

Outcomes of the Youth Opportunity Fund / Youth Capital Fund

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Marian Morris and Matthew Walker

National Foundation for Educational Research

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Executive summary

Background

The Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) were established in April 2006, as part of the proposals in the Youth Green Paper 'Youth Matters'. The Funds comprised a total of £115 million of ring-fenced funding, which was distributed between all Local Authorities (LAs) to work with young people to administer over two years. Subsequently, the YOF/YCF was extended until 2011. The overall aim of the Funds is to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving young people the power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area.

The two funds have different focuses. Through the YOF, young people can apply for finance to develop and provide activities using revenue funding. Through the YCF, young people can apply for funding for capital investment such as buildings and equipment. One distinctive feature of both the YOF and the YCF is that applications are made by young people to a panel of other young people who make decisions on whether applications are appropriate and should receive funding.

The YOF/YCF guidance notes from DCSF state that all young people aged 13-19 should be able to participate in YOF/YCF, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and the hard-to-reach. These include young people who traditionally face barriers to participation such as *'young disabled people, young care leavers, looked after young people, young offenders, young carers, young refugees, young lesbians and gay men, young black and minority ethnic people, travellers and those in rural areas'*.¹

¹ Department for Education and Skills (2006) Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes, Nottingham: DfES.

Key Findings

- Participation in the decision-making panel had led to positive outcomes for panel members including developing personally and socially and gaining skills in team working and decision-making. These young people also benefited from a sense of empowerment and, in some cases, increased participation in other positive activities and improved attitudes towards learning.
- Young people who participated in projects that received YOF/YCF funding also benefited. They had made new social contacts and learned new skills as a result of the project activities. Their self-confidence and, in some cases, behaviour had improved and some had increased their engagement in other projects and activities.
- The Funds approach whereby a panel of young people decide whether applications for the YOF/YCF from other young people should be funded has been a success. Nearly all LAs considered that the young people had done a good job in administering the Funds.
- Young people were said to have been increasingly efficient and confident in scrutinising applications. Panel members valued the responsibility and power that they had, felt listened to and respected and believed that they had been able to make a difference for young people.
- Promotion and marketing had changed from a widespread approach to a more targeted approach and it was expected that this targeted approach would be the focus in the future.
- The importance of an adult broker to promote and support an application to the funds emerged as a key feature of the Funds.
- As the Funds became more embedded in the second year LAs had experienced an increase in the number of applications, including from the voluntary and community sector. The nature of applications had also changed, as young people applied for Funds for more creative and innovative projects.
- The Funds had led to an increase in the number and range of opportunities available for young people and an increase in young people's participation. To some extent this included participation among young people who did not previously participate in positive activities. The Funds sometimes acted as a catalyst for a new group to form with a focus on applying for Funding.

Aims and Objectives

The evaluation aims to explore the impact of the YOF/YCF on young people and to examine the following hypotheses:

- That giving young people control and decision-making power about resources in their area will increase levels of participation in positive activities
- That giving young people a voice (through funding / consultation) will lead to an increase in the provision of quality positive activities.

Summary of research methods

The research which was undertaken between September 2006 and June 2008, had two phases. The findings from the first phase were presented in O'Donnell *et al* (2007)². This summary presents the findings from the second phase of the research and draws on data gathered through three strands of research methods. These were:

- Follow-up case-study visits to 12 LAs, where interviews were conducted with LA staff, young people who were members of the panel, applicants and participants in YOF/YCF funded activities, and adults who supported young people and/or provided activities
- Telephone survey of managers with responsibility for the YOF/YCF in 129 LAs
- Questionnaire survey of 323 young people and the wider community, such as parents and carers, in eight LAs.

Further details on each strand are provided at the end of this summary.

What has been the impact of the YOF/YCF on young people's participation in decision-making?

The Funds appear to have been successful in achieving the aim of empowering young people by giving them active roles as decision-makers through the YOF/YCF youth panels. Panel members reported that they felt that they had made a difference for young people and said that their decisions were respected by adults. The success of this often novel approach, of young people acting as decision-makers with a budget, is reflected in the views of LA staff. Nearly all (98 per cent) of those who were surveyed by telephone considered that the panel of young people had done a good job in administering the Funds.

LAs had adopted different approaches to the structure of the panels with most operating one central panel and fewer adopting a combination of a central

² O'Donnell, L., Bielby, G., Golden, S., Morris, M., Walker, M. and Maguire, S. (2007) Youth Opportunity fund and Youth Capital fund: Evaluation findings from initial case-study visits. Nottingham: DCSF.

panel and additional area panels. A minority of LAs only used area panels. The structure was related to some extent to the type of LA. Central panels were most common in London Boroughs while County authorities were more likely to use a combination of central and area panels. In general, the approaches adopted appear to have met the needs of LAs, as the case-study LAs had made few changes to their overall structure since the previous year. Nevertheless, while case-study interviewees recognised that there was scope for further broadening the types of young people who were represented on the panel, there were indications that a wider range of young people were already becoming involved. Staff in four LAs said that new members had joined the panel including those who were not previously known to the LA and those who were under-represented on the panel such as young people from disadvantaged areas or with learning difficulties or disabilities. Strategies such as recruiting young people who had applied for the Funds, broadening approaches to promotion and marketing and the influence of word-of-mouth among young people were said to have contributed to recruitment to the panel.

In the first year of the implementation of the Funds, adults who had worked with the decision-making panels had been impressed by their responsible and considered approach to the role. This continued in the second year and there was evidence that panel members were becoming increasingly confident and efficient in scrutinising applications for the YOF/YCF. The support and guidance required from adults was said to be decreasing over time. In order to ensure that the experience gained by young people could be shared with newer recruits to the panel, four LAs had introduced a system of peer mentoring support. This approach entailed experienced panel members paired with newer members. There may be value in all LAs considering mechanisms for sharing practice between panels to assist the continuing development of the Funds.

What was the impact on panel members?

In addition to contributing to the aim of empowering young people, the experience of being a member of a YOF/YCF decision-making panel was of value in relation to the personal, social and skill development of those young people who were involved. These young people had met new and different people and their perceptions of others had been challenged. They had developed new skills which they considered would be of value in the future and, in some cases, had gained accreditation. Other LAs may wish to consider accrediting the work of panel members to support the recognition of their contribution. The young people valued the responsibility and power that they had in their role and felt that their views were listened to and respected. Consequently, they felt that they had been able to make a difference for young people. The Panel members' success in ensuring the effective implementation of the Funds required considerable commitment and time and there would be value in acknowledging their contribution.

How has awareness of the YOF/YCF been raised and how far has it reached the hardest to reach?

As the YOF/YCF became more embedded, the approaches to promoting and marketing the YOF/YCF had moved from the widespread approaches used initially to more targeted approaches. There was evidence that LAs and panels were increasingly targeting hard-to-reach young people and voluntary and community sector organisations through, for example, outreach work by youth workers and by panel members. To some extent, the increased use of targeted promotion was a consequence of LAs receiving an increased number of applications in addition to the need to broaden the types of individuals and organisations applying for the Funds. It appears likely that use of targeted promotion will continue to increase as the majority of LAs surveyed said that this would be their approach in future.

It was also evident that the YOF/YCF were becoming increasingly embedded in the culture of young people as it was reported that awareness was increasingly raised through word-of-mouth between young people. This increase is notable because such promotion between peers was considered to be the most effective promotion mechanism by around half of the LA staff surveyed. The research also revealed, however, the importance of the role of an adult broker in raising awareness of the opportunity presented by YOF/YCF among young people. The majority of young people who were surveyed said that they had heard of YOF/YCF through an adult. Given this role of adults in engaging young people in applying for the Funds, it may be worth considering promoting the range of activities and facilities that received YOF/YCF funding through appropriate professional, voluntary and community networks.

While LA staff considered generally that there was still scope for further developing the involvement of young people from hard-to-reach groups in the YOF/YCF, the majority had strategies in place to encourage applications from these groups. These strategies most commonly included using existing organisations with links to target groups of young people, including the voluntary and community sector. LAs had also used support workers to target and work with young people who were hard-to-reach in developing an application. It was acknowledged that young people from these groups may need more support and more time to develop an application. Fewer LAs used ring-fenced funding for specific target groups but, among the case-study areas where this approach has been adopted, it was said to have led to an increase in successful applications from particular groups.

What was the process of applying for the Funds like and what has been funded?

In the second year of implementation, the LAs and panels were reviewing some of their processes for administering the Funds. Some were considering, for example, dividing the Funds into equal amounts that could be

applied for at specific timepoints to distribute them more evenly throughout the year. Overall, young people who had applied for the Funds were positive about the experience. For some applicants, the process of applying for the Funds was said to require minimal adult support other than encouragement and assistance with identifying costs. However, staff in projects and LAs acknowledged that some young people required more guidance, motivation and practical support in order to apply.

There was evidence that there had been an increase in the number of applications in particular from voluntary and community sector organisations and from groups of young people who were hard-to-reach. Moreover, LA staff observed that the quality of applications was improving as they were more realistically costed and contained more creative and innovative ideas.

Projects and activities that related to sports, arts, drama, day trips, residential and youth centre refurbishments continued to be among the most common types of projects to have received funding. However, panels were reflecting on the nature of the funded projects and were considering re-prioritising the projects they funded to ensure a balance of project types across their area. Interviewees noted the value of showcasing examples of a variety of projects to stimulate ideas and other LAs may wish to consider this approach.

What is the impact of the YOF/YCF on provision for young people and their participation in activities?

The research showed that the YOF/YCF had led to an increase in participation in positive activities among young people. Half of the LAs surveyed said that there had been a large increase and a further third said that there had been a small increase. Moreover, the majority of LAs felt that, at least to some extent, this was among young people who had not participated previously. This was also reflected in the finding that young people who were surveyed reported that they had participated in positive activities more often since the introduction of the Funds. This was particularly the case among young people who said that they had participated in YOF/YCF funded activities.

This was substantiated through the visits to LAs where an overall increase in things to do and places to go was reported. The Funds were said to have funded activities and facilities which would not otherwise have received funding. Young people, reportedly, were also making more frequent use of facilities such as refurbished youth clubs, because what was on offer was what they wanted and because refurbishments had raised the profile of a centre in the area.

While some young people who participated in YOF/YCF funded activities had been involved before YOF/YCF funding was received, there was evidence of young people participating who had not done so before, either because the

project was entirely new or it had not previously appealed to them. In addition, some new groups were formed through applying for the Funds to meet a need, including groups that were formed as a result of outreach work by youth workers. In these instances, applying for the Funds could be a focus and a catalyst for consolidating the group.

Overall, the Funds were said to have led to providing greater access to a wider range of activities, albeit sometimes in specific areas. Furthermore, the YOF/YCF had led to the involvement of more and new providers and improvements in quality of provision (as assessed by whether facilities and activities were up-to-date and provided young people with what they want). Thus, the evidence suggests that the hypotheses are correct and that providing young people with a voice and decision-making power can lead to greater participation and an improvement in the quality of activities.

