

Mapping the involvement of businesses in supporting services for young people in out of school settings





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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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Notes:

- A box summarising key findings is included at the start of each section.

- Case studies described in boxes are shaded according to source:

Business sector

Local authority

two-fifths

of local authorities: businesses have **always been involved** in services for young people

95%

of local authorities say businesses have **an important part to play** in services for young people

two-thirds

of local authorities say businesses **are supporting** young people in non-formal out of school settings

Summary of key findings

Business sector support for services for young people is already common practice in many areas and, where it exists, it has often been in place for many years. Where businesses are engaged with local authorities this is often initiated by the council contacting the business and elected members play an important role in this. Preparing young people for the workplace through work experience, apprenticeships and mentoring are the main ways in which businesses support young people.

Business sector involvement is already happening in around two-thirds of councils. In many areas – around two-fifths – business sector involvement has happened for many years; it is not a new idea. However, in many cases business sector involvement in young people's services happens in an ad-hoc way and fewer than one in ten councils would say that they had a clear strategy in place to take it forward and develop it.

There is strong support amongst local authorities for engaging with businesses to supporting services for young people. Larger businesses often get involved with third sector organisations in the locality where their head office or main centre of employment is based.

With effective business engagement and support for young people's services, young people can develop skills for employment, relationships can be built between potential employers and employees, bringing money into public and third sector service delivery and developing a bigger, better pool of potential workforce for businesses.

The main benefits for young people in businesses supporting services is the development of skills for employment – such as team working and problem solving. Councils do not see an important role for businesses in just providing young people with 'things to do' in a more general sense. Improving aspirations of young people is another important benefit and also links to encouraging the most talented young people to stay in the local area. There is therefore significant scope for further developing other aspects of business engagement for the benefit of young people, councils and voluntary and community groups.

A very positive picture emerges with many examples of good practice across the country. If those examples of good practice can be highlighted and disseminated, along with the key things which made them happen, then some of that good practice and the benefits which it can bring can be realised in other areas where, for a variety of reasons, that has not yet been experienced. Providing opportunities for discussing examples of practice at forums and other events was suggested by several respondents to the survey, along with promoting the benefits to businesses too. Many respondents also emphasised the potential benefits of having a specific role focusing on brokering and developing the relationship between councils, third sector providers and local businesses.

Building relationships between employers and potential employees is seen by councils as the most important way in which businesses can support local services for young people.

Local authorities stressed the potential benefit to businesses of developing a bigger, better workforce pool in their local area, whilst in interviews, businesses highlighted the value of good PR and brand awareness, developing their staff and giving something back to the community.

Despite most local authorities measuring the impact of services for young people, it appears much rarer for councils to measure the impact made by specific projects/ partnerships, including the impact of support from the private sector. Some measurement of impact is undertaken by businesses themselves.

Practical lessons for councils

Four key drivers of business sector engagement emerge from the research which could accelerate and expand partnership working arrangements between the business community, councils and voluntary organisations. These key practical lessons can be summarised as follows:

1. Business sector involvement in supporting services for young people should not be viewed merely as a financial hand-out: most of the achievable benefits are not financial.
2. Understand what a company is all about and proactively approach those which most closely align with your aims and objectives. Key themes for promoting engagement with the business sector in supporting services for young people centre around improving the communication between the sectors – private, local government and voluntary. Key to this is developing a shared understanding of what is happening locally in each sector and of the aims and objectives of those organisations and where common ground can be found for the mutual benefit of all involved.
3. Make personal contact with businesses, including facilitating face-to-face events, and ensure effective communication of working arrangements and future aspirations.
4. Having a specific role for brokering relationships whether based at the local authority or as part of an independent, possibly charitable organisation, the role of brokerage between councils and business is absolutely vital to develop a planned strategy for developing and maintaining business sector support for services for young people. Individual relationships across sectors are important and where these are formalised will help to move business sector support from an ad-hoc basis to a more strategic footing.

Introduction

The National Youth Agency (NYA), as part of its on-going work with the Local Government Association (LGA), has conducted a project to map and promote what the business community is already doing with regards to supporting service delivery for young people in out of school settings.

The project captures the many ways businesses are supporting young people through a survey of Heads of Youth Services (or equivalent) and interviews providing case study examples of practice from councils and from the business community.

The report is structured around feedback elicited through the survey, interspersed with examples of practice/experienced gleaned from interviews with councils, businesses and other associated organisations.

Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, has brought together a business group looking specifically at the role the private sector plays in supporting out of school services for young people. This report will help inform the work of this business group.

Methodology

An online survey was designed following discussions with selected stakeholders and was hosted online using Survey Monkey. An email was circulated to Heads of Youth Service at councils in England (c. 150) using a database of contacts maintained by the NYA. Reminders and other promotional activity were carried out by the NYA to encourage responses to the survey.

There were 92 completed online survey responses recorded between 19th July and 8th August 2011. Of these, 23 responses were duplicates which were removed¹ leaving completed surveys from 69 councils. This represents an excellent response rate for a survey of just under half (46%) on which this analysis is based.

The survey included a question inviting respondents to take further part in the research by participating in an interview to generate examples of local practice. Contacts were also made direct to the NYA following publicity about the research in the publication Children and Young People Now. Additional short case studies and vignettes from the business sector were provided through contacts within the business group set up by Tim Loughton². In total, around twenty semi-structured interviews were carried out with councils, businesses and other associated organisations (see Appendix for further details).

Notes:

1. Duplicates occurred where someone completed the survey twice or where more than one person from a local authority completed the survey. Duplicates were removed based on assessment of (1) amount of survey completed; (2) seniority of person completing the survey; (3) whether they worked in children's services/youth services.
2. These were kindly completed by Louise Morgan of Accenture who provided substantial pro-bono support to this research.

Findings

1. Patterns of business sector involvement

Business sector support for services for young people is already common practice in many areas and, where it exists, it has often been in place for many years. Where businesses are engaged with local authorities this is often initiated by the council contacting the business and elected members play an important role in this, bringing their contacts from previous roles into the mix. Independent brokers also play a significant part in the process.

Preparing young people for the workplace through work experience, apprenticeships and mentoring are the main ways in which businesses support young people.

Businesses are supporting young people in non-formal, out-of-school settings in around two-thirds of Councils (65%).

The most common ways in which businesses were involved in supporting services for young people – for around half of all councils – was through work experience and apprenticeships. Around a third of councils reported that businesses provided mentoring for young people, whilst around a quarter reported businesses providing staff volunteers to support services.

Figure 1: In what ways are businesses involved in supporting young people, or supporting services for young people, in your area?

Type of support	<i>n</i>	%
Work Experience	37	54%
Apprenticeships	34	49%
Mentoring for young people	22	32%
Staff volunteering	18	26%
Sponsoring young people	10	14%
Other	9	13%
Management and leadership	9	13%
Staff mentoring	9	13%
Capital investment	7	10%
Businesses have no role in supporting services for young people	0	0%

Most commonly it was the council that instigated the involvement of businesses in supporting services for young people through making the initial approach (43%). Elected members promoted the involvement of businesses in around a fifth of all councils (19%), whilst in a similar proportion of areas (20%) an independent broker (e.g. Business in the Community, Chamber of Commerce) put the arrangement in place.

Figure 2: How did this arrangement come about?

