

# Positive for Youth

Executive Summary

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## Introduction

The Government is passionate about creating a society that is positive for youth. Young people matter. They are important to us now, and to our future, and we need them to flourish.

*Positive for Youth* is a new approach to cross-Government policy for young people aged 13-19 in England. It brings together all of the Government's policies for this age group, presenting a single vision across the interests of at least nine departments.

It has been produced with young people and youth professionals through extensive collaboration and consultation.

*Positive for Youth* sets out a shared vision for how all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities, businesses – can work together in partnership to support families and improve outcomes for young people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged or vulnerable.

This means working towards a common goal of young people having a strong sense of belonging, and the supportive relationships, strong ambitions, and good opportunities they need to realise their potential.

Young people must be in the driving seat to inform decisions, shape provision, and inspect quality.

Councils are accountable primarily to local people for how well young people do, and how well their services support them.

The Government will publish annually national measures of young people's positive outcomes, and an audit at the end of 2012 of overall progress towards creating a society which is more positive for youth.

## Context

The teenage years are a critical period of growth and change. They are an important time for making significant life choices and decisions.

Young people need to try new things, take on responsibility, and be allowed to learn from their failures and mistakes.

Adolescence brings significant physical and emotional changes and teenagers naturally grow in independence. This can lead to changes in the nature of the relationship between young people and their parents or carers, often making it more difficult. These difficulties are for the most part the normal pressures of growing up and do not lead to detrimental outcomes for young people involved.

Most young people make the transition successfully to adulthood through a combination of supportive families; good schools, colleges and training providers; access to opportunities for personal and social development outside the classroom; and the vision and belief that they can succeed.

While most young people are doing well and are enjoying life, there is no room to be complacent.

The current global economic situation has created concern among many of today's teenagers about their future – particularly their future employment prospects.

Many young people are also concerned about local services as councils face difficult decisions, and charities struggle to sustain provision.

Disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, including those in care, those with disabilities, and those struggling in education can be at risk of poor outcomes. They need additional and early help to overcome the challenges they face.

A very small minority of young people feel no sense of belonging and as a result do not respect the communities in which they live. The vast majority, however, do make a positive contribution and feel misrepresented and undermined by negative images of, and attitudes towards, young people.

We need to work together to create a society that is more positive for youth.

## **We all have a role to play**

Government cannot create a society that is positive for youth on its own. Real progress depends on everyone playing their part:

- **Young people** – taking responsibility, making the most of every opportunity available, and speaking up on issues they care about.
- **Parents, carers and families** – having the primary responsibility and influence to nurture young people through to adulthood.
- **Other adults** – taking an interest in the lives of their young people and being positive role models.
- **The media** – taking responsibility for the impact of the images of young people that they promote.
- **Businesses** – building partnerships through which to give time, expertise, and money to projects to support young people.
- **Teachers** – helping young people aspire and attain, and working in partnership with other services to address early any barriers they face.
- **Youth workers** – supporting young people's personal and social development and helping them develop strong aspirations.
- **Other professionals** – providing specialist early help to young people to address issues and stop them escalating and causing harm.
- **Local authorities** – having the primary responsibility for improving young people's outcomes and commissioning appropriate services.
- **Other commissioners** – having a responsibility for specific outcomes such as crime and health outcomes for young people.
- **Government** – promoting new ways of working, facilitating reform, and monitoring overall progress.

## Helping young people succeed

Raising young people's aspirations and driving up participation and attainment in learning is the best way to help young people realise their potential and get ready for work.

The Government has already introduced significant reforms to education to drive up standards – including further empowering teachers, reviewing the curriculum, and providing additional funding for the most disadvantaged pupils.

It is raising the age to which young people must participate in education or training to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015 to help prepare them for adult life and employment.

It has also recently announced a Youth Contract to address youth unemployment and published a new strategy for supporting young people aged 16-24 to participate in learning and work.

The Government's health reforms offer exciting potential to improve young people's health and wellbeing by developing more coordinated and preventative approaches, involving young people in shaping local services, and making it as easy as possible for them to get early advice.

Young people's experiences outside the classroom at home and in their community are also crucial in helping them form and pursue their ambitions.

## Promoting youth voice

Young people have energy, enthusiasm, and valuable ideas for shaping and improving the world around them. Yet young people generally get a bad press.

Young people have a right to have their views taken into account in all decisions that affect their lives. We must give them a stronger voice and celebrate their positive contribution and achievements. We must also encourage and support them to speak up when they see media reporting that they believe is unbalanced or unfair.

