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Brokering engagement from the business community for the youth sector – the role of councils

Learning from the **Routes To Success** pilot project





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The National Youth Agency, as part of its programme of work funded by the Local Government Association, has developed the Routes to Success programme – a free package of support to help councils improve the local offer of services and support for young people.

For further information on the Routes to Success programme and to access free support visit:

www.nya.org.uk/routes-to-success

The Local Government Association (LGA) is here to support, promote and improve local government.

We will fight local government's corner and support councils through challenging times by focusing on our top two priorities:

- representing and advocating for local government and making the case for greater devolution
- helping councils tackle their challenges and take advantage of new opportunities to deliver better value for money services.

The Local Government Association is an organisation that is run by its members. We are a political organisation because it is our elected representatives from all different political parties that direct the organisation through our boards and panels. However, we always strive to agree a common cross-party position on issues and to speak with one voice on behalf of local government.

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

The LGA covers every part of England and Wales and includes county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire, police, national park and passenger transport authorities.

We also work with the individual political parties through the Political Group Offices.

For further information about the Local Government Association visit: <http://www.local.gov.uk/>

Executive Summary

The National Youth Agency (NYA), as part of its on-going work with the Local Government Association (LGA), has conducted a pilot project to test whether it is possible to leverage resources from the business community into the voluntary youth sector. Earlier research carried out by the NYA found that the business sector is already supporting services for young people in two thirds of local authorities however there is need to move from an ad hoc to a more strategic approach. There was an evident willingness to engage further from both business and local authorities.

Working with the British Chamber of Commerce and Manchester City Council the National Youth Agency undertook a project to test out whether it was possible to deliver support to voluntary youth groups via business, brokered by an intermediary.

Specific aims:

- To support the youth sector in Manchester to build constructive and productive relationships with business.
- To use the learning to develop a transferable model for use by local authorities.

The project took place in three phases:

1. Preparation, mapping existing activity, understanding how elements join up, looking for opportunities for further collaboration and capacity building in the voluntary, community and faith sector.
2. Holding an event for business and voluntary, community and faith sector to come together in partnership with British Chamber of Commerce.
3. Strategic development, working with Manchester city Council to explore ways of building the work into a strategy to ensure it was embedded and ongoing.

Key Learning points:

While there will always be a degree of difference based on reality in the ground, the project identified a number of key learning points:

Scan the environment to identify what work is already taking place within business organisations, the voluntary, community and faith sector, particularly in infrastructure bodies and across the local authority

There is a need to build on local links; there will be lots of things already going on. Local authorities will have regeneration and economic development departments which may well be working with business organisations to promote economic growth and to address unemployment.

- Relationships between youth organisations and business and the culture of partnership may not be as developed as you hope. Capacity building may be needed by both partners and the preparation and linking will take longer than you think. You may need to set parameters for inclusion and linking of existing work as often there is yet another initiative to be aware of and concerns to address. You may choose to make that an ongoing part of the work and continue to bring work together. The strategic leadership for the project needs to come from the local authority. Look across the local authority and develop links with other departments working with business to make use of their expertise and knowledge.
- Be co-ordinated and work collectively to develop capacity within the local authority, the business community and in the voluntary, community and faith sector.

- The ethics and principles of working with business need to be explored and re explored on a regular basis. Both the local authority and local voluntary, community and faith sector may have views on the type of business they wish to engage with. It also provides an opportunity to confront tensions and build partnerships between providers. As the sector changes and new providers emerge so will tensions on who should benefit, i.e. should private providers benefit from local authority brokerage.
- Working in partnership with local business organisations i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Business in the Community helps get into the business community and adds credibility.

There were some strong messages emerging from the project

For local authorities: look across the authority and harness the knowledge and expertise that exists in other parts of the organisation. Try and make it do-able and not another large responsibility given to someone. In Manchester the 'plus one' model was used.