Activity	<i>n</i>	%
Local authority contacted the business	30	43%
Organisation/project contacted the business	20	29%
Independent broker	14	20%
Elected member/s promoted involvement	13	19%
Business contacted local authority	13	19%
Business contacted local third sector organisation	8	12%

The survey also shows that, where businesses were supporting services, this had been in place for at least two to three years in around eight-out-of-ten (79%). This indicates that where businesses are engaged with the council it tends to become a well-established arrangement.

Where businesses were supporting services for young people, around half of councils indicated that this was on an ad-hoc basis in their local area, whilst around half described it as part of a planned process/systematic.

Overall then, responses to this survey indicated that, for just over a quarter (29%) of councils, business sector involvement in supporting out-of-school services for young people is already part of an established, planned/systematic process. For a similar proportion it was equally well established, but on a fairly ad-hoc basis. Whilst for the remainder of councils (39%) there was currently no support from businesses in the delivering of out-of-school services for young people.

A significant minority (31%) of respondents were not sure whether there was a specific post at their council with a remit for engaging with the business community, however, 57% did have such a role and just 13% did not.

This suggests that:

- A. There is a sizable proportion of councils that have already embedded an effective, supportive relationship with the local business sector, which may provide useful learning and practical examples of how this has been achieved;
- B. There is room for improvement in supporting councils to establish a relationship with the local business community to support service provision and to move that from an ad-hoc basis to a more sustainable, planned process.

2. About business sector involvement

There is strong support amongst local authorities for engaging with businesses to support services for young people. Larger businesses often get involved with third sector organisations in the locality where their head office or main centre of employment is based. This can lead to an uneven coverage – with many HQs located in more affluent areas of the country. However, those businesses that have branches tend to have a national programme, led through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy as well as local, innovative involvement in the sector designed and run at the branch level.

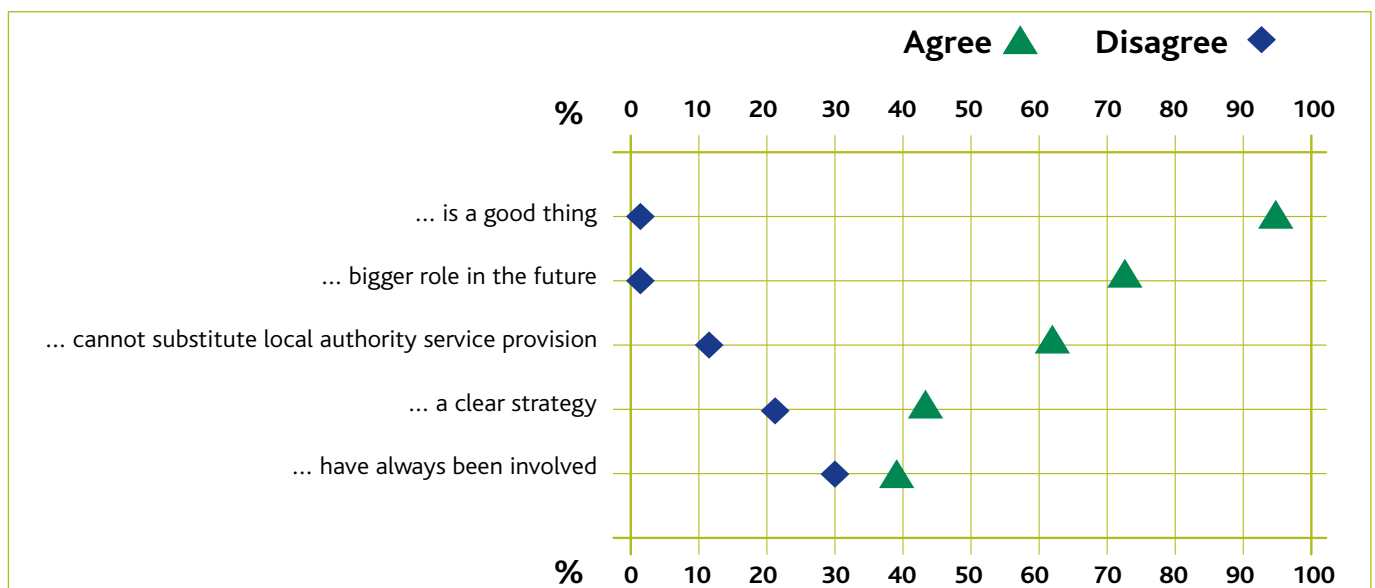
Nearly all respondents (95%) thought that businesses have an important part to play in supporting services for young people in out of school settings, and a similar proportion agreed that it was 'a good thing' (94%). As shown in Figure 3, below, a substantial minority of councils – 39% – reported that businesses had always been involved in the delivery of services for young people in their area; whilst a slightly lower proportion – 30% – reported that this was not the case.

Whilst 62% of respondents agreed that the involvement of businesses could not substitute local authority service provision, almost three-quarters (72%) thought that businesses are likely to play a bigger role in the future in supporting services for young people in out of school settings. Steve Kay (Head of Youth Services at North East Lincolnshire) commented:

Whilst [business sector support for services for young people] may not be the panacea for all ills, you need to develop relationships which are effective and maximise your resources towards an identified need. If it doesn't compromise service needs, etc and young people/communities can benefit from that relationship, then the public sector has a responsibility to explore it.

Less than half (49%) of respondents reported that their council had a clear strategy in place for involving the business sector in service delivery and only 8% of councils 'strongly agreed' that they had a clear strategy in place.

Figure 3: Agree/disagree with statements that... "The involvement of businesses in supporting services for young people in out of school settings..."



Note: Chart shows figures for combined 'agree' and 'strongly agree' (agree) and 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Many examples of private companies supporting services for young people are developed on a locality basis, focused on the areas in which companies are based. For example, the head office of Research in Motion (Blackberry) is in Slough and they work with a local charity called Aik Saath around supporting conflict resolution amongst 12 to 24 year olds.

This locality-based focus is often linked to companies wanting to make a positive impact in the areas in which they were located and could also help develop their future potential workforce. Additionally, the benefits from this local focus of Corporate Social Responsibility are reaped by large sections of the workforce who live in those areas and who, in turn, may be more motivated to volunteer and support those initiatives. A potential negative outcome of this may be that business sector support tends to be biased towards those areas with more and larger businesses – e.g. in the south east – and compound the disadvantage experienced by areas already experiencing higher unemployment – e.g. in the north.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofAML) have a long-term partnership with Tower Hamlets dating back to 1999. This includes one-to-one help for primary schools, a comprehensive three-year inclusive package of activities designed to help prepare 12 to 15 year olds for the world of work. In addition to this they regularly have volunteers going into all 13 Tower Hamlets secondary schools to give mock-interviews, and they encourage staff to sign up to become School Governors either in their home locality, or in Tower Hamlets.

Work has primarily been with **Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership** who have provided a structure and administrative support to ensure a good experience for volunteers.

BofAML has a firm-wide goal of achieving 1.5million volunteer hours and there is a regular push to ask volunteers to log the hours that they give to the community. Key aspects which help make this happen include:

- A structured process for getting employees involved;
- Dedicated person who coordinates internal communications to source volunteers;
- Leadership involvement – president encourages entire senior leadership team to get involved;
- Teamwork – everyone doing what they do best;
- Intermediaries/brokers to enable teachers to focus on the day job;
- Actively measure progress – exam results, attendance, feedback;
- Communication with schools and partners.

There is an interesting move for BofAML to move to work more with Islington schools. This has been built out of the local authority which stemmed from an individual contact at BofAML and an official at Islington Council.