Young people who had participated in YOF/YCF-funded activities were said to have benefited from learning new skills associated with the specific project. Many had gained in self-confidence and, in some cases, this had led to further outcomes as they engaged in other opportunities or activities. Young people said they gained socially from making new friends and some said that their behaviour had improved since their involvement.

While some interviewees found it difficult to assess the impact of the Funds on the wider community, there were indications of improved attitudes towards young people among the wider community. These effects arose from projects which engaged directly with the community and from adults' respect for young people bringing resources into their community.

Interviewees, and those surveyed, were more circumspect about the impact of YOF/YCF on anti-social behaviour and crime in their areas. This was primarily because they considered that the impact of the project would be contained within the project and would not be able to have a wider effect. However, where a project had provided improved places for young people to go to, respondents were more likely to consider that this had led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

In addition to the impact on young people, the implementation of the Funds had a further impact on LAs by providing a successful demonstration that giving decision-making power to young people was an effective and worthwhile approach for allocating funding within a community. The Funds had provided an opportunity for LAs to learn how best to involve young people in decision-making and some were considering extending this approach to other areas of their activity as a result of their experience.

What have been the lessons learned and how will YOF/YCF develop in the future?

The main challenges that LAs had encountered in implementing the Funds related to ensuring that the Funds were led by young people while balancing this with the necessary structures, procedures and strategic aims. Linked to this was the support provided by LA staff for young panel members. Overall, the time and cost associated with the administration of the Funds was a challenge in many LAs, which could not be fully resourced from the five per cent allocation from the YOF/YCF. As a consequence, LAs had used their own central resources to ensure that the necessary support was provided.

Among projects that had applied for funding, the main challenge identified was associated with delays in receiving the Funds once an application was approved. In general, interviewees did not report delays between applying and gaining approval as a concern. LAs may wish to share practice relating to mechanisms for ensuring a minimal time lapse between approval and receipt of the money.

The second challenge experienced by project staff was the adult support required by young people during the application process. There may be value in panel members and LAs considering alternative approaches to applying to minimise further the demands on applicants and supporting adults.

The key lessons learned by LA staff included:

- being proactive in order to involve a wide range of young people
- providing adequate and appropriate support to panel members
- carefully managing the expectations of young people so that they are not disappointed
- establishing, at an early stage, an infrastructure that included systems for monitoring and distributing the Funds
- considering having a maximum and minimum allocation of funding per project and the possibility of ring-fencing some Funds for particular purposes
- having an application process that was accessible and straightforward was critical
- celebrating the success of YOF/YCF funded projects and to promote this.

In considering the future of the Funds, LA managers were reflecting on the types of projects that were funded and were considering adapting the criteria for approval in relation to the duration of projects, the extent to which they were innovative and whether funding would be allocated to projects that had already received some Funds. In addition, they were considering adapting the panel to either refresh the membership or to devolve some decision-

making to local panels. Overall, LAs' experience of the YOF/YCF was expected to impact on their future approaches to allocating funding to youth provision, including in relation to the new programme of capital investment to improve facilities for young people. They planned to consult more with young people and to adapt their spending to reflect more closely what young people want.

Research Methods

These included case-study visits, telephone survey and a postal survey, as outlined below.

Case studies

A stratified sample of 12 LAs was identified that were broadly representative in terms of the types of LAs across England. Three were County authorities, three were Metropolitan authorities, three were Unitary authorities and three were London Boroughs. The sample included a broad range of LAs in terms of their size, levels of deprivation and demographic characteristics.

The case-study areas were visited between November 2007 and January 2008 and, in each area, interviews were conducted with:

- **Senior managers** with overall responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 interviewees)
- **Operational managers** in the LA or a partner organisation with responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 interviewees)
- LA staff with **administrative and financial management** responsibilities (six interviewees)
- Representatives of the **decision-making panels** of young people with responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 decision-making panels)
- Representatives of **young people in projects** who had successfully applied for YOF/YCF funding or participated in projects (52 projects)
- **Adults from organisations that had supported young people** in applying for the Funds and provided an activity or facility for young people (54 projects). These included 20 projects that were part of the LA, 23 that were voluntary and community sector organisations, two that were a combination of the LA and third sector, three that were private organisations and six schools.

The visits focused on the outcomes and impact of the Funds and any changes and developments in the implementation.

Telephone survey

A telephone survey of managers of the Funds in LAs was conducted in February 2008. The 12 case-study LAs were excluded from this survey and interviews were conducted with managers in 129 of the remaining 138 LAs (93 per cent).

Questionnaire survey of young people and the wider community

A questionnaire survey was undertaken between November 2007 and January 2008 to explore the wider effects of the YOF/YCF among young people who may or may not have participated in YOF/YCF-funded projects, and the wider community. The survey was developed in consultation with young people in the case-study areas and explored participation in activities, awareness of the Funds and the extent of any change in the area since the introduction of the Funds. The questionnaire was distributed by LA staff and young people in eight LAs. A total of 323 questionnaires were returned. These included 237 questionnaires from young people aged 13 to 19 and 81 from people aged 20 and over.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund (YOF/YCF) were established in April 2006, as part of the proposals in the Youth Green Paper 'Youth Matters'. The Funds comprised a total of £115 million of ring-fenced funding which was distributed between all LAs to work with young people to administer over two years. Subsequently, 'Aiming High for Young People'³ – the ten year strategy for positive activities – announced that the YOF/YCF would be extended until 2011.

The overall aim of the Funds was to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving young people the power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. The main purposes of the Funds are to:

- give a voice to young people, particularly disadvantaged young people, in relation to things to do and places to go, conveying a powerful message to young people that their needs and aspirations are important
- change the way that local authorities and their partners provide activities and facilities for young people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, increasing the responsiveness of providers to what young people want
- improve things to do and places to go in line with what young people want in their neighbourhoods
- provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities, gaining recognition and accreditation
- increase the well-being of young people by contributing to the achievement of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes
- increase young people's engagement with services and with the democratic process at local level.

The two funds have different focuses. Through the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF), young people can apply for finance to develop and provide activities using revenue funding. Through the Youth Capital Fund, young people can apply for funding for capital investment such as buildings and equipment. In some cases, young people apply for both YOF and YCF funding for one project. One distinctive feature of the YOF/YCF is that applications are made by young people to a panel of other young people who make decisions on whether applications are appropriate and should receive funding. Thus there

³ H.M. Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007). *Aiming High for Young People: A ten year strategy for positive activities*. London: TSO

are three groups of young people who may be affected by, and benefit from, the YOF/YCF. These are: those who participate in the decision-making group, those who apply for Funding and the wider community of young people who may access facilities, projects and opportunities that have been developed as a result of a successful application to the YOF/YCF.

The YOF/YCF guidance notes state that all young people aged 13-19 should be able to participate in YOF/YCF, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and the hard-to-reach. These include young people who traditionally face barriers to participation such as '*young disabled people, young care leavers, looked after young people, young offenders, young carers, young refugees, young lesbians and gay men, young black and minority ethnic people, travellers and those in rural areas*'.⁴

1.2 Aims and objectives

The evaluation aims to explore the impact of the YOF/YCF on young people and to examine the following hypotheses:

- That giving young people control and decision-making power about resources in their area will increase levels of participation in positive activities
- That giving young people a voice (through funding / consultation) will lead to an increase in the provision of quality positive activities.

In meeting these aims, the second phase of the research had the following objectives:

- To identify the impact and outcomes of the Funds in relation to:
 - young people involved in the design and delivery of the Funds
 - young people applying for the Funds and accessing activities and facilities funded through the YOF/YCF – including the extent to which participation in activities had increased since the advent of the Funds
 - the wider community and provision for young people
 - working in partnership with other organisations
- To identify effective models of delivery and practice for the Funds
- The costs associated with implementing the funds and perceptions of cost-effectiveness.

⁴ Department for Education and Skills (2006) Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes. Nottingham: DfES

1.3 Research methods

The research had two phases. The first phase entailed a telephone survey of managers with responsibility for the Funds in LAs and visits to 12 case-study areas. The visits were undertaken in January and February 2007 and the findings were presented in the first report of the evaluation⁵. This report presents the findings from the second phase of the research and draws on data gathered through three strands of research methods which were:

- Follow-up case-study visits to 12 LAs
- Telephone survey of managers with responsibility for the YOF/YCF in 129 LAs
- Survey of 323 young people and the wider community in eight LAs.

Further details on each strand are provided below.

1.3.1 Visits to 12 LAs

As outlined in the report of the initial visits to LAs (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007) a stratified sample of 12 LAs was identified and details of the case-study LAs are presented in Table 1.1. The 12 LAs were broadly representative in terms of the types of LAs across England as three were County authorities, three were Metropolitan authorities, three were Unitary authorities and three were London Boroughs. The sample included a broad range of LAs in terms of their size, levels of deprivation and demographic characteristics.

⁵ O'Donnell, L., Bielby, G., Golden, S., Morris, M., Walker, M. and Maguire, S. (2007) Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund: Evaluation findings from initial case-study visits. Nottingham: DCSF.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of the sample of LAs

Government Office	Type of LA	Urban/Rural area	Size of LA (population)	Level of deprivation (IDACI score)**	% population who are white British	YOF/YCF Funds (rounded figure)***
North East	Unitary	Mixed	Small	Medium	97%	£150,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Small	High	43%	£400,000
Eastern	Unitary	Urban	Small	Medium	86%	£200,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Medium	High	52%	£400,000
South East	County	Rural	Large	Low	90%	£650,000
Yorkshire & Humber	Unitary	Semi-rural	Small	Medium	96%	£200,000
West Midlands	Metropolitan	Urban	Medium	High	78%	£450,000
North West	Metropolitan	Urban	Large	High	92%	£800,000
East Midlands	County	Semi-rural	Large	Low	97%	£700,000
Yorkshire and Humber	Metropolitan	Urban	Large	Medium	89%	£600,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Medium	High	34%	£400,000
South West	County	Rural	Large	Low	97%	£500,000

*The size of LA has been categorised according to population figures, as follows: small – up to 158,200; medium – 158,201 to 239,500; large – 239,501 to 1,062,700.

**IDACI is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, a measure devised for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This score relates to Lower Level Super Output Areas (similar size to electoral wards).

***Amount of Funds received have been rounded to maintain anonymity.

The case-study areas were visited between November 2007 and January 2008 and, in each area, interviews were conducted with:

- **Senior managers** with overall responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 interviewees)
- **Operational managers** in the LA or a partner organisation with responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 interviewees)
- LA staff with **administrative and financial management** responsibilities (six interviewees)
- Representatives of the **decision-making panels** of young people with responsibility for the YOF/YCF (12 decision-making panels)

- Representatives of **young people in projects** who had successfully applied for YOF/YCF funding or participated in projects (52 projects)
- **Adults from organisations that had supported young people** in applying for the Funds and provided an activity or facility for young people (54 projects). These included 20 projects that were part of the LA, 23 that were voluntary and community sector organisations, two that were a combination of the LA and third sector, three that were private organisations and six schools.

