



# Youth matters: summary

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department for  
**education and skills**

Every Child Matters

Change for Children

# Summary

## **Context: Young People and Services Today (Chapter 1)**

**1.** The teenage years are an exciting time, full of learning, new opportunities and new experiences. Young people are enthusiastic, creative and open to new ideas. Most enjoy their teenage years to the full.

**2.** Changes in the economy, society and technology mean that young people today have more opportunities than previous generations and most take full advantage of them. They work hard and succeed at school, going on either to study at college or university or to find a job. The majority have good relationships with their parents and a strong commitment to their friends and local communities. The internet and mobile phones have

revolutionised the way young people live and the way in which they communicate and get information. Technologies such as MP3 are transforming the way they access music.

**3.** Young people also often have great commitment, caring passionately about the issues of the day such as climate change and making poverty history. Many get involved as volunteers and help in the community where they live.

**4.** Typically, it is when we are teenagers that we are most alive to exploring new ideas. New experiences, travel, taking risks and having the opportunity to be responsible for their own decisions all widen young people's horizons.

5. The teenage years are also a time of transition and many young people face difficult challenges – relating, for example, to study, money, employment, health, self-esteem and relationships. Some young people, including disabled young people and those who are homeless, may face barriers in accessing education and leisure, and teenagers from some ethnic groups have to face prejudice.

6. Most young people deal successfully with these challenges and make the transition to adult life without experiencing serious or lasting difficulties. A minority of teenagers, however, can face more serious problems. They may have differences with their parents, which may lead ultimately to leaving or running away from home. They may have health problems which can affect their ability to learn and to achieve. They may become disengaged and disaffected at school, sometimes dropping out completely. Smoking, alcohol and drug habits are also often formed in the teenage years.

7. A minority of young people can get involved in behaviour that is a serious problem for the wider community, including anti-social behaviour and crime. The Government is clear that when this happens we need to respond firmly.

8. This paper is therefore not just about providing more opportunities and support to young people, it is also about challenge. We need to strike the right balance between rights and responsibilities, appreciating the enormous contribution that young people can make while expecting them in return to appreciate and respect the opportunities available to them.

9. Our approach recognises that parents are the strongest influence in young people's lives. However, publicly funded services also have a key role to play. Services for teenagers need to expand opportunities for all young people while helping to tackle the range and complexity of problems faced by the minority who are at risk. We need to provide the right mix of challenge and support to

young people who are involved in anti-social behaviour and crime, and to their parents. We need to respond to young people as they are today, with their greater expectation of autonomy and control, not as young people were a decade ago.

**10.** This paper seeks views on how to reform services in England to meet these challenges. While it focuses on teenagers, some of the proposals it contains are also relevant to young people who are slightly older than 19 or younger than 13. The document starts from an understanding that, while existing services – Youth Services, Connexions, mainstream services, and a wide range of targeted support programmes – have made a crucial contribution, they do not amount to a coherent, modern system of support. There is much that is good about services for teenagers, but there is a lot that could be better. In particular:

- services do not always meet the needs of individual young people;
- the various organisations providing services and help for

young people do not work together as effectively or imaginatively as they should, with the result that money and effort are wasted;

- not enough is being done to prevent young people from drifting into a life of poverty or crime;
- services are failing to exploit the full potential of the internet, mobile phones and other new technologies; and
- teenagers and their parents do not have enough say in what is provided.

### **Vision, Challenges and Principles: Our Approach to Reform (Chapter 2)**

**11.** This document offers for consultation a new strategy for providing opportunities, challenge and support to young people. Our vision is to see services integrated around young people's needs helping all teenagers achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes to the greatest possible extent.

**12.** The proposals aim to address four key challenges:

- how to engage more young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive;
- how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities;
- how to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives; and
- how to provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble.

**13.** Our approach to reform is based on six underpinning principles:

- making services more responsive to what young people and their parents want;
- balancing greater opportunities and support with promoting young people's responsibilities;

- making services for young people more integrated, efficient and effective;
- improving outcomes for all young people, while narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not;
- involving a wide range of organisations from the voluntary, community and private sectors in order to increase choice and secure the best outcomes; and
- building on the best of what is currently provided.

### **Empowering Young People: Things to do and Places to go (Chapter 3)**

**14.** Hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London will provide a tremendous incentive for all young people to participate in a whole range of positive sporting, volunteering and cultural activities.

**15.** Teenagers, their parents and communities all want more positive things to do and better places to go for young people. And when young people are involved in activities and

are busy they are less likely to drift into trouble, cause a nuisance or commit crime. But currently up to a quarter of young people do not take part in any form of positive activities, most often because they are not interested in what is available.