3. Links with brokerage organisations

Whether based at the local authority or as part of an independent – possibly charitable – organisation, the role of brokerage between councils and business is absolutely vital to develop a planned strategy for developing and maintaining business sector support for services for young people. Individual relationships across sectors are important and where these are formalised will help to move business sector support from an ad-hoc basis to a more strategic footing.

Three-quarters of survey respondents stated that they had links with local Education Business Partnerships. Around a third had links with Business in the Community (34%) and Federation of Small Businesses (34%). Only 16% knew of links with their Regional CBI but this may partly reflect a large proportion who did not know (53%).

Manchester City Council works to broker business sector support for apprenticeships and **work-pairing**. A range of examples of private sector involvement were cited including construction companies, housing associations and one school being sponsored by B&Q to run a construction and a horticultural course. A number of academies exist across Manchester and these tend to be sponsored by larger companies. Engagement with businesses is a planned process through which the council matches schools with employers and helps schools to develop that relationship. However, there is a perception that in some cases sponsorship is 'only in name' and that an opportunity exists to develop this into a more meaningful engagement with schools and with young people.

The example below shows how an intermediary/brokerage organisation – in this case York Cares (Business in the Community) – can facilitate and coordinate business support for local charities.

Starting Blocks is an initiative developed in partnership by **Aviva** and **York Cares** to get young people leaving the care system into supported work placements and skills workshops in order to increase their employability. This programme – and others run by York Cares – achieves their goals through employee volunteering: 'matching the skills and expertise of employers and employees to community projects where they can have the most benefit.'

In this example the City Council (York) is one partner of the initiative and clearly shares the goals of supporting young care leavers into employment. Thus, the council benefits, even where it is not the sole or lead agency in service delivery, through a shared objective.

If this collaboration with companies such as Aviva did not exist then clearly the work load for York City Council would increase considerably.

The role of brokerage is a crucial one whether it is situated in independent brokerage organisations or charity – like Connect Reading or York Cares – or if it is situated within the council. Buy-in for partnership working between private and public sector needs to be achieved at an operational as well as strategic level. This is highlighted in the case study below:

The construction company **Carillion** was engaged to deliver a five year programme for Building Schools for the Future in Rochdale. Within that agreement there is a donated hours scheme to work with schools and youth clubs. Experience here highlighted the need to have buy-in and support for working in partnership at all levels of the organisations involved. Although (in this example)

engagement was embedded in contracts it was only once youth workers had been located next to a school, linking the local site manager with local youth workers that real engagement started to develop and the project moved from strategy to practical action.

You need strategic people at the top first but it's only going to work when you get the practical side involved. Plan engagement from the very beginning – talk about roles, commitments, who's going to drive it etc but then get very practical about who's doing what from which team etc. The structure provided by BSF has been very useful. (Dave Baker, Rochdale Borough Council).

It's very much about the brokering. People often talk about the leadership role which can be interpreted in different ways. It's not about us stamping 'County Council' on everything. It's about us being the glue, working alongside others which are then much happier to gel into groups than if there's a more direct approach. Each local situation is different ...but what's important is seeing each partner as equal rather than one particular lead. (Andrew Lightfoot, Devon County Council)

This point was also raised in the interview carried out with Enterprise Foundation (the CSR arm of the parent company Enterprise PLC). The Enterprise Foundation highlighted that:

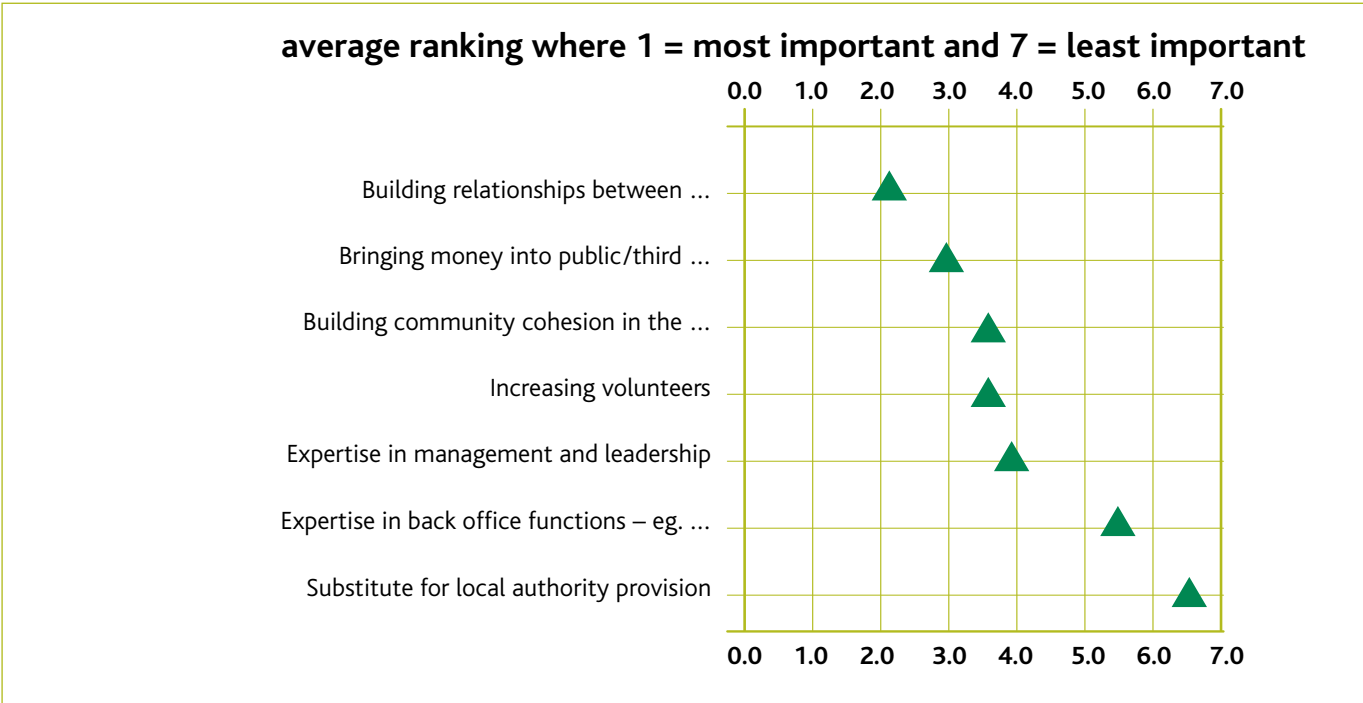
... the real value in ensuring that all relevant departments within a local authority are involved during contract negotiations to ensure that the overall CSR offer is joined-up. Engaging with them at an early stage not only ensures that they have 'buy-in' to the programme but also potentially ensures that there is the maximum benefit to the community when it is implemented.

4. Benefits for councils

Building relationships between employers and potential employees is seen by councils as the most important way in which businesses can support local services for young people.

Figure 4 (below) shows that councils think the most important benefit from engaging with businesses on services for young people is the building of relationships between potential employers and employees. This was ahead of the financial benefit of bringing money into public and voluntary sector service delivery (ranked second most important benefit for councils). Business sector involvement as a substitute for local authority provision was ranked as by far the least important benefit. This suggests that councils still feel that they have a distinct mandate for delivering provision.

Figure 4: benefits for local authorities, charities and projects in engaging businesses in supporting services for young people in out of school settings?



The benefits to councils emerging most strongly from the interviews was the *added value* which businesses could provide in getting young people into sustained employment. In particular several examples were cited where businesses had provided additional impetus and in-kind support (e.g. thorough providing volunteers) to help develop pathways into employment for more vulnerable young people in out of school settings.