The visits focused on the outcomes and impact of the Funds and any changes and developments in the implementation. The interviews explored:

- Awareness of the Funds and approaches to marketing and promotion
- Changes in the implementation of the Funds
- Approaches to engaging young people, especially those who are identified as hard-to-reach
- The decision-making panel and their role
- The process of applying for the Funds
- The nature of activities and facilities that were funded by the YOF/YCF
- The cost-effectiveness of the Funds
- The outcomes of the Funds for young people, LAs, for provision and for the local area as a whole
- The main challenges and lessons learned
- Plans for the future development of the Funds.

LA staff were also asked to complete a proforma to provide details of the allocation of the Funds and the numbers of young people who participated.

The views of LA staff, service providers and supporting adults, and young people, are presented in this report. In relation to some aspects, the numbers of LAs where an approach was found, or where a view was expressed, are detailed. This is to provide some guidance as to the extent of an experience or approach within these 12 LAs. However, in considering these figures, it is worth taking into consideration that, during the interviews, respondents were not all asked identical questions with a range of responses, as they would be on a questionnaire. Rather, the views expressed in response to a semi-structured set of interview questions will reflect the issues, priorities, concerns and context for each interviewee.

1.3.2 Telephone survey of LA managers

In order to explore the extent to which the experience of the 12 case-study LAs was more widely experienced, a telephone survey of managers of the Funds in LAs was conducted in February 2008. The 12 case-study LAs were

excluded from this survey and interviews were conducted with managers in 129 LAs. Nine LA managers did not respond or did not agree to be interviewed. The survey comprised questions relating to:

- Their approaches to marketing and promoting the Funds and engaging young people
- The nature and structure of the decision-making panels
- Strategies that they had adopted to engaging young people who are identified as hard-to-reach
- Outcomes of the Funds for young people, the LA and the local area
- The extent to which they had spent their YOF and YCF funds
- Their future plans for the Funds.

1.3.3 Survey of young people and the wider community

As noted in Section 1.1, the Funds aimed to make a difference for young people by providing places to go and things to do for young people. The report of the initial visits found that, while some projects provided opportunities for a finite number of people for a finite period of time, others provided facilities or activities that could be accessed more widely by young people in the area. Furthermore, young people are part of a wider community of older and younger people and the wider community may be affected by the nature and extent of young people's involvement in positive activities. To explore the wider effects of the YOF/YCF among young people who may or may not have participated in YOF/YCF-funded projects, and the wider community, a questionnaire survey was undertaken between November 2007 and January 2008.

The survey was developed in consultation with young people in the case-study areas and explored:

- Their awareness of the YOF/YCF and whether they had applied for the Funds
- The extent of any change in their participation in a range of activities and whether they would like to do more of these activities
- The barriers to participating in activities
- Whether they had participated in a YOF/YCF-funded activity or used a facility funded by YOF/YCF
- Their perceptions of the extent to which the area itself, places to go and things to do for young people had changed since the Funds were introduced.

Each area that agreed to administer the survey was provided with questionnaires to distribute. LA staff and young people distributed the questionnaires to other young people and the wider community. A total of

323 questionnaires were returned from eight areas. These included 237 questionnaires from young people aged 13 to 19 and 81 from people aged 20 and over.

While this survey provides an insight into the views of opportunities for young people, and the YOF/YCF among the wider community of adults and young people, it is worth noting that it is not possible to assess how far the respondents are representative of the wider community. Indeed, as the method of administering the survey entailed young people who were panel members and LA staff distributing the questionnaire, there is a greater probability that young people and adults who are aware of, and involved with, the Funds may be represented among respondents. The findings therefore, may not be fully representative, but they do reflect the experience of certain members of the community in the eight areas represented in the survey.

2. What has been the impact of the YOF/YCF on young people's participation in decision-making?

Key findings

- There had been little change in the structure of LAs' YOF/YCF decision-making panels from the first year of the Funds, mainly because LAs felt that their original approach was working well.
- Seven of the 12 case-study LAs reported that there had been changes to the membership of the panel in the second year of the Funds. LAs appeared to be recruiting more diverse groups of young people through a more extensive range of marketing strategies, including promotion through schools and youth organisations, and promotion to young people who have successfully applied for YOF/YCF funding.
- Just over half of all LAs who responded to the telephone survey felt that their panel was representative of all young people in their area. Both LA staff and panel members, however, felt that the representativeness of the case-study panels could be improved further, for example, through better local advertising of the panel, and more promotion through schools.
- While there had been little change to the decision-making process, both adults and young people themselves reported that panel members were more confident and efficient in reviewing applications, and they felt that they had a better understanding of the process.
- In some cases, young people had also taken on additional responsibilities in implementing the Funds and the support and guidance required from adults appeared to have declined over time.
- All but one of the 12 case-study areas provided formal training for panel members and, in four of these areas, the training had led to a nationally-recognised qualification for the young people.
- Nearly all (98 per cent) of the LA staff that took part in the telephone survey stated that the panel had done a good job in administering the Funds.
- Both staff and panel members felt that the panel had led to a range of positive outcomes for the young people involved, including personal development, improved social, team-working and decision-making skills and, in a small number of cases, improved attitudes to learning.
- There was also some evidence that giving panel members control and decision-making power about YOF/YCF funding had not only given them a sense of empowerment and had made them feel more involved in their local community, but had led, in some cases, to an increase in participation in other decision-making and positive activities.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the structure and membership of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels, and explores the impact of the Funds on young people's participation in decision-making. It draws on interviews with LA staff and panel members in the case-study areas, and the telephone survey of all LAs. More specifically, it discusses:

- The structure and membership of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels, including the extent to which panels are representative of all young people, and how far this has changed since the introduction of the Funds.
- The reasons why young people became members of the decision-making panels and their experiences of participating in the panels.
- The training and support provided for panel members.
- The impact of the Funds on young people involved in the decision-making panels.

2.2 What is the structure of the decision-making panels and how far has this changed?

2.2.1 Structure of the panel

Both the telephone survey of all LAs and the case-study visits to 12 LAs revealed that LAs had adopted a range of approaches for the structure of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels. The telephone survey, for example, indicated that, across all LAs, 62 per cent were operating a central decision-making panel only. Nearly one quarter (23 per cent) of LAs had both central and area panels, while six per cent (eight LAs) were operating area/district panels only. In the 38 LAs where area/district panels were in operation, the number of panels ranged from one to 25, with an average (median) of six panels. Five LAs (four per cent) said that they had adopted another approach. Three LAs, for example, said that, rather than having a core panel of young people, they consulted with various existing groups of young people within the LA (such as young people's issues groups), while one LA had a small core panel with a rolling panel of other young people who attend panel meetings but who do not have a vote when deciding which projects to fund.

Further analysis was undertaken to explore the relationship between the type of LA and the type of YOF/YCF decision-making panel they were operating. This revealed that central panels were most common in London Boroughs and Unitary authorities, and least common in County authorities. In contrast, Counties were most likely to adopt a combination approach of a central panel and area/district panels, possibly due to the larger size and more rural nature of county authorities.

Table 2.1 presents the frequency with which the YOF/YCF panels met, and shows the differences between central panels and area/district panels in the frequency of their meetings. Although only a small number of LAs were operating area/district panels, there were some indications that these met more frequently than central panels – 16 per cent of respondents said that area/district panels met more than once a week, compared with three per cent who said this of central panels. The main reasons given by respondents for area/district panels meeting more frequently were that they deal with more applications than the central panel, and that it is easier for area/district panels, which involve young people from a particular area, to meet regularly. Central panels, on the other hand, involve young people from across an authority and, particularly in LAs where transport is limited, it can be difficult for young people to meet on a regular basis.

Table 2.1 Frequency with which panels meet – central panels and area/district panels

Frequency	Central panel	Area/district panel(s)
	%	%
More than once a week	3	16
Once a week	13	13
More than once a month (e.g. every 2-3 weeks)	20	24
Once a month	28	16
More than once a month (e.g. every 2-3 months)	21	24
Other*	7	5
No response	8	8
N=	110	38

*Two single response questions - one for central panel and one for area/district panels
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
*Where respondents gave an 'other' response, the most common response was that the frequency of meetings varies depending on when applications need to be assessed, and the volume of applications received
Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008*

The case-study visits to 12 LAs were able to provide further information about YOF/YCF panels, and the extent to which these have changed over time. At the time of the follow-up visits to the case-study areas (November 2007-January 2008), eight LAs had just one central decision-making panel, while four operated both area/district panels, as well as a central, LA-wide panel.

There had been very **little change in the structure** of the decision-making panels from the initial case-study visits (in spring 2007) because LAs felt that their original approach, which had been established to fit in with the

authority's context and existing systems, was working well. However, three LAs had made significant changes to their approach. One LA, which had not set up a panel at the time of the initial case-study visits, had now established a central panel. Another LA, which had hoped to use both a central panel and area panels, had found it difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of young people to the area panels, and to find sufficient staff and resources to manage this approach, and so had retained the central panel only. In a third LA, a 'scrutiny panel' for YCF applications, which involved adults from the Council and Youth Service, had been formed to review the decisions made by the young people on the panel. The operational manager in this LA explained that this approach was designed to protect the young people on the panel, who, potentially, could be criticised for the decisions they made. The panel members interviewed appreciated the protection and guidance provided by adults on this scrutiny panel, and reported that none of their decisions had so far been overturned.

Although the structure of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels had remained largely stable, there had been changes to the membership of the panels, and to the roles and responsibilities of the young people participating in the panels, as discussed in the following sections.

2.2.2 Membership of the panel

In most of the LAs, the number of young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels was between approximately six and 25 young people, and included roughly equal numbers of male and female young people. However, in two LAs that were operating area/district panels, in addition to a central panel, the number of panel members was much higher – approximately 70 in one of these LAs and 100 in the other.

The majority of LAs initially tended to target young people already known to the LA prior to the introduction of the Funds, for example, through LA-run youth forums or youth groups. However, there was some evidence at the time of the follow-up visit to LAs that they were starting to recruit **wider groups of young people** to the panel. Staff in four LAs said that new members had joined the panel including those who were not previously known to the LA and those who were under-represented on the panel such as young people from disadvantaged areas or with learning difficulties or disabilities. This was achieved through a more **extensive range of marketing** strategies. These included the following:

- promotion through schools or existing youth groups / youth organisations
- open promotion through their YOF/YCF information and marketing material (e.g. posters, flyers)
- promotion to young people who have successfully applied for YOF/YCF funding

- word-of-mouth, through existing panel members
- open days for young people interested in joining the panel.

Promotion to successful applicants, in particular, appeared to have increased since the initial visits to case-study areas. However, some LA staff and panel members still felt that more could be done to promote the panel to young people, and their suggestions included better advertising around the local area and promoting the panel in schools. Approaches adopted to ensure that the panels were representative and included young people from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups are described in the following section.

While in seven of the 12 LAs the panel was open to any young person who expressed an interest, in two LAs young people were elected onto the panel and, in a further three LAs, young people went through a selection process (involving an interview, or completion of an application form) due to the numbers of young people interested in joining the panel. The panel members in one LA, for example, reported that 60 young people had applied for ten places on the panel.