**16.** Our first challenge is to put young people themselves in control of the things to do and places to go in their area. We don't want government agencies second guessing them. So we propose to put buying power directly in the hands of young people themselves in two ways:

- First, we will support Local Authorities to develop and pilot 'opportunity cards'. These cards would provide discounts on a range of things to do and places to go and could also be topped up by young people and their parents with money to spend on sports and other constructive activities. Subject to piloting, we will establish a national scheme to support the roll-out of local opportunity cards. Central

Government will also top up the opportunity cards of disadvantaged 13-16 year olds. This subsidy would be withheld from young people engaging in unacceptable and anti-social behaviours and the card suspended or withdrawn. Over time, we could expect to see Local Authorities choosing to fund sports and other constructive activities for young people by topping up their opportunity cards. Top-ups could also be used to reward young people for volunteering or for making progress in improving their situation.

- Second, we propose to provide an 'opportunity fund' in each Local Authority to be spent on local projects that young people want – for example, providing a youth café or running a sports league. Local Authorities, building on existing practice, may adopt different approaches, but the key aim is for young people

themselves to decide how the fund can be spent.

**17.** Local Authorities, working through children's trusts, have a key role to play in commissioning and providing activities and facilities for young people. To help ensure that activities are of a more consistent quality and that they meet the needs of young people we propose:

- to legislate to clarify Local Authorities' duty to secure positive activities for all young people;
- to provide statutory guidance for Local Authorities setting out a new set of national standards for the activities that all young people would benefit from accessing in their free time. This would include:
  - access to two hours per week of sporting activity;
  - access to two hours per week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups or classes;

- opportunities to contribute to their communities through volunteering;
- a wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences; and
- a range of safe and enjoyable places in which to spend time;

- that each Local Authority, working through children's trust arrangements, should, within existing resources, develop an annual local offer to communicate clearly the national standards to young people and the range of activities available locally.

**18.** We propose to establish a line of capital funding of £40 million over two years from April 2006 to enable Local Authorities to develop, in conjunction with young people, new approaches to strategic investment in youth facilities. We want them to think creatively about what is available for young people locally, with a particular focus on facilities in deprived neighbourhoods.

**19.** Through extended services, schools will have an important part to play in delivering the local offer. We will provide additional central Government support to increase sporting opportunities for older teenagers and those not in school by investing in a network of local youth sport development managers. We also want to explore the scope for giving more young people the opportunity to take part in summer residential events.

**20.** We want young people to have more influence over what is being provided in each locality. They should have more opportunities to be involved in the planning and delivery of services and more opportunities to express their views during local inspections.

#### **Young People as Citizens: Making a Contribution (Chapter 4)**

**21.** The second challenge is how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities. The new body being established to implement the recommendations of the Russell

Commission on volunteering will be tasked with achieving a step-change in the level of volunteering by young people.

**22.** In addition, we want to promote peer mentoring, sustained civic service and a stronger culture of volunteering in schools, colleges and universities. We will also explore in pilots the impact of different types of rewards in encouraging young people to volunteer. We are particularly interested in extending the idea of earning points or credits to be exchanged for a choice of reward.

#### **Supporting Choices: Information, Advice and Guidance (Chapter 5)**

**23.** The third challenge is to provide better support to young people as they make decisions about their careers, education, health and other issues. Difficult transitions have always existed, like that from primary to secondary school. Recent 14-19 reforms mean that young people now face increasingly complex decisions as they approach the age of 14. Those decisions can have a dramatic effect on young people's

future wellbeing and on their ability to contribute to wider society and the economy. It is in all of our interests to help them make the right choices.

**24.** We must therefore provide good, impartial and accessible advice which is free from stereotyping. In some circumstances – for example on health issues – advice should be confidential. It must be provided in a way which recognises how young people live their lives today. That means, for example, taking full advantage of new technology.

**25.** We propose clear minimum expectations of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) that each young person and their parents should receive. These would be:

- at age 11-12 (year 7): an introduction from a variety of people, including other pupils, to what is on offer within secondary school;
- at age 13-14 (year 9): support in considering post-14 choices and a personal session with an adviser if they or their parents need or want

it. This will complement plans for a local 14-19 learning prospectus;

- throughout the teenage years: better help to think through post-16 options, personal social and health issues and career choices;
- an easy-to-access, innovative and independent ICT service through which young people can access national and local information from a variety of sources, including through an easily navigable website, online advisers and a helpline.