Accenture tend to work directly with charity partners rather than through an intermediary, broker or local authority. One example is Accenture’s relationship with the Eden Project (a UK educational charity and social enterprise) which focuses on helping people develop skills so they can get jobs, build businesses and improve their communities. The SuperSkills programme was developed to address an identified lack of soft skills embedded within practical training, the disengagement of vulnerable groups and the lack of clear exit routes for learners on courses, especially in East London.

Accenture’s Corporate Citizenship’s pro-bono team evaluated the Eden Project’s Chelsea Flower Show Garden – designed, planted, built and hosted by 400 homeless people, ex-offenders and people with a drug addiction – to assess how effective the project was for skills training. From this, a skills

programme was developed which could effectively be scaled and deployed in different situations. Accenture's Corporate Citizenship's pro-bono team provided direct strategic involvement, business and programme management role. As a result 350+ people have been trained through Great Grass and the Cisco Networking Academy in IT training, and practical soft skills, e.g. health and physio, media and PR, catering and nutrition, landscaping and grounds maintenance. More than 50 Accenture employees have been engaged through sharing their business skills on a staff volunteering programme.

North East Lincolnshire Council has a Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme across the Borough which is supported by the Drive for Grimsby Group. This group is made up of local employers and community leaders who act as a board for the Duke of Edinburgh Programme. The Youth Support Service chooses to report to the group which has awarded around £120k to support the project, paying for mini-buses, training, etc. However, the support of the group goes far beyond the financial. Members of the group have strong links with the local press and negotiated a free pull-out supplement on the programme. The group is currently spearheading income generation to enable the programme to move into a new designated facility.

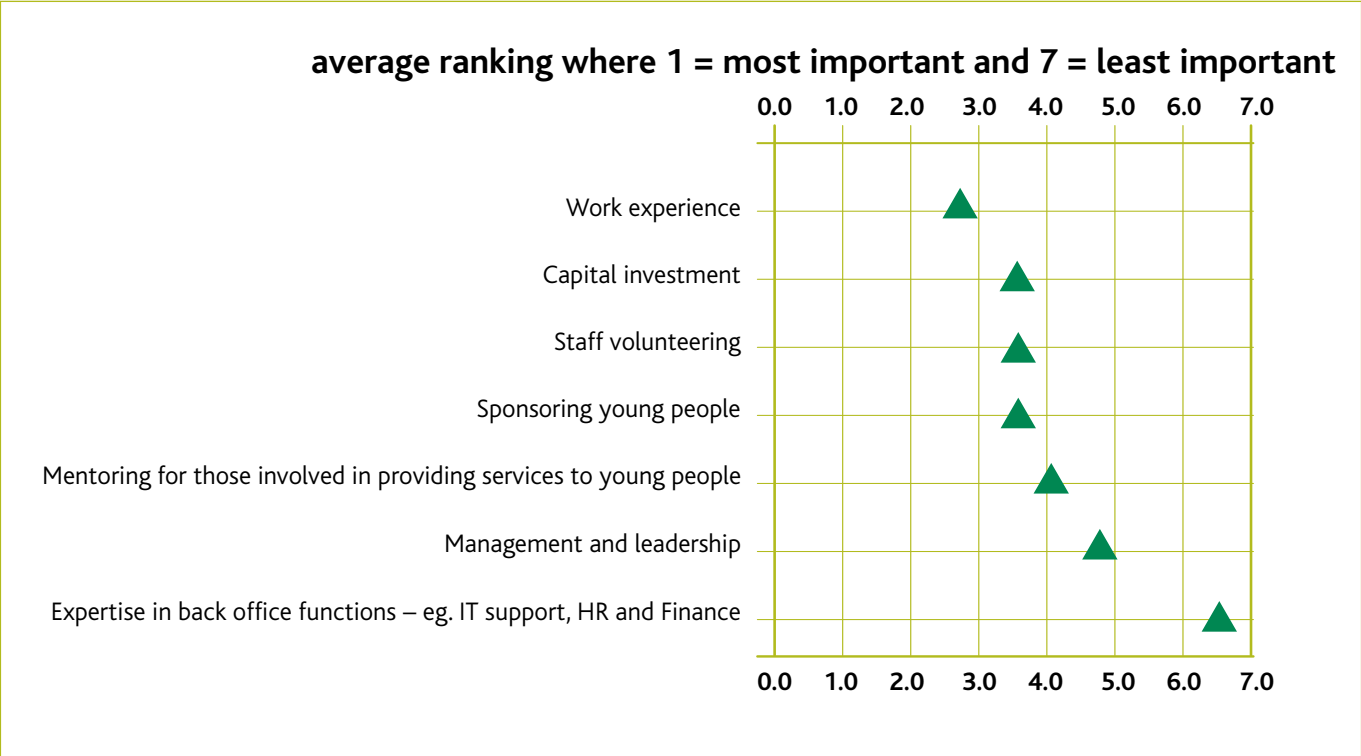
Head of Youth Support Services, Steve Kay, commented:

This type of private sector engagement is so important and it's about managing that relationship. It's not about getting money from them: they challenge us, keep us on our toes, they're bothered. They have a philanthropic approach to the area in which they've had personal success through their business interests. We need to have awareness and respect for that. They are on the interview panel for appointing a project manager and are now part of the Local Strategic Partnership forum. So, they are getting much more involved in other aspects of service delivering. It's about understanding who you are what you do and how to make it work.

The Wirral Apprentice scheme – described in more detail in section 7 – stimulated additional apprenticeships in the workplace by offering employers a wage subsidy to employ an apprentice. Examples such as this could usefully be disseminated amongst other councils along with the key learning generated, as councils thought that work experience was the best way in which businesses could support services for young people.

Conversely, expertise in back office functions was considered by councils to be the least useful way in which businesses could support local out of school services for young people. This may reflect that councils already have robust, efficient and effective back-office functions. However, it would be interesting to see whether smaller voluntary or not-for-profit organisations would consider this type of support more useful.

Figure 5: the best ways in which businesses could support local out of school services for young people?