There are many ways to involve young people locally. The Government urges relevant bodies in every area to involve young people in making decisions about council, health, transport, and other relevant services. It wants to see every area having arrangements for young people to audit the quality of these services.

To support this, the Government is providing funding of £850,000 to the British Youth Council in 2011-2013 to:

- set up a new national scrutiny group of representative young people to advise Ministers across Government directly on how policies affect young people and their families;
- advise councils and others on how to involve young people in decision making and auditing services;
- make sure there are young people able to represent youth voice in the national media; and
- sustain the UK Youth Parliament and support its influence.

In addition, each local authority area will soon have a new organisation called Local HealthWatch to make sure that young people will have a voice in shaping local health services.

## **Putting families first**

Parents, carers, and families, have the primary responsibility and influence to nurture young people through to adulthood.

Nearly all parents find parenting teenagers difficult at times. They need to feel society and public authorities support their efforts to take responsibility for their teenage children, transmit positive values to them, and set appropriate boundaries.

Parents need to know where to go for advice and help if they are worried or having problems.

Services for young people need to support families while respecting and nurturing young people's growing sense of independence and personal responsibility.

Many charities, faith groups, and other voluntary and community organisations play a significant role in supporting families, including through parenting classes.

In addition to significant support for families in the early years, the Government continues to support families of teenagers through a range of free online and telephone advice services.

It also provides funding to councils that can be used to support parents.

The Government has launched a specific programme to turn around the lives of the 120,000 most troubled families by the end of this Parliament.

## **Strengthening communities and the voluntary sector**

Strong communities which take responsibility for their young people will help them to feel a strong sense of belonging.

All young people benefit from relationships with adults they trust. Youth work has a key role to play in supporting young people and strengthening their relationship with their communities. Many young people can also be inspired particularly by adults from the world of work.

We can be proud of the uniformed organisations, faith groups, and other charities and community and voluntary organisations that already make a huge difference in the lives of many young people and their communities. They are responsible for a significant proportion of the youth work and other activities and services available to young people. Many of these have particular expertise in helping disadvantaged young people to do well.

To restore common-sense and proportionality, the Government is reducing unnecessary burdens related to vetting and checking adults who come forward to volunteer to work with young people.

It is also providing funding to ensure around 5,000 Community Organisers are trained over the lifetime of this Parliament to act as a catalyst for more community-led social

action.

The Government wants to see innovative and enterprising voluntary and community organisations. This means them demonstrating what difference they make for young people and attracting income from a wider range of sources so that they are less dependent on state funding.

It has recently given community groups the right to bid to take over the running of local council services. It is also helping providers find ways of measuring what difference they make to young people which are credible with funders, and making it easier for charities to get access to the capital they need to grow.

To identify new ways of helping disadvantaged young people to succeed, 18 voluntary organisations are benefiting from a share of £31.4m from the Department for Education over the two years 2011-13. They are pioneering and evaluating innovative approaches to early help, such as targeted support to help young people stay and succeed in learning who would otherwise drop out of school, college or training.

In addition, alongside providers in the private and social enterprise sector, voluntary and community sector organisations will also have a key role in delivering new intensive support to engage some of the most vulnerable 16-17 year olds in education and training. This follows the recent announcement of a new performance based scheme worth £126m in England over the next three years, as part of the Youth Contract.

Businesses and other employers are key members of the community. Like many in the charity sector, an increasing number of them understand the benefits to them and their employees of developing partnerships at the corporate level to support young people – who may be their current or future customers or employees.

The Government will provide funding of £320,000 over the period to March 2013 to a consortium led by Business in the Community to broker the engagement of more businesses with charities to support work with young people.

## **The valuable role of services for young people**

Some young people don't get the support or opportunities they need through their families or communities. To help counter this disadvantage, youth workers and other services for young people have an important role to play in:

- supporting young people's personal and social development – which includes developing important skills and qualities needed for life, learning, and work;
- making sure all young people are able to participate and achieve in education or training; and
- raising young people's aspirations and thereby reducing teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and crime.

The Government will therefore retain the duty on councils to secure young people's access to sufficient activities and services to improve their wellbeing, including their duty to seek and take account of young people's views in decisions about these activities.

It will consult shortly on new much shorter and clearer statutory guidance.

In addition to activities and services funded by councils, the Government is investing directly to improve services and opportunities for young people.