Staff in seven of the case-study LAs reported that there had been **changes in the membership** of the panel since the first year of the Funds, with some new young people joining the panel, and others discontinuing their involvement. For some LAs this was a deliberate approach to keep membership *'fluid'*, and to recruit from *'as wide a network as possible'*, including young people from hard-to-reach groups. One LA, for example, emphasised, *'we're continually trying to get new people...we need fresh people in'*. However, some LA staff reported that they had retained some original panel members with experience of the decision-making process, to support newer members.

Representativeness of the panel

LAs had made efforts to recruit a wider range of young people to the decision-making panels, and panels were reportedly more diverse than at the outset of the Funds. In general, however, there was still a view in the case-study areas that more could be done to ensure that the panels were representative of all young people. Panel members in five of the 12 case-study LAs felt that their panels were *'a pretty good mix'* of young people and were largely representative of all young people in their area, as expressed by one young person: *'We all come from different backgrounds, so there's no one really missing'*. However, young people in the remaining LAs reported that particular groups of young people were not represented on the panel (for example, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, young people who are Looked After, young people with disabilities). However, it is worth noting that some of these young people felt that it was not possible for the panel to

include all types of young people, due to the limited number of young people who were able to be involved.

The telephone survey of all LAs revealed similar findings in terms of the perceived representativeness of the decision-making panels. More than half (56 per cent) of LA staff interviewed felt that the young people on the YOF/YCF panel were representative of all young people in their LA. One third of respondents reported that the panel was not representative of all young people, while 12 per cent were unsure.

As was evident in the case-study areas, LAs had utilised a range of different approaches to try to ensure that the young people on the panel were representative of all young people in their LA, and as Table 2.2 illustrates, nearly all of the LAs were working with the voluntary and community sector (94 per cent) and youth organisations (93 per cent) to recruit young people to the panel. The majority were also targeting particular groups of young people (85 per cent) or using panel members to recruit other young people (82 per cent).

Table 2.2 Approaches adopted to ensure that panels are representative of all young people in LAs

Approach	%
Working with the voluntary and community sector to recruit young people	94
Working with youth organisations to recruit young people	93
Targeted promotion of panel membership at particular groups of young people	85
Panel members have recruited other young people	82
Recruiting young people who have applied for the Funds	75
Other*	21
No response	1
N= 129	

More than one answer could be given, so percentages do not sum to 100

**Other approaches reported included promotion to schools, open events or conferences, promotion through existing forums of young people, and election processes.*

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

All but one of the LAs responding to the telephone survey reported that the YOF/YCF decision-making panel involved **young people from disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups** (the remaining one LA did not respond to this question). As Table 2.3 shows, nearly all decision-making panels (94 per cent) included young people from disadvantaged areas, and the majority also involved young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (81 per cent). Around two-thirds of LAs indicated that their YOF/YCF panels

included young people who are Looked After (69 per cent) and young people with physical disabilities (68 per cent) or learning difficulties (64 per cent).

Other types of young people reportedly involved in YOF/YCF panels included rurally isolated young people (eight LAs), homeless young people (six LAs), young travellers (five LAs), young refugees/ asylum seekers (three LAs), and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (three LAs).

Some groups of young people (such as teenage parents, young offenders and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered young people) were less frequently reported as being involved in the YOF/YCF panels. While these groups of young people may be less prevalent among young people as a whole, many LAs also reported that they do not ask young people to disclose characteristics such as these when they join the panel, so it may well be that the involvement of these young people in the YOF/YCF panels is underestimated.

Table 2.3 Extent to which young people from disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups have been involved in YOF/YCF panels

Young people who:	%
are from disadvantaged areas	94
are from ethnic minority backgrounds	81
are Looked After	69
have physical disabilities	68
have learning difficulties	64
are young carers	42
are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered	41
are young offenders	31
are teenage parents	28
Other	14
No response	1

N=128

*More than one answer could be given, so percentages do not sum to 100
The base is those who said that hard-to-reach young people were involved in the YOF/YCF panels.*

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

Reasons for young people's involvement

The main reasons young people in the case-study areas reported for becoming involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels could be grouped largely into two main categories – those that recognise the **benefits to others in the local community** and those that reflect **benefits to the young people themselves**. The majority of young people, for example, said that they

wanted to help other young people through their involvement in the panel, and to improve provision for young people in the local area. Young people also felt that they could gain useful skills and experience that would be ‘*good for your CV*’, such as team-working skills, and financial management skills. For others, the main motivation was to have decision-making power in the local community, and ‘*to give young people a say in what is happening.*’

The young people reflected on what factors might prevent young people from becoming part of the decision-making panel, and the most common reason given was a **lack of motivation or confidence**. This was attributed by young people on one panel to the sense of disempowerment felt by many young people:

Young people are quite disempowered and they are so used to adults doing everything for them...so it takes a lot of motivation to get involved in positive activities and decision-making.

The way youth are portrayed in general - it's pumped into you so much we start to believe it – that we aren't able to make certain decisions....we are seen as irresponsible. After a while you don't expect to be given positions of responsibility.

Other reasons given by panel members for young people not becoming involved in the YOF/YCF panels included a lack of awareness of the Funds, a lack of transport to attend meetings, and a lack of time to participate. Young people on two panels mentioned the amount of work and commitment involved in being on the panel, and felt that this prevented some young people from becoming involved.

2.2.3 Roles and responsibilities

In general, in the second year of the Funds, **young people appeared to be more involved** in the implementation of the Funds, and had taken on additional responsibilities. As expressed by the operational manager in one LA, ‘[panel members] *took on a lot more responsibility in terms of putting everything together, whereas last year I was behind them all the time, this year, I could say “this is what needs to be done – get on and do it”...it might take longer, but at least they [the young people] are doing it.*’

In some cases, young people had been more involved in the decision-making process, and in developing or refining the review process; in others they had redeveloped application or marketing materials, and were more involved in promotion of the Funds; and in others they were now more involved in monitoring successful projects. In two LAs, the YOF/YCF panel had also extended their remit to include assessing Youth Bank applications as well as YOF/YCF applications.

Decision-making process

As outlined in the report of the first year of the Funds (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007), panel members usually considered a range of factors when reviewing YOF/YCF applications. These included the number of young people who could benefit from the proposed activity, and whether they included young people from hard-to-reach groups, the originality and relevance of the application, and whether applicants had sourced complementary funding. Panels within five of the LAs visited had developed a scoring system for reviewing applications, based on pre-defined criteria, and some of these also applied a weighting system, scoring particular parts of the application form higher than others.

The follow-up visits to LAs revealed that there had been **little change to the decision-making process** itself. There had, however, been some refinements to, or *'fine tuning'* of the review process and/or scoring system, for example, to include a requirement for projects to have at least four Every Child Matters outcomes in one area, or, in another, not to prioritise those projects that have previously received YOF/YCF funding. In addition, in some areas, in order to cope with the increased number of applications in the second year of the Funds, panels were meeting more frequently, or they had split the panel into two, so that they could review more applications.

On the whole, LA staff, and panel members themselves, felt that they had become **more confident and efficient in reviewing applications** and making decisions about which to fund. For example, LA staff reported that due to their experience, young people were more familiar with the marking scheme, and had gained a better understanding of which applications represented *'best value'*, and thus, the decision-making process was more *'streamlined'*. Young people also indicated that they felt *'more involved'* in the second year of the Funds and *'understand more'* about the process, and so found it easier to make decisions about which projects to fund. The young people in one panel, however, noted that the decision-making process was *'constantly evolving'*, as they gained more experience of different types of applications.

In summary, there had been only minor changes to the structure of the decision-making panels in the case-study LAs, although there had been some changes to the membership of the panels, and the extent of young people's involvement in the implementation of the Funds. Some LAs were planning to develop their panels further, and had a range of changes planned for the future. One LA, for example, was intending to change from one central panel to a number of area panels, to reduce the amount of pressure on the core panel. Another LA was planning to implement an election process for panel members, and another was intending to link the YOF/YCF panel to the LA-run Youth Council.

2.3 What training and support has been provided for panel members?

2.3.1 Training

As was the case in the first year of the Funds, the extent and nature of the training provided to panel members varied across the 12 case-study LAs, with some providing **formal, accredited training**, and others providing less formal, '*on-the-job*' training. For example, four LAs had provided accredited training, leading to ASDAN or OCN qualifications in grant-making (three of which were through YouthBank), while seven had provided formal training through residential sessions, or as part of panel meetings themselves. These sessions were generally delivered by adults from the LA, including youth workers and councillors, although, in one LA, panel members were trained by youth advocates. Training had covered areas such as the criteria for assessing applications, discussion of who should benefit from the Funds, and any priority groups of young or types of projects, and development of skills, such as team working skills and interviewing skills, and was also thought to have helped the young people to get to know each other better.

One LA reported that they did not provide any formal training for panel members, but that they received '*hands-on training*', through their involvement in the different aspects of the implementation of the Funds. This was reinforced by one of the young people involved in the panel in this area, who emphasised that '*you receive training while you are doing it...you learn on the job.*' Furthermore, even in areas where training had been provided for panel members, young people indicated that they continued to learn and develop new ways of decision-making through their real-life experience on the panel.

Some LAs reported that young people were required to complete training before they could participate in the panel. For example, in one LA, young people had to participate in training and attend three panel meetings to observe the decision-making process before they could join the panel. In other LAs, training was provided to new members once they had already joined the panel, during the initial sessions in which they were involved. However, given that the membership of many of the panels had changed over the last year and, thus, young people had received varying levels of training and had different levels of experience in the decision-making process, some LAs were finding it challenging to provide training that met the needs of all the young people. Four LAs had tried to address this by adopting a peer-mentoring approach, where existing panel members were paired with new young people, so that they could '*cascade*' the training they had received and support them in the decision-making process. This approach was valued by the young people, as the following comment from one panel member illustrates:

We made a point that when we did open it up for new people to come that we made sure we had a few people from the last round that could stay on so that they could act as mentors...If we had started from fresh with a whole new batch of people, we would have had to go over everything again.

One LA also warned about ensuring that training was not too burdensome so that it would deter young people from joining the panel – ‘*You don’t want to make it too lengthy else you would put them off.*’

Although, on the whole, LA staff and panel members were happy with the training provided, they made some suggestions about how their training programme could be improved. These included developing a rolling programme of training (e.g. on a quarterly or termly basis), to address ongoing training needs, and setting up meetings with YOF/YCF panels in other areas, to share ideas.

2.3.2 Support

In addition to the training provided, panel members also received **support and guidance from staff within the LA** (most commonly youth and community workers) to assist them in their role on the YOF/YCF panel. This tended to involve staff arranging and attending panel meetings and providing advice and technical guidance on applications (if requested by the young people), particularly those applying for YCF funding, as these require more knowledge of issues such as land ownership and planning permission. LA staff also tended to take responsibility for the administrative aspects of implementing the Funds (for example, monitoring the spending of successful projects). There was a general view, though, that **adult involvement had declined** in the second year of the Funds, compared with the first year, as young people took more responsibility for the different aspects of the Funds (such as re-designing application materials and sending letters to successful and unsuccessful applicants). One operational manager, for instance, stated that, ‘*in the first year, young people were led by the hand, but staff input is a lot less this year*’. This view was reinforced by comments from the young people, as illustrated by the following example: ‘*At first we felt like we needed help but, as we got through it, we needed it less*’.