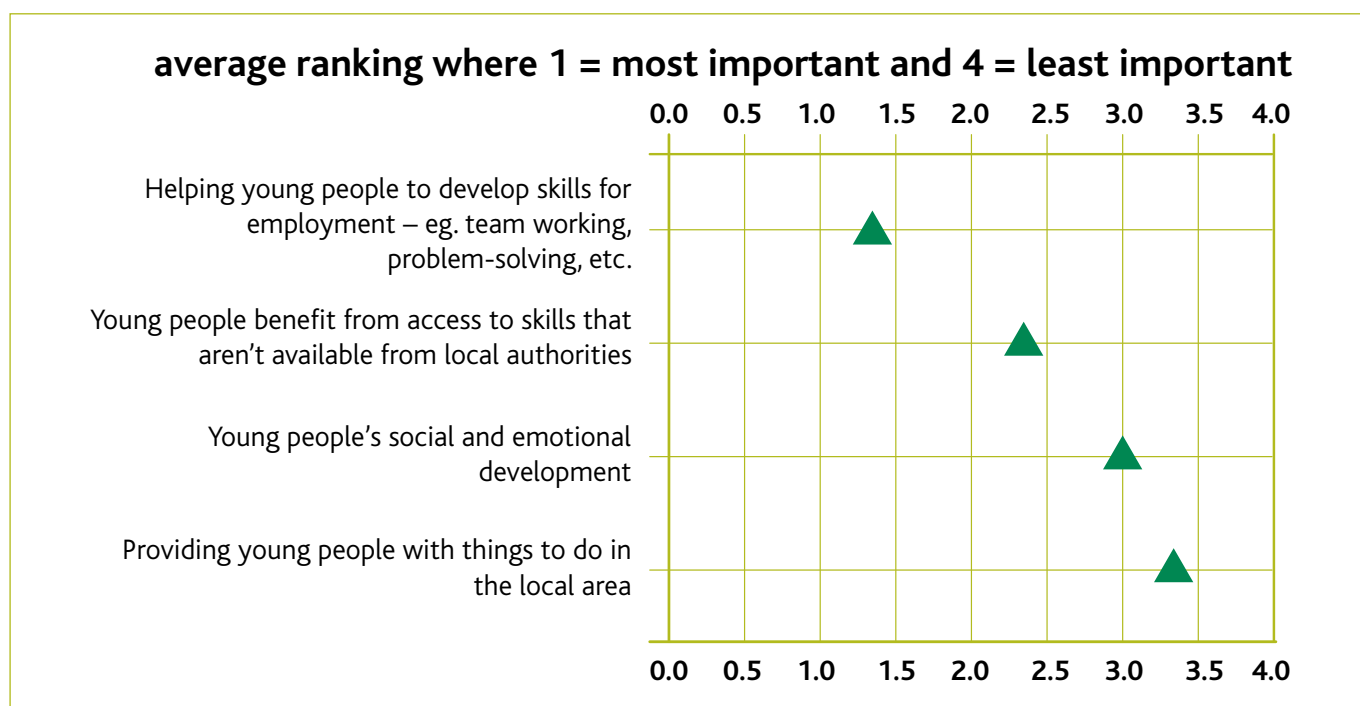


5. Benefits for young people

The main benefits for young people in businesses supporting services for young people is the development of skills for employment – such as team working and problem solving. Councils do not see an important role for businesses in just providing young people with ‘things to do’ in a more general sense. Improving aspirations of young people is another important benefit and also links to encouraging the most talented young people to stay in the local area.

Figure 6 shows that councils thought that by far the most important benefit of business sector involvement for young people was in helping young people develop skills for employment (e.g. team working, problem solving). ‘Providing young people with things to do’ was ranked as the least important benefit, suggesting that councils, on the whole, do not see the provision of positive activities as the best or most relevant benefit of business sector involvement. This is significant because it suggests that councils see engaging the business sector to support service provision being focused specifically on providing structured opportunities to develop skills related to employability and the workplace. The extension of this is that responsibility for providing young people with ‘things to do’ lies elsewhere or is of less importance.

Figure 6: benefits for young people in engaging businesses in supporting services for young people in out of school settings?



Two case studies of young people supported through the Wirral Apprentice provide examples of how the scheme can help develop young people from different backgrounds and in different circumstances.

The Wirral Apprentice: a young person's case study – Katie

Katie is a 19 year old woman who has left care and is a single parent. Katie had a negative attitude toward education having left school with poor qualifications. Katie had attended other training providers, but only for short periods before giving up and thought it was pointless to career plan as she had a young child. A friend told her about the Wirral Wise ESF programme and she decided to give it a go.

Aspirations

The Wirral Wise ESF project offered Katie impartial information advice and guidance by a seconded Connexions PA as well as employability skills such as interview techniques and job-search skills. Katie also took part in enterprise activities, organising a fund raising event for the Make A Wish foundation. Staff reported that Katie worked hard and had grown in confidence whilst on the project and had a better idea of the type of work she would enjoy and was best suited to.

Career to date

Katie applied for several apprenticeship opportunities with help of the Wirral Wise team and then completed the programme. The Wirral Wise staff sent Katie's C.V. to The Wirral Apprentice team who ensured that it was sent to as many companies as appropriate. One company had had an Administration Apprentice who had left their position and The Wirral Apprentice team requested that the company speak to Katie before going out to general advertisement for a new apprentice. The employer agreed and following the interview, the employer sang her praises. Katie started her Administration Apprenticeship on 29th November 2010 and has grown in confidence since settling in and enjoying being employed.

The Wirral Apprentice: a young person's case study – Joel

Joel is a 17 year old male from Birkenhead who achieved well at school – 8 GCSE's at A*-C – and progressed to Further Education. Joel had some paid work experience as a temporary Christmas shop assistant at the end of 2009. This outgoing and sociable young care leaver had applied for Motor Vehicle Apprenticeships during the third round of The Wirral Apprentice advertisements. Joel was contacted by a member of The Wirral Apprentice team to receive further support in applying for more engineering and manufacturing related apprenticeships.

Career to date

After enrolling on the Wirral Wise ESF employability programme Joel took part in enterprise activities and completed the 12 week ESF programme with L2 Edexcel Work skills and L2 Health and Safety. The Wirral Apprentice team member requested employers to guarantee interviews for care leavers wherever practicable and appropriate for the role. Joel was guaranteed three interviews, which went extremely well and he successfully secured an apprenticeship opportunity.

The names of the young person in these case studies have been changed. Thanks to Melanie Campbell for producing these case studies.

An important benefit for young people of business sector involvement in the delivery of services for young people in non-formal settings is to develop their understanding of different industries and help raise aspirations. The case study example of Carillion working with Rochdale Council on Building Schools for the Future (below) provides an example of this and also how the industry may also benefit.

In Rochdale, **Carillion** is working with a school (on the Building Schools for the Future Programme) for anything up to 18 months and therefore it is important to have a good working relationship with the school. Also, the company is helping to prepare young people to think more realistically about working in construction, providing first-hand opportunities and the chance speak to employees about what the work involves.

Whilst the company may not expect to recruit directly from their schools, the engagement does raises the profile of the industry and young people get a much more realistic view about what the jobs are and what they [the young people] need to do in terms of qualifications etc.

“...one young girl thought that being an architect was way beyond her, but can now see that there are things she could get involved in which would make this an achievable goal – i.e. experiencing this first hand and being able to speak to people doing it, raised her aspirations. This is very important as Rochdale is quite a depressed area. The more talented and/aspirational young people tend to leave the area so this is good evidence that they [young people] don’t have to leave the area to achieve.”

Carillion, working with **Rochdale Council**, has engaged with local young people, through the youth service, in specific aspects of the construction. For example, working with the youth council and other groups of young people to imagine and design the ideal learning environment (layout, colour scheme – big, bright and airy).

Two key benefits emerge from this case study:

1. The value of very practical careers advice and modelling work experience for young people. Continuing a programme whereby young people in schools get a very real insight into an industry like construction and the range of opportunities available. This is particularly true where employers were only around five years older than young people and could provide an advice or even a mentoring role which is accepted as genuine and meaningful to the lives of young people.
2. Excellent local benefits can be realised by encouraging both sides – public and private – to see the benefits of engaging and collaborating. For businesses this may be about developing the future pool which their workforce will be drawn from, whilst youth services could really benefit through transferring this learning to other areas, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In both cases the local area would benefit. For example, this partnership has delivered environmental and conservation projects using building expertise and young people.

Thanks to Dave Baker, Senior Youth Officer, Rochdale Borough Council.

6. Benefits for businesses

Local authorities stressed the potential benefit to businesses of developing a bigger, better workforce pool in their local area, whilst in interviews, businesses highlighted a range of benefits including the value of good PR and brand awareness; staff motivation and development; and giving back something to the community.