- By March 2013 there will be 63 state-of-the-art Myplace youth centres in disadvantaged areas acting as hubs for a wide range of activities and services for young people. The Government will help centre leaders to promote the network nationally, share effective practice, and build local business and community ownership.
- A wide range of organisations are being funded to develop and test National Citizen Service. The aim over time is to offer every 16 year old the opportunity to mix and learn from peers from different backgrounds in a challenging programme of character-building activities and to create a legacy of social action in their communities. Over 8,000 young people took part in 2011 and up to 30,000 more will take part in 2012 with the aim of expanding to 90,000 young people in 2014 making it one of the largest personal and social development programmes for young people in the world.
- The Government is seeking to provide more young people with exciting personal development opportunities by exploring opportunities to expand the MOD-sponsored Cadet Forces.

## **The importance of early help**

Supportive families and good schools are key, but young people who are particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable need effective additional early help.

Providing early help is not just about intervening early in a child's life. The teenage years are another critical period of growth and change, and not all problems in these years can be predicted.

It is therefore essential to identify when additional help is needed in the teenage years, and to provide it to young people and their families promptly to prevent issues escalating and causing further harm.

Local authorities can draw on funding from the Revenue Support Grant, the non-ringfenced Early Intervention Grant worth £2.365 billion in 2012-13, and from 2013 the public health grant, to respond to the priority needs of young people and their families.

Community Budgets will be available in all local authorities over the next two years to allow areas to pool funding locally to support families with multiple problems.

The Government has a wide range of policies to support early help. These relate to specific issues such as safeguarding young people from harm or neglect as well as to particular groups of young people, such as those in care.

## **Stronger local partnership**

The *Positive for Youth* vision relies on all sections of society working together in stronger partnership to help more young people to feel a strong sense of belonging and to realise their potential.

Councils have a key strategic role, but they cannot realise the vision on their own.

They will need to work with young people, families, and communities, and with local partners such as charities, schools, health services, and the police to assess needs and co-ordinate local resources. Health and wellbeing boards offer exciting potential for them to do so.

The country's financial situation creates significant pressures. Working together to integrate services, reduce duplication, and share resources, is a better approach than simply cutting existing services to fit reduced budgets.

The Department for Education is providing funding of £780,000 in 2011-13 to the Local Government Association to make sure that local authority commissioners get the support they need to improve local services for young people.

This will include access to the lessons from a number of pioneering 'youth innovation zones', and support to reform how services are delivered locally – including increasing the role of charities and other organisations. The first four youth innovation zones are Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Knowsley, and a consortium led by Devon.

Local people are best able to make decisions about local services in response to local needs. The Government won't tell them what services to deliver or how to deliver them.

However, it will not hesitate to intervene against any well-founded concerns about long-standing failure to improve outcomes and services for young people.

## **Monitoring progress**

The Government will work with young people and those who fund and deliver services for them to review progress in realising the *Positive for Youth* vision and in improving outcomes for young people.

It will focus wherever possible on measures of the positive outcomes achieved rather than negative outcomes prevented.

It will use data that is already available to publish a set of measures that is more positive than any previous set of performance measures.

A new Youth Action Group is bringing together government Ministers from nine departments with key voluntary sector leaders to discuss the needs of disadvantaged young people.

The Government will publish an audit of progress at end of 2012.



## Summary of commitments

Action the Government is taking that will support the *Positive for Youth* vision includes:

- **empowering young people** by enabling them to inspect and report on local youth services and setting up a national scrutiny group for them to help 'youth proof' government policy as part of funding of £850,000 to the British Youth Council in 2011-2013;
- **funding support to parents** of teenagers through national helpline and website services to offer support and advice;
- **empowering communities** through the Localism Act which gives them the Right to Challenge to take over the running of council services;
- **funding improved business brokerage** with projects for young people through funding of £320,000 to April 2013 to a consortium led by Business in the Community;
- **promoting a Business Compact on social mobility** to set out practical ways businesses can avoid talent and ability going to waste and ensure that young people from all backgrounds have a fair chance to get ahead;
- **reforming education** to raise standards, particularly for the most disadvantaged young people;
- **reviewing the National Curriculum and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE)** – to define the essential knowledge young people need to move confidently and successfully through their education and define the core outcomes PSHE should achieve;
- **raising the age to which young people must participate in education or training** to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015 to help prepare them for adult life and employment;
- **supporting young people to participate in learning and work** including through its Youth Contract worth over £1bn to support more 16 and 17 year olds to participate in education or training, expand opportunities for young apprenticeships, and help more young people find work;
- **targeting Apprenticeships more on young adults**, ensuring consistently high quality across all Apprenticeships, and cutting back on bureaucracy to encourage more employers to join the programme;
- **transforming vocational education** following the Wolf review to ensure that vocational qualifications are high quality and enable progression to higher education and sustainable employment;
- **promoting work experience**, including by launching a consultation on programmes of study for 16 to 18 year olds, which includes a vision that work experience should become an important part of many 16 to 18 year olds' experience in school or college;