The young people were positive about the support provided by adults, and valued their guidance. One young person, for example, explained that the panel ‘*is young people-led but we work with adults too...we need the support of adults.*’ Another said that, when the panel is reviewing YOF/YCF applications, it was ‘*good to have them [adults] there*’ in case they had queries, or were finding it difficult to reach a decision. Generally, young people felt that the adults working with them (who were usually youth workers) provided the right balance of support, as the following comment about one youth worker illustrates:

You know when you have a parent who steps back and makes their kid make their own decisions, but if they go completely off the rails, they'll step in and help them....but they'll let them make their own decisions, and help them grow...she's kind of like that.

Young people explained that while adults may give them guidance or advice on applications, or provide them with supplementary information to help them in reviewing applications, it is the young people themselves who make decisions about which projects are funded. One young person, for instance, stated that they had '*100 per cent ownership [of the panel]...it's ours...it's up to us*'. Even in one LA, where a youth worker reviews the applications prior to the panel, and makes a recommendation about whether a project should be funded or not, young people emphasised that this recommendation was '*not an order, just advice*', and that they have '*full control*' and make the final decision. Furthermore, young people on all the panels interviewed felt that their **views were listened to and respected**, not only by the adults involved, but also by the other young people on the panel, and there was a general view, both among adults and the young people themselves, that the panel members were working well together as a team.

2.4 What has been the impact of YOF on young people who are involved in decision making?

Nearly all (98 per cent) of the LA staff that took part in the telephone survey stated that the young people involved in the decision-making panel had done a **good job in administering the Funds**. Only two per cent (two individuals) were unsure how successful the panel had been, while one respondent did not answer this question.

Table 2.4 presents respondents' views on the impact that the Funds have had on young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels. This shows that nearly all of the respondents to the survey (99 per cent) felt that the young people had gained new skills, and 82 per cent of individuals strongly agreed with this statement. A total of 98 per cent of LA staff reported that panel members had gained accreditation or other recorded outcomes, and these included nationally recognised achievements such as Duke of Edinburgh award, OCN Level 2 in grant giving, ASDAN, and Youth Achievement Award, as well as local, youth service awards. The majority of LA staff overall felt that involvement in the Funds had improved young people's personal and social development, and had increased their participation in other decision-making groups. In contrast, they were less likely to indicate that being on the YOF/YCF panel had improved young people's attitudes or attendance at school – 31 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, although only three per cent

disagreed (the remainder stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed, possibly because they did not have evidence of any changes in young people's attitudes or behaviour at school).

Table 2.4 Impact of the Funds on young people involved in the decision-making process

Impact	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%	%	%
They have gained new skills (e.g. working in teams, decision-making)	82	17	1	0	0	0
They have benefitted socially (e.g. meeting new people, increased confidence)	65	35	0	0	0	0
The young people have gained accreditation or other recorded outcomes	45	53	1	2	0	0
They are involved in other local decision-making groups	40	53	4	3	0	0
They have encouraged other young people to become involved in the decision-making process	36	61	2	1	0	0
Being on the panel has improved their attitudes/ attendance at school	1	24	64	3	0	2
Other*	21	12	0	0	0	67
N= 129						

Series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

**Other impacts mentioned by LA staff included young people developing an understanding of the needs of different types of young people in their area, improved knowledge of the local community, improved relationships with adults and enhanced employment prospects.*

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

The case-study visits to 12 LAs provided further insight into the outcomes for young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels. All the panel members interviewed had **enjoyed being involved** in the decision-making panel, and felt that it had been '*a fantastic experience*' for them, and they identified a range of benefits and outcomes for themselves. LA staff in all of the areas visited also felt that participation in the panel had led to some positive outcomes for young people, and they praised the hard work and commitment of young people in administering the Funds. The outcomes identified by adults and young people included:

- Personal development
- Learning outcomes
- Social outcomes
- Empowerment and ownership
- Involvement in the local community
- Improved attitudes to learning.

Each of these outcomes is discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 Personal development

Staff in seven LAs highlighted the personal development arising from young people's participation in the YOF/YCF decision-making panel, and there was general consensus among these interviewees that the panel had led to '*significant impacts*' among young people, particularly in relation to their confidence, self-esteem, maturity and responsibility. One strategic manager emphasised the particular benefits to young people with complex personal issues. He felt that participation in the panel had enabled them to feel valued and trusted, and thus had increased their self-esteem, which he considered to be '*immeasurable in terms of value*'. These comments were echoed by panel members themselves, who most commonly mentioned improvements in their confidence and self-esteem, particularly in relation to interacting with other people (in a group situation, for example).

Both adults and young people themselves also felt that, through interacting with different types of people, the panel had helped to **open young people's minds**, and had challenged some of their attitudes and perceptions about other groups of young people. The operational manager in one LA explained that the nature of the applications the panel received had also forced them to address their own attitudes and perceptions, particularly in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. She felt that this had helped the panel members to develop '*awareness of their own prejudices...stuff around homophobia has been amazing...some have been challenged and really moved on*'.

2.4.2 Learning outcomes

Both panel members and the LA staff that supported them identified a **range of skills** that the young people had developed as a result of their participation in the panel. This was summed up by one young person who stated that the panel *'was a completely different experience...I've never done anything like this before, so everything I did was a new skill.'* This view was echoed in the comments of LA staff, one of whom reported that the panel members *'individual learning and as a group of young people has increased exponentially through their involvement in these Funds.'*

Such skills included decision-making skills, communication skills (for example, listening skills, speaking skills, telephone skills), organisational and time management skills, financial skills and team working skills. The young people generally considered that these skills would be useful for their future lives and careers, and *'will help you get a job in later life.'* In four LAs, the training that young people had received through the panel had also led to a **national qualification** (including an Open College Network certificate, and an ASDAN qualification).

A small number of young people reported that their involvement in the YOF/YCF panel had helped to **guide their career ideas**, or had led to employment opportunities that they would not otherwise have had. One young person, for example, had become an apprentice youth worker as a result of his involvement in the panel, while another had successfully gained a competitive work placement opportunity due to the experience she had gained through the Funds. A third young person stated that the panel had been influential in their post-16 choices: *'before I came to [the panel], I wouldn't have gone to college.'*

2.4.3 Social outcomes

The decision-making panels tended to comprise young people who had not previously met, and some panel members said that they valued *'experience of different people'*, and the social aspects of being a panel member. One young person, for example, stated that she had *'made friends that I probably wouldn't ever have met'*, while another said that the panel had led to her developing *'long-term friendships'* with other young people. Some panel members also felt that their experience on the panel had helped to develop their **social and team-working skills**, and thought that they were now better at understanding other people's point of view, and cooperating with other young people. The YOF/YCF panels tended to involve young people from a range of different backgrounds, and as one young person acknowledged, *'before, many of us wouldn't have liked to work together.'* However, most of the young people reported that they had developed good relationships with the other panel members and they were now working well as a group. Young people also felt respected and listened to by the adults involved in supporting

the panel, and felt that they had developed good relationships with these adults.

2.4.4 Empowerment and ownership

Both LA staff and panel members highlighted the impact of the Funds on empowering those young people involved in the decision-making panels, and the young people **valued the responsibility and power** they were given to make decisions. Central to this empowerment was having a decision-making role accompanied with finance, as the following comment from one operational manager illustrates: *'Previously, young people's involvement was always tokenistic, but giving them hold of the purse strings is an empowering experience for them.'*

Young people felt that their views were being listened to and respected by adults within the LA, and they generally recognised the impact their involvement in the panel was having on provision for young people in the local area. This is summed up by the following comment from one panel member:

Up until a few months ago, I still didn't believe that our input was that beneficial – what could we possibly do that's going to make a difference? But it does...when you see the fruits of what we've done....we've helped people to go to other countries, and get skills.

Members of all the panels interviewed emphasised the importance of young people being involved in decision-making, although some acknowledged that they did not realise this was possible until they joined the panel, as one young person described: *'I never thought young people were able to have a voice until I joined.'* The young people also felt that they were in a better position to decide what provision should be funded than adults within the LA, as the following comments illustrate:

We did it better than it would have been done if a group of adults had got together because we had a bit more understanding of where young people applying were coming from.

Young people have their own views on things which might be different from what adults think we want, so it is important to consult them.

It's like the council, they don't give us a choice, they just go ahead and do it. They think every young person wants to play football and they don't.

2.4.5 Involvement in the local community

There were mixed views on whether young people's involvement in the YOF/YCF panel had led to them participating in other decision-making or positive activities. The Head of Youth Service in one LA, for example, reported that all the panel members had subsequently joined other organisations. This was supported by the comments from some of the young people – one, for instance, had subsequently joined a Young People's Strategic Planning Group within the LA, while another had become involved in the Youth Council as a result of their participation in the YOF/YCF panel. Other young people reported that they were not more involved in decision-making or their local community, either because they were already involved in such activities prior to the Funds, or because they did not have sufficient time.

Although the impact of the panel on other participation was mixed, there was general consensus among young people that the panel had **increased their awareness of provision for young people** in the local area - *'it means you can find out about a lot of other events that are on'* – and had also made them feel more involved in their local community.

2.4.6 Improved attitudes to learning

Evidence from the telephone surveys and case studies of LAs suggested that most LA staff were unsure about the impact that the panel had had on young people attitudes to learning, and behaviour at school or college. A minority did, however, indicate that the young people's experience and achievements on the panel had been recognised by their school. A small number of young people interviewed also felt that the skills they had developed through the panel had **impacted on their learning**. One young person, for instance, reported that the confidence she had developed through the panel meant that she was more comfortable about making presentations at school. Another young person felt that his improved organisational skills were benefitting his school work: *'I think it helps you manage your time better, like when you have exams coming up; you know how to manage your time and to set yourself a timetable.'* A third young person felt that the panel had improved their overall attitude to school, and was helping them in subjects such as citizenship and mathematics: *'I've liked school more really because...knowing more about politics has made it easier in some lessons...also it's a bit easier in maths.'*

In summary, it is clear that young people were benefiting in a range of different ways from their involvement in the decision-making panels. However, as the Funds develop, LAs will need to carefully consider the time and commitment required of panel members. As indicated in Section 2.2.3, some panels had started to meet more frequently and, although young people enjoyed and valued their involvement in the panel, some noted the workload involved. Furthermore, some young people felt that they should receive more

rewards or recognition, particularly from the government, for the work they do on the panel. This was summed up by one young person, who said, *'It's a big commitment for us, and I know we all enjoy it, but it's our free time.'*

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the findings relating to the YOF/YCF decision-making panels, focusing primarily on any developments in these panels over time, and the outcomes for young people participating in the panels. It has revealed that there has been little change in the structure of the panels since the first year of the Funds, mainly because LAs felt that their original approach was working well. There had, however, been developments in the membership of the panels, and in the marketing strategies to recruit new young people, although there was still a view among some LAs that more could be done to ensure that the panels represented young people from a wider range of backgrounds. In general, young people appeared to be more involved in the implementation of the Funds in the second year, and had taken on additional responsibilities, such as promotion of the Funds and monitoring successful projects. However, comments from some LA staff and panel members suggest that the role of young people in the panel needs to be carefully managed to ensure that they are not overburdened. On the whole, young people valued both the training and support they had received as part of their role on the panel, and felt that the adults they were working with provided the right balance of support, and respected their views. The majority of panel members had also enjoyed their experience on the YOF/YCF panel, and felt that it had led to a range of outcomes for them, including personal development, social outcomes, a sense of empowerment and ownership and, in some cases, increased participation in other decision-making and positive activities.