The data with regards to the benefits for businesses as perceived by councils (see Figure 7, below) had a much narrower spread. This suggests that there was less agreement about what the most important benefits were for businesses.

Figure 7: benefits for businesses in being engaged in supporting services for young people in out of school settings?



Survey respondents from local authorities felt that the most important way in which businesses could support local out of school services for young people was through providing work experience. This is a similar finding to the earlier question which found that the most important benefit for young people was businesses helping young people to develop employability skills (see Figure 6).

Overall the most important benefit for businesses was perceived by those participating in the survey to be helping to develop a bigger, better pool of potential workforce. The least important benefit was perceived to be good PR/brand development. However, this runs contra to what emerged from the interviews with businesses that cited the value of good community relations as being an important one (see case study example below for Staffordshire County Council and Asda). This links to the importance of an effective brokerage role to develop a shared understanding of aims and objectives of different organisations in any potential partnership working arrangement.

A specific post was established at **Staffordshire County Council** (from May 2010) with a remit to work in partnership with local businesses, primarily to build links around work-placed health. Through this a partnership working arrangement has developed with Asda providing support for service provision in local communities. Examples of activity directly benefiting young people include funding and development of a Wii Fit room at a school (for out of hours use) and refurbishment of facilities

at the local football club and development of a two-year business plan for expanding their use.

Asda run face to face on-street marketing surveys every quarter around perceptions of Asda, including perceptions of what Asda does in the local community.

Each region produces a chart and is reviewed against other stores (out of around 300). Stafford Store has won the Gold Award three times. Every year new stores [open] and they want to win. You get rewarded in terms of trophy/prestige and also financial rewards to the store – e.g. for a party for staff in store.

This provides a good example of measuring impact from a business perspective (see section 9. Measuring Impact which follows). Asda also highlight the important benefits which this partnership with the local council brings...

The best advertising is indirect advertising. If you spend the money in the community rather than an advert on tele... it's surprising how many people say they come and shop in a particular store because of the work they do in the community. At the end of the day, all the big supermarkets sell the same or similar stuff, so your reputation in the community is important.

(Sherif Hegazy, Marketing Coordinator, Asda Stores).

The post holder at Staffordshire County Council has now been approached by the local stores of Tesco and Sainsbury's about how they can get involved in work with the council.

Barclays supports the communities it works in through a significant programme of community investment – using the company's skills, time, money and expertise to support community issues.

Business Rationale

Barclays reported that for them being a responsible bank means being honest about successes and failures, in touch with the public mood and sensitive to the expectations of its stakeholders.

Barclays has a long standing tradition of supporting the communities in which it operates and is approaching global community investment as a core part of its corporate objectives and values.

Providing Support Where it is Needed Most

Community investment is supported by evidenced need within the local area. For example, the Barclays Money Skills programme, which includes the Barclays Money Skills 'champions' project led by the National Youth Agency, was brought about after Barclays commissioned a body of research into young people and the youth sector.

This research identified that young people aged 16 to 25, particularly those not in education, employment or training (NEET), were a group particularly at risk of financial exclusion. It also identified that while there were a significant number of financial capability programmes available, many were aimed at school students, there was a gap in terms of effective programmes to innovatively support NEET young adults.

The study also identified that one of the ways in which Barclays could make effective changes would

be to work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

For Barclays, the value of working with the VCS sector is:

- The skills and experience of working with vulnerable people;
- They typically already have established relationships and hold a position of trust within local communities; and
- The established networks and local knowledge help Barclays to deliver effective support to those in greatest need.

Barclays indicated that while there are a number of challenges involved in a partnership approach, if approached in the right way by both parties it can also present a number of significant opportunities.

These include:

- There is sometimes a significant difference between the operational structures of VCS organisations and corporates. It is therefore vital to recognise and understand these differences and develop a way of working that brings together the best of both worlds into an effective delivery partnership.
- Corporates have a huge amount of experience, expertise and skills that can be used to enhance any community programme. Barclays explained that it doesn't want to give out money and 'wait for the report' – they want to help and bring their skills to the table.
- There is a challenge to make sure both organisations communicate and work effectively towards their goals. If partner organisations are willing to be flexible then partnerships can be long lasting and highly successful.

The importance of activity being rooted in the local community was also evident in the examples derived from an interview with **Starbucks** about their Corporate Social Responsibility programme. Whilst, guidance is provided at a corporate level, there is local autonomy and branch staff (known as partners) are encouraged to engage with their communities as they want to in the role of 'community advocates'. The knock-on benefit to the businesses is three fold:

- The obvious benefit in terms of PR and marketing for the brand
- It establishes Starbucks as part of the community. Starbucks feel that branches should earn the right to 'be there'. There is a real sense of local relevance – partners from individual branches working in their immediate surroundings – for example 'dressing up in fancy dress costumes and visiting young people in the local hospital.
- Partner engagement and retention – partners, a high proportion of which are aged between 16 and 24 are community minded. Through the programme they get to play an active part in their community, sitting on panels, engaging with local media councillors etc. Partners feel that they get greater buy-in if they are involved in the selection of VCS orgs they work with.

7. Facilitating engagement with the private sector – lessons to learn

Key themes for promoting engagement with the business sector in supporting services for young people centre around improving the communication between the sectors – private, local government and voluntary. Key to this is developing a shared understanding of what is happening locally in each sector and of the aims and objectives of those organisations and where common ground can be found for the mutual benefit of all involved.

Several ways in which councils can facilitate engaging local businesses were suggested in the interviews.

a. Understanding the ways in which the private sector works

A distinction needs to be made between the benefits sought and achieved by large corporate companies and by small or medium enterprises (SMEs). Local SMEs may want to get involved in supporting services for young people and could improve the offer to young people but are unlikely to be able to attend lots of meetings so some other mechanism needs to be in place to support this.

The Wirral Apprentice scheme stimulated additional apprenticeships in the workplace by offering employers a wage subsidy to employ an apprentice. The scheme was funded initially through the Working Neighbourhood Fund and subsequently through the European Social Fund. The wage subsidy was set at the national minimum wage of £4.77 per hour. This was paid for a maximum of 18 months and, in return, the employer was required to offer a minimum two-year contract of employment to the apprentice. Employers were also supported by a named Wirral Council staff member. Selection of a suitable training provider and recruitment and selection/interview of apprentices was supported in accordance with the needs of the employer.

The scheme was designed to get local employers 'tuned into apprenticeships', allow them to succession plan and take the financial risk out of offering the opportunity to young people. Almost 200 businesses came forward. When the support was reduced from 18 months to 12 months only four withdrew. Melanie Campbell (Wirral Council) commented:

What was evident is that it's not the length of the contract [of financial support] that's important it's the fact that someone is there to support them to do this – e.g. advice on maternity/paternity pay. The knock-on effect is that employers are more experienced and more comfortable in recruiting young people.

The last round of funding was as much about growing local businesses as well as creating apprenticeships. The first round of apprentices are now mentoring the second round and the profile of the council has been raised enormously amongst local businesses.

Over 300 apprenticeships have now been supported through this scheme, including many from businesses not traditionally or previously involved – e.g. jewellery design. They are oversubscribed with employers with 60 companies on the waiting list and 94% of employers stating that they want to continue the scheme. A database of around 400 employers has been developed through the scheme that could be approached to subsidise other initiatives such as mentoring and sponsorship.