For business: be open to the work of the sector and think about the contribution youth projects can make to your business, whether that is improving the communities in which you and your customers live or offering your staff development opportunities

For the youth sector: be realistic about your task, take time to build a relationship with businesses and think about what you can offer them. Consider working collectively with other organisations to present a case for support.

The National Youth Agency Routes to Success Programme:

The **Routes to Success** programme is a new sector-led approach funded through the Local Government Association to support improvement in local authority youth services. It draws 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.

Rationale:

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. The NYA's work with local authorities identifies 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.

In some places the local authority continues to deliver the majority of provision, in others there is a more mixed model with commissioning both internally and externally bringing new providers to deliver. There are also examples where the provision is completely commissioned.

It is not simply statutory services that are finding life difficult, the voluntary and community sector has also been hit hard. Now more than ever there is a real need to leverage in resources from other sources if we are to continue to provide quality services for young people.

Research carried out by the NYA last year found that establishing links with the business community is one way to do this. Our research, 'Mapping the

involvement of business in supporting services for young people in out of school settings' made a number of positive discoveries. It found that, over two thirds of local authority youth services had some form of business engagement. In over half of the examples this support is providing work experience, in 49% offering apprenticeships and in 32% providing mentoring for young people.

The report identified three strategic priorities for policy development:

- 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.

Central government has also recognised the important role that business can play in our sector and, as part of its Positive For Youth Strategy, established the United Futures programme to make it easier for youth organisations and businesses to work together to develop mutually-beneficial relationships and initiatives which support young people. To be an example of avoiding duplication and making best use of resource the United Futures programme and this project agreed to work together and make sure their work is complementary.

Introduction:

The project had two main aims:

- To support the youth sector in Manchester to build constructive and productive relationships with business to increase the in-kind and real

support available to the sector.

- To develop and test a transferable model for local authorities to apply when developing relationships with business.

Specific outputs included:

- Develop a long term Manchester strategy for building engagement between voluntary, community and faith sector and business that will be mutually beneficial to business, the sector, the local authority and young people.
- Develop guides and tips for voluntary, community and faith sector and business to assist in the development of positive relationships.
- Undertake local capacity building events with the voluntary, community and faith sector and other providers to assist in preparing them to build those positive relationships.
- Hold a speed dating event to launch the processes and to play a part in informing business of the contribution made by the sector to young peoples' lives.
- Develop tools for measuring impact and future sustainability ensuring learning is recorded and used.

The project was led by the NYA and worked with 2 key partners:

Manchester City Council:

Manchester City Council came on board at a time when it was seeking to construct a new youth offer due to significant reductions in funding for young people's services and the withdrawal of directly delivered services. The amount of money available to commission services for young people reduced significantly and the Valuing Young People Team wanted to explore ways to build constructive and productive relationships with business in the City to increase support to the voluntary and community sector providers. The project also gave

them the opportunity to make a positive open offer to the voluntary, community and faith sector that wasn't competitive or dependent on assessment by the City Council

The reduction in services to young people comes against a back drop of record rates of youth unemployment and significant changes to the benefit system. Young people are being asked for skills and experience they cannot always gain at school and the other agencies they gave accessed for support are being stretched and cannot always meet need.

The British Chamber of Commerce:

The British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) is an independent business network, with 53 accredited Chambers across the UK representing over 104,000 business members employing over 5,000,000 people. Local Chambers work with businesses of all sizes, and representing all sectors with a mission is to make the Chamber network an essential part of growing business; by sharing opportunities, knowledge and expertise. BCC have an interest in reducing youth unemployment and in working with those who educate young people both formally and informally. Working with the National Youth Agency BCC sought to bring the knowledge and relationships of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce to the project.

Methodology:

Phase 1: preparation

Phase 1 of the project focused on gaining an understanding of the current picture within Manchester. The mapping exercise found that there was already substantial work going on, particularly in areas around:

- Skills and employment.
- Apprenticeships.
- Schools.