**26.** We want to explore how we might give further impetus to the quality and impartiality of IAG by expressing these expectations in a set of quality standards, on which we will consult.

**27.** We believe that schools and colleges should be accountable for ensuring the wellbeing and maximum progression of all their pupils and students, including those with severe and complex learning difficulties.

**28.** To support this and to reflect the wider reforms of services for children and young people set out in *Every Child Matters*, we will devolve responsibility for commissioning IAG and the funding that goes with it, from the Connexions Service to Local Authorities, working through children's trusts, schools and colleges.

**29.** In devolving funding, we will aim to ensure that young people have a better service linked to the school curriculum and to pastoral care; that services are efficient and cost-effective; and that high-performing Connexions Services are preserved. In most cases, we would expect to see children's trusts, schools and colleges agreeing on new arrangements for commissioning IAG locally. But where schools and colleges believe that local provision is poor, they should have the right to commission the service directly. Following a phased approach from 2006, we would expect these new arrangements to be in place by 2008.

**30.** Local Authorities would be responsible for commissioning IAG for

young people who do not attend a school or college. There will also be times when young people want to seek confidential information and advice – perhaps on physical, emotional and mental health issues – from a trusted adult who is not linked to where they live or where they are studying.

### **All Young People Achieving: Reforming Targeted Support (Chapter 6)**

**31.** The fourth challenge is to provide more tailored and intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble. Problems multiply if they are not addressed and the risk factors involved in many poor outcomes – such as being out of education, employment or training, offending and being victims of crime, teenage conceptions or substance misuse – are often the same. Support services need to meet the overall needs of individual teenagers, rather than approaching them piecemeal.

**32.** Young people at risk of poor outcomes should therefore receive,

via someone they know and trust, an integrated package of support which meets their needs.

**33.** We want every young person who needs support in a number of overlapping areas to have a nominated lead professional who will be a single point of contact and make sure support is provided in a co-ordinated, convenient and integrated way. We will move towards a clear and simple assessment process so that neither young people nor their family have to retell their story many times to different people. We will also make it easier for young people to access services by encouraging co-location in schools, voluntary drop-in and health centres, youth facilities and advice shops.

**34.** We propose to merge a range of existing Government funding programmes which currently focus on specific issues, so that Local Authorities working through children's trusts can use the funding more flexibly to tackle the needs of young people in a holistic way. We will ask Local Authorities, working

with local partners, to use this new flexibility to take the lead on teenage pregnancy and tackling the number of young people not in education, employment or training, while contributing to further progress in dealing with drugs and youth crime, in keeping with their existing duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. We expect this to lead to frontline youth support teams focused on prevention and effective early intervention; a step change in the extent to which professionals who support young people engage with parents; and clearer and simpler routes for schools to use when they have pupils with severe problems.

### **A Reformed System: Delivering the Proposals (Chapter 7)**

**35.** We will give Local Authorities working through children's trusts the necessary responsibility, resources, authority and incentives to lead the way towards a more responsive and integrated service for teenagers and their parents.

**36.** Having a single body responsible and accountable for youth policy and

the *Every Child Matters* outcomes in each area will enable integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This will lead to an integrated youth support service, focused on and structured around young people's needs and involving a wide range of providers, including voluntary and community organisations.

**37.** We need universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for young people. These changes will therefore be made in the context of wider reforms to universal services including schools, for example the new Leadership Group on Pupil Behaviour and Discipline.

**38.** We will support this by merging funding streams and developing together with the inspectorates a single revised system for performance management.

**39.** The service most affected by these reforms is Connexions. Connexions has pioneered innovative

approaches to supporting young people, especially those at risk – for example through the role of the Connexions Personal Adviser and by listening to teenagers and involving them in devising their own package of support. Now in the light of wider *Every Child Matters* and 14-19 reforms, it is important that we integrate Connexions with a wider range of services at local level. We will encourage Local Authorities to retain the Connexions brand and would welcome views on the range of services it might cover.

**40.** Managing the transition to these new arrangements will be complex. It will be important to maintain a focus during an interim period on the effective delivery of key objectives by services affected by the changes, such as Connexions Partnerships and Youth Services. Subject to consultation, and the success of pilots, we intend that the reforms proposed in this document should be completed by April 2008.

## Having Your Say: Consultation Arrangements (Chapter 8)

**41.** The consultation period for these proposals will run until 4 November 2005. Final decisions will be made after that. We want to hear the views of all concerned – Local Authorities, schools and colleges, Connexions Partnerships, Youth Services, the private and voluntary and community sectors, the health sector, the wider community and particularly young people and parents.



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