- **providing capital investment to complete 63 Myplace centres** by March 2013, and developing a national approach to exploiting their potential to be hubs led by communities and businesses for transforming local services;
- **expanding National Citizen Service** to offer 30,000 places to young people in 2012, 60,000 in 2013, and 90,000 in 2014;
- **exploring opportunities to expand Cadet Forces**, particularly in maintained schools;
- **encourage volunteering for all age groups including young people**, including through funding of £4 million over 2011-15 to v; over £40 million over 2011-13 through the Social Action Fund, Innovation in Giving Fund, Challenge Prizes, and Local Infrastructure Fund; and over £1 million over 2011-13 to YouthNet;
- **promoting the School Games** to ensure that every young person can experience the excitement and benefits of competitive sport;
- **promoting early intervention**, including through the Early Intervention Grant worth £2.365 billion in 2012-13 to local authorities for services for vulnerable children, young people and families;
- **making Community Budgets available in all local authorities over the next two years** to remove financial and legal restrictions on how services intervene early to avoid poor and high cost outcomes for vulnerable families and young people;
- **funding 18 innovative voluntary organisations** with £31.4m over the two years 2011-13 to pioneer and evaluate innovative approaches to early help;
- **reforming health services** including setting up health and wellbeing boards to enable more strategic and coordinated planning and delivery of health services and a Local HealthWatch in each local authority area to make sure that young people will have a voice in shaping local health services;
- **addressing the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood** by continuing to work actively with businesses and regulators to ensure Reg Bailey's recommendations are implemented;
- **developing a new social marketing strategy** to promote young people's public health;
- **promoting young people's mental health**, including through the *Time to Change* campaign, capacity building in the voluntary and community sector, staff training, and helping local areas develop evidence-based practices;
- **taking action to reduce smoking, substance misuse and obesity** among young people;
- **making far-reaching changes to the safeguarding system** in response to Professor Eileen Munro's review, ensuring that arrangements for older children and young people are addressed explicitly in these changes;

- **giving children in care extra support at every stage of their education**, including through the Pupil Premium and through £1,200 per year from the new 16 to 19 Bursary;
- **promoting work to prevent and tackle youth homelessness** including through strengthening the Homelessness Safety Net to include young people under the age of 21 who are vulnerable as a result of leaving care and 16 and 17 year olds who find themselves homeless;
- **setting up a new Troubled Families Team** by the end of the 2011 to work alongside local areas to ensure that these families are supported;
- **establishing an Ending Gang and Youth Violence Team** to provide practical advice and support to up to 30 local areas with a gang or serious youth violence problem;
- **running the *This is Abuse* campaign** to prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships;
- **running a body confidence campaign** to tackle negative body image amongst young people;
- **clarifying its expectations on local authorities** through revised statutory guidance to be published shortly for consultation on their duty to secure activities and services for young people;
- **supporting local authority commissioners** to improve local services for young people by providing funding of £780,000 in 2011-13 to the Local Government Association – including for a small number of ‘youth innovation zones’ to test radical new system-wide approaches to involving all local partners in supporting young people – the first four are Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Knowsley, and a consortium led by Devon;
- **funding a strategic partner for the voluntary youth sector** to give them a voice in Government policy, promote access to social finance, and support workforce development;
- **funding a Mutuals Information Service** to provide a comprehensive package of support for public sector workers to create new independent public service mutuals;
- **helping services for young people to demonstrate their impact** by funding the Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions to develop standards for evidence, and Catalyst to develop an outcomes framework;
- **working across departments** through a Youth Action Group that brings together Ministers from nine departments with key voluntary organisations to discuss the needs of the most disadvantaged young people;
- **publishing annually a positive set of national measures** to demonstrate progress in improving outcomes for young people; and
- **committing to a ‘one year on’ audit** at the end of 2012 to take stock of progress in achieving the *Positive for Youth* vision.