3. How has awareness of the YOF/YCF been raised and how far has it reached the hardest-to-reach?

Key findings

- Awareness of the Funds continued to be raised through existing contacts such as youth workers and those in the voluntary and community sector. However, in the second year, there was increased use of activities such as road shows and other promotional events.
- Face-to-face interaction with young people to promote the Funds was widely used and was regarded as effective in increasing the involvement of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people.
- Awareness of the Funds was spread increasingly via word-of-mouth, which suggest that the Funds are becoming more embedded in the culture of young people and that awareness will grow among young people as the Funds become more established.
- The success of promotional strategies was reflected in the changes in the types of YOF/YCF applications received in the second year. LAs reported receiving a greater number of applications from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people.
- The LAs had developed links with partner organisations including the voluntary and community sector and other statutory agencies working with young people. These links were said to be useful in promoting the Funds and providing support to young applicants.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which the LAs raised awareness of the Funds in the second year and how far it has reached the hardest-to-reach young people. It draws on three sources of data including the telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, the survey of young people and the wider community, and data from the 12 case-study visits.

It presents findings relating to:

- How the LAs raised awareness and promoted YOF/YCF and how this has changed

- The extent to which awareness had been raised among young people who are target groups or hard-to-reach
- How far the LAs developed links with partner organisations.

3.2 How did the LAs raise awareness and promote YOF/YCF and how has this changed?

Visits made to LAs in January and February 2007 revealed that a variety of methods were being used to promote the Funds (O'Donnell *et al*, 2007). At this stage, marketing materials such as posters and flyers were perceived as effective and quick methods of raising awareness of the Funds. Outreach activities including workshops and visits to youth centres were being used, to some extent, to encourage young people to participate in the Funds. Such activities were most commonly directed at youth networks or voluntary organisations and viewed as effective in raising awareness of YOF/YCF with existing contacts.

3.2.1 Strategies used to raise awareness and promote YOF/YCF

The follow-up visits revealed that LAs in the 12 case-study areas had continued to use the promotional strategies such as posters or flyers to raise awareness of the Funds. Promotional materials had sometimes been updated with the help of the young people on the decision-making panels. For example, one group of panel members had held a brainstorming meeting to discuss how best to update the posters and leaflets, to make them more appealing to young people. These types of promotional materials were being used in conjunction with other methods such as road shows and other promotional events.

Two of the 12 case-study LAs said there had been **less 'blanket' marketing** in the second year. This was because they had already received a high number of applications from young people. One of the operational managers in an LA said they had reduced widespread marketing in favour of targeted approaches for disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. In her view, a 'blanket' marketing approach would have led to more applications from those who had previously applied, whereas the hard-to-reach groups needed more support in completing an application. In some of the case-study LAs, the panel members were involved in promoting the Funds through attending open events or by distributing leaflets. In these cases, the young people noted this shift in focus from blanket marketing. For example, one of the panel members said, *'initially we publicised it to everyone but then we noticed we were not receiving any applications from particular groups. We had to prioritise these groups like disabled, travellers and refugees'*.

Operational managers in some of the LAs explained that there was more **outreach work** by youth workers in the second year, which entailed more face-to-face engagement with young people, particularly those who were not

already participating in activities or accessing facilities. In addition, **panel members** were going out more to meet with young people to explain and promote the Funds. This often reflected a desire to encourage more disadvantaged or hard-to-reach young people to apply for the Funds. For example, one of the operational managers said that their evaluation of the first year revealed they were not reaching these groups. The youth panel, therefore, organised and ran special workshops with groups of hard-to-reach young people in order to raise their awareness of the Funds. The operational managers in the case-study areas said that different strategies were effective for different purposes. As one of the operational managers explained:

'It depends what your priority is. If you want to engage loads of young people, just doing a blanket marketing campaign gets the most able, and loads of the most able apply'.

However, other strategies were said to be needed to engage the hard-to-reach young people as, *'you need time to work with these groups'*. It was said that hard-to-reach young people need time to discuss their ideas and apply for the Funds. The LA staff who were interviewed said adults such as **youth workers in the statutory and voluntary and community sector** acting as brokers to promote the Funds to young people was an effective method of promoting the Funds. Overall, strategies which enabled face-to-face discussions with people about the Funds were viewed as most effective.

The majority of the successful young applicants in the 12 case-study areas said that they had **heard about YOF/YCF through an adult**, who was usually an existing contact such as a youth worker or another supporting adult such as a sports coach or a teacher at school. A few of the Fund recipients said that they had heard about them through other LA staff including a social worker and staff from the Looked after Children (LAC) Unit at the LA. Other young people had been informed about the Funds by parents who had links with community centres, or through their involvement in the decision-making panel or youth parliament in their local area. Detached youth workers had also encouraged some young people involvement in YOF/YCF projects. Young people described how youth workers had talked to them about the local area and this had led to YOF/YCF projects to support the development of facilities such as a skate park or youth shelter.

The majority (89 per cent) of the survey respondents agreed that awareness of the Funds was increasingly spread via **word-of-mouth** while only two per cent disagreed and the remaining nine per cent were unsure. This increasing word-of-mouth promotion may suggest that the Funds are becoming increasingly embedded in the culture of young people and that awareness will increase among young people as the Funds become more established. From the young peoples' perspective, the level of promotion through speaking with others had increased. The members of the panel described talking to other

young people about the Funds at promotional events and telling their friends. One of the operational managers said, *'you can never under-estimate word of mouth, especially among young people'*.

As illustrated in Table 3.1, the telephone survey of the staff responsible for the Funds in 129 LAs also revealed word-of-mouth to be one of the most commonly used mechanisms by which the Funds were publicised and one which was viewed as the most effective mechanism by the majority the interviewees. As Table 3.1 shows, almost all (99 per cent) of the LAs reported that the Funds were publicised in this way. Publicity through other organisations (95 per cent) and flyers, leaflets and posters (94 per cent), and websites (91 per cent) were also used by the majority of the LA staff interviewed but were felt to be the most effective by fewer LA managers who had used these approaches than word of mouth

Table 3.1 Strategies used to publicise the Funds

Marketing approaches	% of respondents who have used the approach	% of respondents who identified it as most effective	N=
Word-of-mouth	99	56	128
Publicity through other organisations	95	21	123
Flyers, leaflets and posters	94	18	121
Websites	91	15	117
Local newspapers and magazines	86	17	111
Email	75	22	97
'Show case' events (of successful YOF/YCF projects)	71	17	92
Visits to schools	61	11	79
Telephone (texting and calling)	57	1	74
Other	34	46	44
No response	1	5	0
N =	129		

Marketing approach used – more than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Most effective method – the base is those who had used each approach

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

Many (86 per cent) of the LAs were using local newspapers and magazines to publicise the Funds. In the second year, the 12 case-study LAs also noted distributing information about the Funds via links with the local press. Information about successful projects had been disseminated through press

releases and this was said to have helped to inform greater numbers of young people. Information about the Funds was also included in LA newsletters. Other new developments included greater use of web-based information to promote the Funds. The operational managers in three of the 12 case-study LAs reported developments in such approaches. These developments had provided opportunities for the young people on the decision-making panels to become involved in marketing the Funds. For example, in one of these LAs, the website was designed by the decision-making panel while another LA had received advice on updating the website from a team of young people. In another case-study LA, the YOF/YCF website was linked to a LA website listing activities for young people in the local area and the website was launched through local press and radio. In the second year, the majority (91 per cent) of LAs responding to the telephone survey stated they were using websites to promote the Funds and over two-thirds (75 per cent) had used email to publicise the Funds (see Table 3.1). While word-of-mouth was regarded as the most effective approach, 15 per cent and 22 per cent respectively of LA staff who had used websites or email considered that these uses of ICT to promote the Funds were most effective.

3.2.2 How did the young people become aware of the Funds?

The strategies adopted by the case-study LAs had led to around half of the young people who responded to the survey being aware of the Funds. As can be seen from Table 3.2, young people became aware of the Funds through a range of different means, which highlights the need for multiple strategies for promotion. From the LA perspective, word-of-mouth was the most commonly used and most effective method of publicising the Funds (see Table 3.1), however contact with a youth worker appears to have been most likely to lead to young people becoming aware of the Funds.

Table 3.2 Methods by which the young people had heard about the Funds

How did you hear about the YOF/YCF?	% of respondents
Through a Youth Worker	56
Through a Youth Club	22
Word of mouth	20
Poster or flyer	10
From a visit by young person	8
Through my school	7
Other	5
No response	0
N = 129	

The base is those young people who were aware of YOF/YCF

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community, 2007/8

The young applicants were generally uncertain about the extent to which young people in the wider population were aware of the Funds. However, they reported telling their friends about the Funds and other young people in the youth centres they attended. The young people who had benefited from YOF/YCF projects, but had not applied, had usually heard about the Funds from their friends or the other young people in the project or organisation through observing changes in the youth centre or improved facilities in their project. A minority of the beneficiaries of the Funds had heard about them from other sources such as their school or the LA website.

The promotion strategies adopted in the LAs appear to have been successful as, at the time of the survey, around three-quarters (76 per cent) of the 129 young people who reported that they were aware of the Funds, had applied for the Funds while one-fifth (21 per cent) had not applied. The young people who stated they had not applied for the Funds were given an opportunity, through an open question, to state their reasons. Young people gave a range of reasons for not applying to the Funds. While seven said that they had not been aware of the Funds, other reasons mentioned by one person in each case included that they did not know how to apply or did not want to apply. Seven young people explained that they had not applied before or other members of their group had done so while one said they lacked time, one had missed the deadline and one had been told that they could not apply.

3.2.3 Promotion plans for the future

As Table 3.3 shows, 88 per cent of the LAs planned more targeted promotion to particular target groups of young people and 76 per cent planned to promote the Funds to adults who work with young people. Greater use of existing funded projects as ‘ambassadors’ to further promote the Funds was planned by 70 per cent of the LAs. The LAs’ plans for future promotion clearly reflect a shift away from a blanket approach to promotion towards more targeted activities in order to raise further awareness of the Funds.