Relationships were established with the United Futures

Consortium (UKYouth, Business in the Community and National Children’s Bureau). While the United Futures programme has a primary focus on charities working with national businesses, some of the materials that they had designed were relevant to this project and we were able to use them. These include resources and checklists for youth organisations to work through to assist them to develop positive relationships with businesses and outlined the business case to persuade businesses to engage. The resources can be accessed here. Relationships were also established with MACC, the principal voluntary infrastructure body, in Manchester who were planning their own work with the business sector using Transforming Local Infrastructure monies. Other voluntary youth projects had similar plans and through this mapping phase the project was able to establish the extent of existing opportunities to ensure a coordinated approach.

- Co-ordinate any specific business engagement projects to learn from each other, avoid duplication and make best use of resources
- Be coordinated and work collectively with other organisations to develop capacity. When the environment is challenging for both the youth sector and business the temptation is to fight for your own organisation. It can be more effective to act collectively.

Phase 2: Capacity building and the speed dating event

NYA working with MACC planned a series of capacity building events for the providers of services to young people in the voluntary, community and faith sector working with Voluntary Youth Manchester. These events were based around the five Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) areas in Manchester and each event brought together UKYouth, Business in the Community and National Children’s Bureau). While the United Futures programme has a primary focus on charities working with national businesses, some of the materials that they had designed were relevant to this project and we were able to use them. These include resources and checklists for voluntary, community and faith sector organisations within an SRF area. The project also held

a further session, bringing together those organisations that operate citywide.

The purpose of these sessions was to prepare for and recruit twenty groups to attend the ‘Speed dating’ event to be held with business (See Appendix for details on the session programme). Sixty groups attended the sessions and twenty went on to attend the speed dating event.

The sessions enabled NYA to get a sense of the relationships that already existed with businesses and how the sector would respond to the initiative. Unsurprisingly the initial focus of those present was to revenue raise. However, working through exercises facilitated by NYA associates, attendees were made aware of the multitude of ‘in kind’ types of involvement businesses often want to offer such as HR support, building improvements et al. Groups were trained on the importance of pitching, and ‘asks’ and considered the offer they would make to businesses.

Key learning points:

- Scan the environment to identify what is already there. The formal education sector and those involved in employment and skills have links, often through Business in the Community.
- There is a need to build on local links; there will be lots of things already going on but not always in a coordinated way. Coordinating activity helps businesses to engage with the sector. ‘One ask’ can be responded to with ‘one offer’, rather than a number of organisations making separate approach that could be overwhelming making saying no the easier option. .
- Relationships between youth organisations and business and the culture of partnership may not be as developed as you hope. Capacity building may be needed by both partners.

- Voluntary, community and faith sector can have unrealistic expectations of business and business often have no idea what the youth sector can offer. As you move this work forward it is important to manage expectations of both parties stressing the relationship is key and will develop over a period of time.
- Preparation and linking will take longer than you think; there is always another initiative to be aware of and concerns to address.
- The ethics and principles of this work needs to be explored and re explored on a regular basis. Both the local authority and local voluntary, community and faith sector may have views on the type of business they wish to engage with. How would you cope with business that wouldn't support certain groups?

Businesses are facing their own challenges and the youth sector is not at the top of their list of priorities. Working with the Chamber enabled the local authority and NYA understand how best to engage, what message are most effective and to give the project credibility with business.

The event to bring the youth sector and business together was organised by the British Chamber of Commerce with Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. The involvement of the Chamber was crucial in getting business to attend. Not only do they understand how business, and SMEs (small and medium-sized businesses) operate, they were instrumental in ensuring businesses attended the event. The event was held at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on 11th December 2012.

- The event was attended by 16 voluntary groups and 42 businesses.
- Presentations were given by the Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce, youth providers and young people to make business aware of the contribution youth organisations make to young peoples' lives and the benefits to the wider community.

