will also help the neighbourhood partnerships lever in new funding. In another, the new youth offer includes a commitment to involving young people as co-producers, working with the youth council to ensure that young people are involved in designing the services they want.

In some areas, however, young people's participation is under-developed or had lost momentum while authorities focused on internal changes, and arrangements therefore needed to be improved or re-prioritised.

Concern was expressed that in some authorities participation mechanisms are managed corporately and fail to draw on youth service practice and expertise. In another 'involving young people' work had been contracted out with reduced funding, resulting in the ending of some activity including young inspectors.

Conclusions

It is possible to identify some overall trends, although there are exceptions among individual authorities. It is likely that these trends will continue as we move into the next spending review, due by summer 2013. These trends include:

- Reconfiguration of services in the context of reduced budgets and the need to achieve greater efficiencies
- A move towards integrating services and adopting locality-based delivery;
- A greater focus on targeted work and, in some cases, moving delivery of all open access work outside the local authority
- Open access provision increasingly delivered by external providers, including voluntary, community, faith and private sectors, and other council departments

- The development of commissioning processes aligned with quality assurance arrangements and creation of new commissioning budgets accompanied, in some instances, by support for VCS capacity-building
- Recognition of the need to make more effective use of data collection and recording to plan services and demonstrate achievements
- Some strong commitment and effective approaches to supporting young people's voice and influence, but indications that this focus has been lost in some authorities
- The establishment of neighbourhood or district arrangements bringing together a range of partners to assess needs and coordinate provision
- Some moves towards generic staff roles across services for young people

Find out more

For more information on our **Routes to Success** programme and to access all local authority case studies join the Supporting Services for Young People knowledge Hub at: <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/web/supportingservicesforyoungpeople>

Appendix A: Notes from Section 251 Data

Universal / Targeted services

Expenditure reported under universal/targeted service covers three main types of activity: youth work, positive activities for young people and information, advice and guidance services. It includes expenditure on the following:

- Employees
- Staff Training
- Premises-related expenditure
- Transport related expenditure
- Supplies and services
- Third-party payments
- Support services
- Costs at residential and non-residential youth centres
- Costs at activity at outdoor and urban studies centres
- Grant funding to the voluntary sector for youth work, positive activities and information, advice and guidance

Targeted services are those focussed on supporting early intervention for vulnerable young people including, but not limited to, those at risk of teenage pregnancy,

substance misuse, youth crime and not being in education, employment or training. This should not include expenditure that is clearly attributed to a specific area of activity (such as the youth offending team or specific programmes for substance misuse or teenage pregnancy). However, targeted support arrangements that address multiple needs or risk factors and provide general support to young people should be included here.

Substance misuse services (Drugs, Alcohol and Volatile substances)

This includes all expenditure on implementing local young people's substance misuse strategies, to include the cost of specialist substance misuse treatment services and placements for under 18s, and targeted prevention and early intervention initiatives that are specifically focused on substance misuse.

Teenage pregnancy services

This area of expenditure includes the cost of implementing and coordinating local teenage pregnancy strategies to reduce under 18 conceptions and to improve outcomes for teenage parents and their children.

Notes

- 1 The **Routes to Success** programme is a sector-led approach to supporting improvement in local authority youth services, drawing together a range of products and services from the National Youth Agency, developed through and informed by their leading role in the sector, to build a more responsive offer to councils. Further information on the programme is available at <http://www.nya.org.uk/routes-to-success>
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- 3 www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth
- 4 Draft Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Wellbeing, Department For Education, March 2012
- 5 National Youth Agency, Financial Implications for Local Authority Youth Services
- 6 For definitions of 'universal,' 'targeted' et al. please see Appendix A



About the National Youth Agency

The National Youth Agency works in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support and improve services for young people. Our particular focus is on youth work and we believe strongly that by investing in young people's personal and social development, young people are better able to live more active and fulfilling lives.

Working with young people, we advocate for more youth-friendly services and policies. We have four themes:

- Developing quality standards in work with young people
- Supporting services for young people
- Developing the youth workforce
- Promoting positive public perceptions of young people.

We deliver our work through training and consultancy, campaigning, publishing and online communications. Through our activities we want to ensure that young people have a strong voice and positive influence in our society.

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