Table 3.3 Plans to change the promotion of the Funds in the future

Marketing approaches	% of respondents
More targeted promotion to particular groups	88
Promoting to adults who work with young people	76
More use of existing projects as ambassadors	70
More promotion via local media (e.g. TV or radio)	66
More flyers, leaflets and posters	58
Develop a website	51
Other	26
Non-response	4
N = 129	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

3.3 To what extent had awareness been raised among young people who are target groups or hard-to-reach?

This section presents evidence about the extent to which awareness of the Funds had been raised among target groups or those described as hard-to-reach by the LAs. During the initial visits to all the case study areas, LA staff had made a distinction between **raising awareness** of the Funds amongst young people from hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups and encouraging young people from these groups to actually **participate** in the Funds (O'Donnell, 2007). At that stage, the majority of the case-study LAs had raised awareness with existing contacts or 'gatekeepers', some of whom worked specifically with hard-to-reach young people. However, they felt that they were not able to judge the effectiveness of strategies to engage young people who were either hard-to-reach or disadvantaged.

3.3.1 Strategies used by the LAs to raise awareness of the Funds among young people who are target groups or hard-to-reach

The telephone survey of LAs revealed that, in the second year of the Funds, specific strategies had been put in place in the majority of the LAs (92 per cent) to encourage applications from hard-to-reach young people. As Table 3.4 shows, the majority of the LAs used gatekeepers such as existing organisations with established links with hard-to-reach and disadvantaged young people (99 per cent) and had enhanced or developed links with voluntary and community sector (93 per cent). The value of ensuring that young people were supported in the application process is reflected in the 95 per cent of LAs who said that they were using support workers to encourage more applications. These three strategies were also viewed as the most effective, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Strategies used by LAs to encourage young people from the hard-to-reach groups to apply for the Funds

Strategies	Used %	Most effective %	N=
Using existing organisations with links to these young people	99	31	118
Support workers to support young people in applying	95	38	113
Enhanced/developed links with voluntary and community sector	93	31	111
Panel members encouraging young people from hard-to-reach groups to apply	85	8	101
Allowing applications in different formats	71	7	85
Encouraging multiple applications from hard-to-reach groups	52	2	62
Ring fenced funding for hard-to-reach young people	20	13	24
Other	34	60	40
N =	119		

A The base is those LAs that had put strategies in place to encourage young people from hard-to-reach groups to apply

Strategies used - more than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Strategies identified as most effective method – a filter question – responses only from those who used a strategy. Five per cent of the respondents did not identify a most effective strategy.

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

An increased use of strategies to encourage applications from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people was also evident in the 12 case-study areas. In some of the areas, LA staff had monitored the number of applications from different applicant types and targeted those groups from whom fewer had been received. Some of the LAs had also involved young people on the decision-making panel in monitoring applicant types. For example, in one of the areas, the young people on the panel had worked with youth workers to identify groups of young people who had not applied for the Funds to target them. This exercise had led to a youth worker visiting a children's home to support the young applicants. Other groups of young people from the decision-making panel had supported young people with disabilities and projects from young people who were looked after, young carers, young people with Bangladeshi heritage and young people with disabilities.

The 12 case-study areas were encouraging YOF/YCF applications from all young people including those groups who were defined in the guidance as

disadvantaged or hard-to-reach. However, some of the LAs said they had **targeted** particular groups of young people. These included:

- young people who were Looked After (six LAs)
- young people with disabilities (five LAs)
- young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (four LAs)
- young travellers (four LAs)
- young offenders (three LAs)
- lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) young people (three LAs)
- teenage parents (two LAs)
- young carers (one LA).

This reflects the findings of the survey of LAs as many of the telephone survey respondents reported targeting disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people. Strategies to encourage applications from targeted groups in the case-study areas included increased use of the targeted dissemination to contacts working with hard-to-reach young people. The LAs had targeted organisations or youth/support workers who work with these groups of young people. For example, in one of the LAs they had used links with colleagues in the social care unit and the voluntary sector to go out and talk with people about the Funds. Another LA enlisted the help of a gypsy liaison officer to raise awareness with young people.

In some case-study areas, young people from the decision-making panels said the majority of applications came from young people who were attending youth clubs or had heard about the Funds through their school. The panel reported it had been difficult to encourage hard-to-reach young people to apply, so they had visited youth groups and worked with them to explain about the Funds and how to apply.

Many of the YOF/YCF projects **involved a cross-section of young people**, including those from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. For example, one supporting adult said their facility was accessed by a wide range of young people, including those from deprived backgrounds. **Hard-to-reach and disadvantaged young people who attended youth centres** had also been involved in YOF/YCF projects. For example, in one room at a YMCA centre had been refurbished and the supporting adult said, '*many of the young people in the centre come from broken homes; they are often very shy and/or have poor literacy and numeracy skills*'.

In cases where YOF/YCF projects were funded specifically for disadvantaged young people who already attend youth centres, supporting adults said they had used the activities to try to reach more **hard-to-reach young people**. For example, a youth worker in one centre said she had encouraged

Bangladeshi girls to attend dance workshops. Another youth worker, who had used YOF/YCF to involve young offenders and young people who have been excluded from school in music production, stated that the Funds had '*drawn new people in*'. Other adults who had supported YOF/YCF applicants said they had provided activities such as music gigs or dance lessons that may have benefited wider populations of young people including the hard-to-reach.

A further strategy to encourage involvement of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people in the Funds was the use of ring-fenced funds. The telephone survey of LAs revealed that one-fifth of the 119 LAs who had put strategies in place to encourage applications from hard-to-reach groups reported using **ring fenced funding for hard-to-reach young people** (See Table 3.4). This was also a strategy mentioned by three of the case-study LAs. Members of the decision-making panels in these areas had decided to **prioritise applications** from particular groups of young people. One young person explained their strategy, '*towards the beginning it was open to everyone but now we are positively discriminating toward some groups like disabled, refugees, gay and lesbians, young people in care*'. In another area, the panel had decided to allocate 25 per cent of the Funds for applications from hard-to-reach young people. This was said to have led to successful YOF/YCF applications from young people involved in the youth offending service and young people with disabilities. Another LA conducted an evaluation with their panel and as a result, they decided to prioritise disadvantaged groups. This led to funding being allocated to hard-to-reach young people such as young travellers and young people who are LGBT. Panel members in other areas said all types of young people should be able to apply for the Funds and to prioritise specific groups would be unfair.

3.3.2 What was the outcome of strategies to raise awareness among young people who are target groups or hard-to-reach?

The survey of LAs suggested that awareness among young people who are hard-to-reach has been raised, as the LAs reported changes in the types of YOF/YCF applications received in the second year. Indeed, four-fifths (81 per cent) of the 129 survey respondents noted a change in the applications received in the second year (April 2007-March 2008) compared with the first year (April 2006-March 2007), either in terms of the number or nature of applications, or the type of young people applying. Around two-thirds (63 per cent) noted a change in the types of organisations associated with the young people applying and half (51 per cent) stated there were changes in the types of young people applying.

Nearly all (128 out of the 129 respondents) of the survey respondents stated that disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups had applied for the Funds. These included young people defined in the YOF/YCF Guidance as those from disadvantaged backgrounds and the hard-to-reach. Table 3.5 presents the

percentage of LAs who reported that young people with these characteristics had applied for the Funds.

Table 3.5 Characteristics of young people who had applied for the Funds

Young people who:	LAs %
are from disadvantaged areas	98
have physical disabilities	95
have learning difficulties	94
are from ethnic minority backgrounds	94
are Looked After	93
are teenage parents	79
are young offenders	78
are young carers	78
are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT)	63
Other	39
No response	1
N=128	

The base is those who said that young people from hard-to-reach groups had applied for the Funds

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

This suggests that, although the majority of LAs had received applications from the hard-to-reach groups identified in the YOF/YCF guidance, some LAs appear to have been less successful in gaining applications from teenage parents, young offenders, young carers and young people who were LGBT. However, it may also be the case that these groups of young people may be less prevalent among young people as a whole. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2 young people may not have disclosed characteristics such as these when they applied for the Funds, so it may well be that YOF/YCF applicants from these groups are under-estimated.

The 12 case-study LAs also noted an increase in **the numbers of applications** received from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people in the second year. For example, a manager in one LA said that around half of the projects in the second year focused on hard-to-reach groups including young offenders, young people with disabilities, young carers, young parents and LGBT young people. Another LA, which had targeted raising awareness of the Funds among voluntary and community sector groups via a LA road show, said the funding allocated to young people with disabilities had increased by over 50 per cent in the second year. Outreach work was perceived as effective in generating applications from a more diverse range of young people. One of the operational managers said, *'the crucial thing is going out and talking to the young people'*. The support of colleagues in the

voluntary and community sector (see Section 3.4) was said to have led to an increase in YOF/YCF applications from **hard-to-reach young people**. The young people on the decision-making panels in each of the 12 case-study areas generally agreed that they had received applications from young people from a range of different backgrounds and organisations. In some areas the panel members had observed an **increase in applications from hard-to-reach young people in the second year** and attributed this to a lot of work that had been done through schools and the youth service to encourage a wider range of applications.

Despite strategies being adopted to engage hard-to-reach young people, the LA staff and members of the panels in a minority of the areas said further work was needed to reach some disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups of young people.

3.4 How far did LAs develop links with partner organisations?

Links with the voluntary and community sector had added value to the delivery of the Funds since they were viewed as having a key role in **raising awareness** of the Funds and **supporting applications from young people**. The LAs reported using a variety of methods to inform the voluntary and community sector of the Funds including:

- liaising with networks of voluntary and community sector groups including sending marketing materials to contacts in the voluntary and community sector, or to voluntary and community consortiums
- using email to a '*youth providers network*' for voluntary groups
- meetings with representatives from local voluntary groups and colleagues in Connexions to keep them informed about the Funds
- appointing a coordinator to liaise with the voluntary and community sector, and
- running road shows to encourage greater involvement from the voluntary and community sector.

Colleagues in the voluntary and community sector were also involved in supporting applications from young people. LA staff said they had received increased YOF/YCF applications from voluntary sector groups. For example, one LA had awarded 15 per cent of the total YOF/YCF funds to voluntary organisations in the first year and 38 per cent in the second year. Young applicants needed the support of a responsible adult or youth organisation when submitting a YOF/YCF application so the support of adults in the voluntary and community sector was especially valued by LAs who confirmed

that involvement of adults from the voluntary and community sector had enhanced the support they were able to provide for young people.

Operational managers in two LAs mentioned working with colleagues from YouthBank UK, a voluntary sector organisation, experienced in youth-led projects. In both cases, YouthBank UK colleagues had been involved in training and supporting the decision-making panel. One operational manager, who said the LA had little previous experience in youth-led decision-making said, *'they helped us a lot because they have a lot of experience'*. The other LA planned to take hard-to-reach young people on a residential as part of their training to be decision-makers with YouthBank UK colleagues. In a further two LAs, the voluntary and community sector were also involved in recruiting panel members and supporting them in their decision-making roles.

3.4.1 Staff in other parts of Children's Services

The LAs had raised awareness of the Funds with colleagues in Children's Services. Colleagues in Children's Services were supporting the delivery of the Funds in a number of ways. This included **raising awareness of the Funds**, helping to **identify target groups** and supporting the **decision-making panels**.