- Table top discussions gave the voluntary, community and faith sector the opportunity to speak directly to business. It was here they were able to make business aware of their own work and make their pitch. The ensuing discussions started that relationship building.
- Following the event 9 voluntary groups said they have started to build relationships with businesses who attended the event.

'I made one good link with a business which I am following up and which may lead to a beneficial partnership being established.'

From the evaluation we know that the voluntary groups who came to the event valued highly the preparation sessions they attended and felt this helped them to get the most from meeting the businesses. Although some participants said their expectations had not been met, the majority felt it was a useful first step in developing a relationship with business. Getting people face to face starts to break down real and perceived barriers and common ground begins to emerge.

Key learning points:

- Work with business organisations, get their commitment and utilise their contacts and credibility with hard pressed businesses. SMEs in particular need a reason to engage.
- Look at the 'ask' from a business perspective and take the advice of business partners.
- Prepare the youth sector to be realistic and see opportunities as the start of building a relationship with businesses.
- The involvement of the Chamber and BitC help ensure the buy in of the wider local authority.
- Business organisations may be able to offer pro-bono venues and therefore keep the cost of events down.

Phase 3: Strategic Development:

The event was always seen as a starting point, a catalyst to explore the development of a strategy to embed the work and ensure it was not a one off activity. NYA worked with the City Council Valuing Young People's Team to bring together interested parties from the local authority, voluntary, community and faith sector and Chamber of Commerce to scope what was already happening and what was needed.

Manchester has a long history of working with the private sector and business bringing huge investment in the City. Although this included work with young people it was focused on formal education and employment. The challenge was to make the case for youth work and informal education and to join up the activity so that it would work in an environment of rapidly reducing resources.

NYA worked with the City Council Valuing Young People's Team to bring together interested parties from the local authority (Third Sector Team; Economic Development Unit), voluntary, community and faith sector / MACC and Chamber of Commerce to scope what was already happening and what was needed. It was recognised that a model should be developed that builds on existing voluntary, community and faith sector infrastructure and capacity building support as well as existing and emerging economic strategies/partnerships and business networks. This would enable stakeholders to co-ordinate efforts and prevent a scattergun approach that could turn hard pressed businesses off and make it difficult for individual often very small youth work providers to develop meaningful and effective relationships with business. The local authority recognised the value of developing a framework model and bringing everything together in an overarching strategy. It spelt out how different parts of the local authority could work together without it being onerous or becoming yet another strategy that could just be left on the shelf.

It was agreed to:

- Develop an engagement framework rather than a new and separate strategy

- Underpin this framework with a set of principles/ values and key outcomes together with 'How To' guides for the voluntary, community and faith sector and private sector.
- Pilot the framework by building on existing and emerging IT infrastructure and voluntary, community and faith sector and business networks.
- Identify resource to drive the pilot.

Key Learning points:

- The ethics and principles of this work needs to be explored and re explored on a regular basis. The youth sector will have opinions and local authorities will also have a view. For example in Manchester there was a clear steer from politicians that this work should benefit groups from voluntary, community and faith sector.
- The strategic leadership for the project needs to come from the local authority
- Look across the local authority and develop links with other departments working with business to use their contacts, networks and expertise
- Be co-ordinated and work collectively to develop capacity
- It provides an opportunity to confront tensions and build partnerships between providers. . As the sector changes and new providers emerge so will tensions on who should benefit, i.e. should private providers benefit from local authority brokerage
- Working in partnership with local business organisations i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Business in the Community helps get into the business community and adds credibility.

In Manchester specific learning relating to the local area were identified:

- Delivering the capacity building in Regeneration areas brought the added dimension of clustering and consortia.
- Working with local consultants enabled existing knowledge and relationships to be utilised.
- In asking people to take on 'extra' work use the 'add one' concept. It is one further ask rather than another project.