It was recognised on both sides that, for various reasons, the pace of change in the business sector is much faster than in councils, where different procedures are in place, including the appropriate democratic process. One person in the business community mentioned that:

I know from other businesses that they find it very frustrating that councils take a long time to make decisions and this can jeopardize the relationship.

Rachel Shepherd (Staffordshire County Council) also highlighted the pace of working as a key factor in the difference between working practices in councils and private companies. However, one key thing here is that the different working arrangements and reasons for them, are well communicated and understood by all parties:

The public sector has lots of processes in place and particularly smaller businesses will find that very frustrating. It makes for a better relationship if that is understood from the start. You always have to look at it from a business perspective. Always ask yourself, what's in it for the business? Is it about PR, staff development, improving the local community? Whatever it is you have to make sure it's relevant to that business and roles are understood by all parties.

Clare Wright, MD, Connect Reading

O2 Think Big

What is Think Big?

Think Big is a social action programme from O2, in conjunction with the National Youth Agency and UK Youth. Think Big is a programme to challenge young people aged 13-25 to make positive changes in their community. If they've got a great project idea, Think Big gives them support, training and funding to make it work.

Think Big aims to harness the talents of young people to bring people together in their communities. It wants to help young people make the most of their potential, and inspire others. To date almost 1500 projects have been approved in 2011 – each receiving £300 and support to develop a project to benefit their local community. A further 57 individuals and groups of young people were provided with £2500 to bring their Think Bigger projects to fruition.

To make this happen, the National Youth Agency has worked with 63 youth partners and coordinated in excess of 1200 O2 volunteers to ensure more young people had the opportunity to engage with the programme and were supported to make their projects a reality.

Key learning

It takes considerable commitment from all to deliver a project with multiple partners. It takes a huge amount of investment in terms of resource and time for corporates to work with smaller charities that do not have the infrastructure to invest in developing programmes. There is a real benefit to investing in up-skilling and equipping organisations in the voluntary and community sector to work with businesses – to provide them with capacity to unlock the potential of working with the corporate sector.

There is a real need for a 'relationship manager' to make projects happen. This role could be provided

by the business itself but in others it could be local government or specific business brokerage bodies depending in the situation.

There is a need for a directory which outlines what is already in existence in local areas so as to not duplicate effort. There is a massive base of small businesses that want to be involved but do not have the capacity to seek out opportunities to invest in.

Benefits to O2

O2 considers that Think Big is a core part of its corporate belief. Its not about delivering a 'Corporate Social Responsibility' programme, rather a way in which the organisation can be a partner for social action.

The programme maximises employee retention, staff really enjoy being a part of it, presenting awards, engaging with media and politicians at the local level.

Challenges

There is often an expectation that corporate organisations are simply there to fund and/or badge existing programmes that youth organisations deliver. O2 always want to establish new partnerships, and play an active role in their delivery, bringing their own unique skills to enhance the offer to young people.

b. Understanding the ethos of the company

Starbucks highlighted that they start with the ethos of 'what do young people want and need' and then look at ways in which this can be achieved. When working with local voluntary and community sector organisations they look for the speed at which they can work and deliver and consequently seek staff with the necessary capabilities to deliver at a fast pace.

c. Raising awareness of the voluntary and community sector to the private sector

Research in Motion (the owners of Blackberry) stress the importance of businesses being aware of which voluntary and community sector organisations exist. They also highlight the potential role for councils in networking and brokering relationships through events such as 'private/public sector speed dating' as 'businesses tend to prefer that over 'unsolicited letters'.

Sherif Hegazy (Asda Stores – Stafford) highlighted that it was the personal touch provided by the relevant contact at Staffordshire County Council which made the difference and helped to develop the working relationship where other attempts have failed:

It's always good to have personal contact. When Rachel (SCC) called and said 'can I come and meet you' it matters. I get tens of letters and emails every week from local charities, councils, and nationals too – but don't have time to write back or respond. But personal communication – call someone then meet them ... Rachel had enthusiasm, flexible, human approach. Not just about filling in forms: you help me and I'll help you and we're done! (Sherif Hegazy, Asda)

My diary is dictated by the business. You have to fit around them and be responsive. Do your homework, find the right person, the right contact. (Rachel Shepherd, SCC)

Similarly, Steve Kay (Head of Youth Support Services at North East Lincolnshire) stated that the most important aspect for developing and maintain an effective, mutually beneficial relationship with the business community lies in 'understanding the terms of engagement.' What is more, the findings from the survey – where many of the partnership arrangements had been in place for several years – show that once relationships with businesses have been set up they tend to be lasting ones.

Rachel (Staffordshire County Council) also identified the importance of taking on personal responsibility for whatever issues or concerns are thrown up when meeting with business to improve perceptions and through that, improve working relationships. Generally people do not make distinctions between different areas of service delivery within councils and, in the case of two-tier local authorities, across organisations. Previous experience in one area of council service delivery will influence perceptions of all areas of service delivery.

Whatever perception I leave them [businesses] with reflects on the whole council. If they are complaining about the size of the road outside their business, or about their grandma in a care home – it could be absolutely anything that you end up talking about – then you need to address that first before you can work on anything else.

d. The perceptions of the private and voluntary sectors

What emerged quite strongly from the case study interviews is that there is a clear need to address the perceptions businesses hold of the public/voluntary sector, and vice versa, and for the perceptions of young people.

One business person interviewed felt that councils have an old-fashioned image of 'people wearing gold chains' in 'these grand old buildings' which can make people – especially young people – feel detached from the council. They also commented that it was felt that working with local businesses could help improve the image of councils as local employers. Conversely, it was felt that there is often some suspicion about the motivation of, particularly larger, businesses working in the local community.

Representatives from both councils and businesses stressed the need to look beyond local businesses as solely providing funding for community based projects and services. One business commented,

Charities always see you as a money pot. They think that's all you have to offer... but I can help with other things like business-side and they start to see other benefits. Sometimes there is resistance: 'don't want this big company coming in to interfere with their business – just want the money'. That's where councils can come in, it breaks down the barriers. Local people can be wary of big businesses starting up projects etc on their own, whereas if business is working with local council, then people feel much more comfortable about getting involved.

Similarly, this was also recognised by local authorities. In Oldham there is a Business Leadership Group supported by the local authority which aims to increase enterprise and help local companies develop their capacity. The Principal Economic and Business Liaison Officer, June Smith, commented that

Effective engagement with the business community is about getting to the heart of people, not just about tapping on CSR budgets. It's about listening to business leaders as local residents, as local people with a strong sense of pride, a passion. It's about the individuals on the [Business Leadership] Group because they live in Oldham, they're from Oldham and they want to make a difference.

e. Understanding the reasons for the engagement of the private sector

Starbucks commented that they want to engage with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) but are not 'grant givers' and there has to be a 'business benefit' to their investment. Thus, voluntary and community sector organisations looking for support from the business sector need to make sure they have a clear understanding of the rationale of the company they approach. Starbucks have a 'community advocate' [member of staff] in each district who want to be contacted about supporting community based projects. They are looking for sustainable, long term relationships with charities and, typically, charities establish individual relationships with store managers.

Similarly, councils could actively seek out opportunities to work with local businesses. One business-person commented that, through the local Chamber of Commerce, they had established a business network around Corporate Social Responsibility however, no one from the council could be identified to sit on that partnership and attend meetings and that was 'a great opportunity missed'.

Steve Kay of North East Lincolnshire Council identified the following lessons learnt through improving local engagement with the business community through the Drive for Grimsby Group:

[You have to] make it easy for business to become involved and be clear about the incentives for business: clear dialogue with business and a strategic approach to employer engagement. A scattergun approach doesn't work: need to be a joined-up coherent partnership.