Phase 4: next steps:

As a result of this pilot there is a commitment from the partners in Manchester (Manchester City Council, MACC and Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce) to support and embed the work that is has taken place as part of the **Routes to Success** project. It is agreed that the partners will continue to work with the NYA Consultants to:

- Work with MACC to develop the programme further using funding they have secured from Big Lottery Fund for Transforming Local Infrastructure. There is a large degree of crossover in the work undertaken by NYA and their partners and the work MACC are proposing to do. By working together the partners will achieve their outcomes and make resources go further.
- The work will include good practice guides, a summary of research and training the training material, all to be available on the MACC website. Follow up with Youth Provider organisations and Businesses who attended the event to map any further activity that has taken place. Capture learning from this activity and understand the impact on the youth providers, business and young people. Use this information inform future materials and initiatives

- Identify a regeneration area to pilot the engagement framework building on existing work bringing clusters of businesses together on an area basis. The businesses will be bought together with youth sector groups from the same area. Local authority officers will broker the relationship and aim to identify support for particular projects to meet the needs of the organisations and young people.

This is a great practical demonstration of partners from a number of different organisations and sectors coming together to share resources, learning and knowledge to pursue a common aim; namely to develop positive supportive relationships between SMEs and voluntary youth organisations.

Conclusions and Key learning

Through the project the key partners kept in contact and reviewed progress and adapted the project in response to reality on the ground. Some assumptions were challenged and although every setting will have its own opportunities and challenges a number of key learning points emerged:

For the local authority:

- Scan the environment to identify what is already there. The formal education sector and those involved in employment and skills have links and relationships already in place. Find out if work is already taking place within business organisations, the voluntary, community and faith sector, particularly in infrastructure bodies and across the local authority.
- There is a need to build on local links; there will be lots of things already going on but not always in a coordinated way. Coordinating activity helps businesses to engage with the sector. 'One ask' can be responded to with 'one offer', rather than a number of organisations making separate approach that could be overwhelming making saying no the easier option. Relationships between youth organisations and business and

the culture of partnership may not as developed as you hope. Capacity building may be needed by both partners. The preparation and linking will take longer than you think. You may need to set parameters for inclusion and linking of existing work as often there is yet another initiative to be aware of and concerns to address. You may choose to make that an ongoing part of the work and continue to bring work together.

- The voluntary, community and faith sector can have unrealistic expectations of business and business often have no idea what the youth sector can offer. The role of a broker can assist in breaking down these barriers and ensure the relationship between the youth sector and business can develop in a positive way.
- The ethics and principles of this work needs to be explored and re explored on a regular basis. Both the local authority and local voluntary, community and faith sector may have views on the type of business they wish to engage with. How would you cope with business that wouldn't support certain groups? For example in Manchester there was a clear steer from politicians that this work should benefit groups from voluntary, community and faith sector.
- Work with business organisations, i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Business in the Community to get their commitment and utilise their contacts and credibility with hard pressed businesses. SMEs in particular need a reason to engage.
- Look at the 'ask' from a business perspective and take the advice of business partners.
- Prepare the youth sector to be realistic and see opportunities as the start of building a relationship.
- The strategic leadership for the project needs to come from the local authority.
- Look across the local authority and develop links with other departments working with business to use their contacts, networks and expertise. Local

authorities will have regeneration and economic development departments who may well be working with business organisations to promote economic growth and to address unemployment.

- It provides an opportunity to confront tensions and build partnerships between providers. As the sector changes and new providers emerge so will tensions on who should benefit, i.e. should private providers benefit from local authority brokerage.

For the voluntary community and faith sector:

- Co-ordinate any specific business engagement projects to learn from each other, avoid duplication and make best use of resources.
- Be coordinated and work collectively with other organisations to develop capacity. When the environment is challenging for both the youth sector and business the temptation is to fight for your own organisation. It can be more effective to act collectively.
- Think about your needs beyond cash. The more imaginative you are the more likely you are to get support. Be clear about your ask. Is it for young people directly, for your staff, for your organisation to run smoothly or about physical resources and buildings? There are some examples in the appendix.
- Make it easy for business to understand what you do for young people and to understand the value of supporting you. Be prepared to demonstrate the impact your work has and be able to identify the outcomes for young people.
- Think more broadly about the impact of the work. What is the impact on the wider community, on health, on schools and education and on anti-social behaviour for example.
- Think about the offer you can make to support business, i.e. offering professional development opportunities to their staff.

- Take the opportunity to work with the local authority to use their knowledge, contacts, expertise and any brokerage they are able to offer.

For business:

- Recognize there are many ways of supporting the voluntary, community and faith sector and in particular youth organisations and they do not all involve giving money. Often support in kind is more valuable than cash. This could be providing professional support, e.g. HR support or help with financial planning, marketing or business planning. There are some examples in appendix 2. Giving your existing staff the chance to volunteer as mentors or board members can be a professional

development opportunity

- Working with youth organisations will give you access to support when working with young apprentices.
- It will not all be one way, be open to the skills, knowledge and experience a youth project may be able to offer you.
- Work with fellow businesses to support organisations in your area, you may develop beneficial relationships with other businesses.
- Access the support offered by the local authority, Chamber of commerce and business in the Community.

Appendix 1

Building Local Business Support for Young People Workshop

Aim: To raise the awareness of voluntary sector youth organisations in Manchester of the benefits of building relationships with business

Learning Outcomes – By the end of the session participants will:

- Be aware of the drivers for working with business in supporting services to young people
- Be aware of the ways in which business can support youth organisations
- Have analysed how ready their organisation is to work with business and what they need to have in place
- Be aware of what their organisation and the work they do offers to business
- Have been able to develop and practice a 5 minute pitch to business
- Have agreed with organisation and individual will represent their cluster at the business speed dating event

1PM Welcome and introductions

Outline of aims for the session

Why work with business, in what ways can they support your work and what can you offer to them

What not to do – stereotypes of the voluntary sector and business

Examination of how ready are you to work with business – Use a questionnaire to examine if you have the standards, skills and qualities needed

What are your goals from working with business – this should link to the biggest needs in your cluster area and organisations

What are your asks – how tangible are they

Writing and delivering your pitch

4.30 What next – who is going to attend the November event

Appendix 2

Examples of relationships between businesses and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations

1. A small community based youth project experienced a dramatic collapse in income and struggled to find funding for core costs. To give themselves a chance to reconfigure their offer and secure their future they approached their landlord of 14 years to request a rent free period. The Landlord was invited to the project and shown the work that took place and the improvements the tenants had made to the building. He agreed a six month rent free period that was eventually extended to 12 months. After 12 months the tenants contacted the landlord to say that although they couldn't afford the whole rent they could offer to pay half rent. The landlord was happy to have the income and to support the project. Over 24 months this has been worth £15,000. The landlord benefited by retaining good tenants who are maintaining and making improvements to his building.
2. A small youth project has a boiler breakdown in the middle of winter leaving it at risk of having to close provision. The initial quote was to replace the boiler for £3500. The project did not have the money available. A trustee who was about to have her kitchen replaced approached the tradesman doing the work who lived in the local area and asked if he could help at all. The tradesman sourced a boiler at cost and provided the other material and the labour free. Total cost £650, initial quote £3,500. This is worth a donation of £2850 and the tradesman has supported a charity in his local area.
3. A regional youth charity need some HR support and was looking to buy it in. Coincidentally the CEO when attending a course met the Regional Director of a building company. He was interested in the work the charity did and they agreed to meet to share information about their respective organisations. As a result of this meeting and the developing relationship the Director asked what he could do to help the charity. The CEO having given this some thought was able to make a number of 'small asks', small to the building firm anyway, and has secured free professional including, HR, project management and bid writing. It is difficult to put a monetary value on this but it has given the charity confidence and energy to approach new projects. The business has taken their first steps into establishing their local CSR work.

Notes



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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