[It is important for councils to] be clear about who you are and what you do. Don't underestimate the importance of managing relationships. Do what you say you're going to do and get reporting mechanism agreed – who what and when.

Don't look at the relationship [with private sector] as simply one of resource investment or you will alienate businesses in doing that. There are a myriad of different ways of getting business sector involved and supportive. You need to explore and see the range of opportunities that each relationship could bring. It's as much about skills, advice, support – a cross fertilisation of ideas and skills – that has nothing to do with them writing you a cheque.

8. Measuring Impact

Despite most local authorities measuring the impact of services for young people, it appears less common for councils to measure the impact made by specific projects/ partnerships, including the impact of support from the private sector. Some measurement of impact is undertaken by businesses themselves.

Of those councils who were supported by businesses in the delivery of out-of-school services to young people, just over half (24 or 57%) stated that they measured the impact of business sector involvement. A variety of different measures were described including the overall achievement of service outcomes, number/type of placements, NEET statistics and feedback from young people in the individual evaluation of projects.

It was not possible to ascertain an overall picture of the impact of business involvement on a macro scale. This is partly because there is such a variety of different ways in which this relationship between private and public sector develops according to local need. Also, in evaluating overall outcomes for young people and the local community, most councils do not isolate the impact of business sector support from other elements of service delivery for young people.

There were examples where the business sector or an organisation in a brokerage role did measure the impact of their contribution, for example through hours volunteered or perceptions of brand.

Connect Reading is a registered charity set up in 2003 by local businesses to provide brokerage between businesses and the public/voluntary sector in the Reading area. It is an independent organisation initiated by the demand of local businesses, and now funded by the membership of local businesses.

The organisation measures the impact made by counting sponsorship and volunteer hours (calculated at the average wage in Reading of £13.20 per hour). Connect Reading estimate a cash-equivalent contribution of around £750,000 since the charity was set up (to end of financial year 2010/11). They are currently working on developing appropriate outcome based measures.

Recommendations for Supporting Future Development

1. Key findings from the research

1. Business sector support for services for young people is already common practice in many areas and, where it exists, it has often been in place for many years. Where businesses are engaged with local authorities this is often initiated by the council contacting the business and elected members play an important role in this. Preparing young people for the workplace through work experience, apprenticeships and mentoring are the main ways in which businesses support young people.
2. There is strong support amongst local authorities for engaging with businesses to supporting services for young people. Larger businesses often get involved with third sector organisations in the locality where their head office or main centre of employment is based.
3. Whether based at the local authority or as part of an independent, possibly charitable organisation, the role of brokerage between councils and business is absolutely vital to develop a planned strategy for developing and maintaining business sector support for services for young people. Individual relationships across sectors are important and where these are formalised will help to move business sector support from an ad-hoc basis to a more strategic footing.
4. Building relationships between employers and potential employees is seen by councils as the most important way in which businesses can support local services for young people.
5. The main benefits for young people in businesses supporting services for young people is the development of skills for employment – such as team working and problem solving. Councils do not see an important role for businesses in just providing young people with ‘things to do’ in a more general sense. Improving aspirations of young people is another important benefit and also links to encouraging the most talented young people to stay in the local area.
6. Local authorities stressed the potential benefit to businesses of developing a bigger, better workforce pool in their local area, whilst in interviews, businesses highlighted the value of good PR and brand awareness, developing their staff and giving something back to the community.
7. Key themes for promoting engagement with the business sector in supporting services for young people centre around improving the communication between the sectors – private, local government and voluntary. Key to this is developing a shared understanding of what is happening locally in each sector and of the aims and objectives of those organisations and where common ground can be found for the mutual benefit of all involved.
8. Despite most local authorities measuring the impact of services for young people, it appears much rarer for councils to measure the impact made by specific projects/ partnerships, including the impact of support from the private sector. Some measurement of impact is undertaken by businesses themselves.

2. Strategic priorities for policy development

An open-ended question in the survey asked about what would help most to increase business involvement in supporting young people, or organisations that provide support to young people, in out of school settings. This generated responses of varying length and subject from forty councils. Qualitative, free-text responses were coded by theme and the following top three themes emerged most regularly (in descending order):

- a) Promoting the benefits to businesses of working with councils in supporting services for young people.
- b) A specific role with remit to broker, develop and maintain relationships between businesses and the public/voluntary sector.
- c) Forums/events for discussion of ideas and examples of good practice.

In the interviews carried out with councils following the survey these same three themes were mentioned most commonly by interviewees.

3. Practical lessons for councils

Three key drivers of business sector engagement emerge from the research which could accelerate and expand partnership working arrangements between the business community, councils and voluntary organisations. These three key practical lessons can be summarised as follows:

1. Business sector involvement in supporting services for young people should not be viewed merely as a financial hand-out: most of the benefits achievable are not financial.
2. Understand what a company is all about and proactively approach those which most closely align with your aims and objectives.
3. Make personal contact with businesses, including facilitating face-to-face events, and ensure effective communication of working arrangements and future aspirations.

Appendix

We are indebted to the local authorities who participated in interviews to support this research. Brief details are provided below.

Local authority	Example of practice
Devon County Council	Devon Education Business Partnership provides work experience placements working with seven thousand businesses. Also a young enterprise scheme using ten business mentors for setting up their own businesses. Head of Regeneration coordinated Productive Skills for the Devon and Somerset Group www.devoneconomy.co.uk
Hampshire County Council	Engaged local branches of large companies to support service provision for young people, including the provision of furniture from IKEA and recruitment of volunteers from Barclays to renovate grounds of local youth club.
Manchester City Council	Engagement with businesses planned through the local authority matching schools and employers to develop relationships and providing advice on legislation regarding changes to apprenticeships and jobs with training.
North East Lincolnshire Council	The Duke of Edinburgh Programme Board for North East Lincs. Is formed by leaders from the local business community who oversee the D-of-E programme and provide a range of support – financial and other – for the provision of services for young people.
Oldham Borough Council	Economy and Skills Team (formerly Regeneration) with specified role to facilitate the involvement of business. Local Business Leadership Group set up to raise awareness of and development of local enterprise. Seeking to address 'the enterprise gap' which exists in the Borough.
Reading Borough Council	Connect Reading is a registered charity set up by local businesses in 2003 to provide brokerage between businesses and the public/voluntary sector in Reading. It is now funded entirely through the paid membership of businesses.
Rochdale Borough Council	The construction company Carillion is engaged in Rochdale to deliver a five-year programme as part of Building Schools for the Future. The contract includes a donated hours scheme to work with schools and youth clubs.

Staffordshire County Council	The 'People' Directorate of Staffordshire County Council is actively engaging the business community in supporting service provision. The local Asda store is working with the County Council to support provision of local community facilities. Examples include, funding provision for out of hours activities via a Wii Room at a local school and refurbishment of the facilities at Stafford Rangers Football Club, plus business development support.
Wirral Borough Council	The Wirral Apprentice scheme stimulates additional apprenticeships in the workplace by offering employers a wage subsidy to employ an apprentice, plus advice and support.

Our thanks are also extended to the following companies for their cooperation on this research project:

- Accenture
- Asda Stores (Stafford)
- Aviva
- Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Barclays Bank Plc.
- Enterprise Plc.
- Linklaters
- O2
- Research in Motion (Blackberry)
- Starbucks



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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