Staff across Children's Services had been involved in promoting the Funds generally within the LA and with the young people with whom they worked. For example, one LA had a steering group consisting of colleagues from Children's Services and Connexions who had helped to promote the Funds. Staff in Children's Services were also said to be encouraging young people in their own community to apply for the Funds. Networking and talking with other colleagues in the LA was said to be valuable because, *'personal contact is what makes things happen'*.

Colleagues within Children's Services were said to have acted as **'gate-keepers'** in order to access hard-to-reach groups. For example, in one LA, the Funds had been discussed with colleagues in the social care department and appropriate young people had been targeted. The operational managers gave examples of YOF/YCF applications where young people had been directly supported by their colleagues in other parts of Children's Services, including:

- colleagues in the Looked after Children (LAC) division working with young people, which led to applications from young people
- youth workers supporting applications from young people involved in the youth offending service
- applications from a group of young people with disabilities from a community group with staff from Children's Services.

Staff from across Children's Services were also involved in recruiting and supporting the young people on the decision-making panel. For example, LA staff such as racial inclusion workers and those from the social care and children's rights groups had supported members of the panel.

3.5 Conclusion

In the second year of YOF/YCF, most of the LAs had continued to use well-established promotional strategies such as posters or flyers, but there was an increased use of other strategies such as promotional events and greater dissemination via web-based strategies and local media. Young people had been involved in promoting the Funds in the first year, but it appeared that these additional promotion methods, such as the web-based strategies, had provided new opportunities for members of the decision-making panels to raise awareness of the Funds.

The research revealed that supporting adults were crucial to the engagement of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people in the Funds. Youth workers and contacts in the voluntary and community sector, who worked with disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people, acted as 'gate-keepers' to the Funds and were instrumental in increasing the number of applications from these groups in the second year. These adults had a dual role because they raised awareness of the Funds and also supported the young people in completing their YOF/YCF applications.

Use of adults with existing relationships with young people had proved successful in the second year in increasing the numbers of applications from disadvantaged or hard-to-reach young people such as those with disabilities and who are Looked After.

Awareness of the Funds was also raised among young people through word-of-mouth between young people and via promotional events involving successful applicants and panel members. The research has highlighted, therefore, the importance of young people in raising awareness of the Funds. Informal discussion about the Funds between young people along with events providing opportunities for successful YOF/YCF applicants to 'show-case' their projects may assist in raising awareness of the Funds in the future.

4. What has been funded and what was the process like?

Key findings

- Half of the case-study LAs had introduced changes to the application process since the first year, including modifications to the application form to make it simpler and easier to complete.
- A wide range of facilities and activities had been funded, the most popular of which were sports-based projects, arts and drama projects, refurbishment projects and trips.
- The majority of funded projects appeared to involve clearly defined groups of young people.
- There had been a move by some LAs to fund more but smaller capital projects in the second year.
- LA staff reported that the Funds represented good value for money in comparison with other expenditure on places to go and things to do for young people.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the process of applying for funding and the nature of the projects funded through the YOF/YCF. It also explores views on the cost-effectiveness of the YOF/YCF programme. More specifically, it examines:

- changes to the application process
- the types of support required and received by applicants
- the ways in which decisions on the outcomes of applications are communicated to applicants
- the factors that are taken into consideration when awarding funding
- the type and range of projects that have received funding
- the costs and perceptions of the cost effectiveness of the YOF/YCF.

4.2 Changes to the application process

At the time of the follow-up visits (November 2007 – January 2008), staff in six LAs reported making changes to the YOF/YCF application process since first implementing the Funds. Six LAs had made no changes, while three had specific plans to introduce changes in the future, including one that had already made some changes.

4.2.1 Changes made

Of the six LAs that had made changes to the YOF/YCF application process, staff in two reported making **changes to the application form** following feedback from applicants. This included making the application form simpler, and easier to complete, as well as requesting more detailed information from applicants regarding their applications. One LA, for example, requested additional location information to track the areas more effectively where applications were coming from. Staff in two LAs reported **targeting funding** at particular groups of young people or to '*priority wards*'. Staff in two LAs also reported revising their procedures with regard to **calling applicants to interview**. One authority had introduced a blanket requirement for all applicants to attend an interview; the other had introduced interviews for applicants they were unsure about '*rather than dismiss [the projects] outright*'. One LA had introduced a **new fast-track procedure** for applications up to £500. The authority in question had identified a need to process applications for smaller amounts more quickly, thereby helping to relieve the administrative pressures on the decision-making panel. Another LA had **extended the number of deadlines for applying for funding** from two to three times a year to cope with a backlog of applications.

4.2.2 Planned changes

Of the three LAs planning to introduce changes to the application process, one planned to **request more information 'upfront'**. This additional information included bank details together with the applicants' plans for monitoring the project should they be successful. The LA in question felt it was better to request this information at the application stage, rather than to chase projects for this information later on. Another LA planned to **divide their YOF/YCF budget into equal amounts**, in line with the periods in which applicants could apply for the funding. They were concerned that there was a danger of them committing too much money early on in the year, meaning that some applicants applying towards the end of the year could miss out. Similarly, one authority had plans to move away from a '*rolling application process*' to introduce **specific deadlines for applying for funding** across the year. They felt that doing so would avoid the build-up of applications and make the process of administering the Funds more manageable.

4.3 Support received by applicants

All of the LAs expected the ideas for projects to come from young people, as was the case at the time of the first round of visits. However, LA staff expected young people to have support from adults with their application and, in most cases to have a supporting organisation to receive the Funds on their behalf. Interviews with adults working with young people revealed that most had provided support to young people in the form of general encouragement, with many applicants reporting completing the application process with minimal adult input. Around half the adult interviewees suggested that **young people required light support**, such as help with costing things and general help in terms of spelling and ‘*knowing what to write*’ on the application form. This support was provided mainly by supporting organisations and sometimes by LA staff. A minority of adults, particularly youth workers, reported that some young people were intimidated by the application form, and needed a lot of encouragement and organising before being in a position to complete one. This appeared to be the case particularly with applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or those with weak literacy skills. However, for most of the young people interviewed during the case-study visits, the experience of applying for YOF/YCF funding was a positive one.

4.4 Time taken to process applications

In at least three LAs the time taken to process applications had shortened since first implementing the Funds. The average period of time taken to inform applicants as to whether or not they had been successful, together with payment, was one month from the date of submission. LA operational managers recognised the need to process applications quickly, but acknowledged that the time taken to process applications could sometimes take longer than expected, as illustrated by the following comments:

It takes time for the young people to give their presentations [to the young people’s decision-making panel] and for the applications to be endorsed by the council.

In theory [we should be able to process applications very quickly], but in practice it doesn’t always work like that because there is quite a lot of bureaucracy involved.

4.5 Communicating outcomes of applications to applicants

Three of the LAs reported changing the process by which the outcomes of applications were communicated to applicants. In one case **LA staff now checked applications** before handing them to the young people’s decision-

making panel to make sure they were complete and eligible for review. In another LA, **panel members were no longer involved in contacting applicants** directly regarding the outcomes of their applications because of the perceived additional administrative burden this placed on the young people. In the third LA to introduce changes, **applicants were now informed by telephone and text message**, as well as by letter.

Overall, most authorities used the combination of a phone call in the first instance, followed by a letter, to communicate successful outcomes to applicants. Letters were more frequently used to communicate unsuccessful outcomes to applicants, together with guidance on how the application could be improved. In most cases LA staff were responsible for communicating the outcomes to applicants.

Staff in only one LA reported having an appeals process in place, which entitled applicants to appeal within seven days of being told their application had been unsuccessful. Staff in the other LAs said they did not feel there was a need to introduce such a procedure, although most said they were constantly reviewing their procedures.

Of the 98 young people who said they had applied for the Funds, 93 per cent reported that their application was successful. While, overall, around three-quarters of those who had applied said that they would do so again, among the 91 young people who stated they had successful applications, 83 individuals (92 per cent) said they would apply for the Funds again. This suggests that young people who were not successful in their YOF/YCF application were less likely than those who were successful to apply for funding again in the future.

4.5.1 Reasons for not funding applications

The main two reasons given by panel members for not funding projects were firstly because they suspected **adults had submitted the applications** and, secondly, because applicants had provided **insufficient information or detail about their projects**. Both panel members and LA staff said that applicants were encouraged to re-submit unsuccessful applications, following feedback from the decision-making panel, and in most cases the follow-up applications appeared to be successful. Some panel members also said they would not fund applications that:

- **benefitted only one individual**, with no wider impact. Driving lessons, for example, would not be funded.
- **were for services or activities that were already well catered for** in the local area.

- **involved staff costs.** For example, one panel reported that if an applicant wanted to hire a sports hall and a sports instructor, they would only allocate the funds for the hire of the hall.
- **requested funding to purchase certain items or equipment,** for example pool tables or video games.

The members of a decision-making panel in one LA also said they were reluctant to award too many projects to any one organisation or group of applicants, and preferred to allocate the funding to as wide a range of different people as possible.

4.6 The nature of applications and funded projects

A full discussion of the types of projects that have received funding from the YOF/YCF is reported in the findings from the initial case-study visits report (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). The following section explores any reported changes or similarities in the nature of the applications and the projects that have received funding in the second year.

4.6.1 Changes in the nature of applications

Staff from nine of the 12 case-study LAs reported seeing differences in the nature of applications received in the second year of the Funds. YOF/YCF managers in three LAs reported receiving **more applications from voluntary and/or community sector** organisations, including from organisations not previously known to the LAs. One interviewee suggested that this was perhaps because '*word just got around*'. Staff from three LAs said that **the quality of applications had improved**. This was expressed in terms of increasingly realistic and accurate costings together with applications that were more closely aligned to the funding criteria. There was also some suggestion that **applications were becoming more varied and innovative**. Staff from three LAs reported receiving applications that were more varied and creative, for example, ranging from sports related projects to drama and art projects or innovative youth-led ventures such as setting up a juice bar. Staff from two LAs said they had received **more applications from hard-to-reach groups** of young people, possibly as a result of local authority attempts to target these groups. Only two LAs reported there had been no changes in the type or nature of applications received since the first year.

The telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in 129 LAs provides further evidence of changes in the nature of applications since the first year. Staff in 105 LAs reported there had been changes in the applications received this year (April 2007 – March 2008). A summary of the findings are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Reported changes in applications

Change	% of respondents
Increase in number of applications	87
Different types of organisations applying	63
Different types of projects applied for	60
Different types of young people applying	51
Decrease in number of applications	5
Other	28
No response	1

N = 105

*More than one answer could be given, so percentages may not sum to 100
The base is those who indicated that there had been changes in the applications received*

Source: Telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

Almost nine out of ten LA staff interviewed by telephone (87 per cent) reported an increase in the number of applications received for YOF/YCF, while more than half reported receiving applications for different types of projects (60 per cent) and from different organisations (63 per cent) or types of young people (51 per cent). Among the five LAs who reported a decrease, this was associated with an improvement in quality and a reduction of the number of YCF applications. The impact of a decrease in applications appears to have been limited as in all five LAs, interviewees were on schedule to spend all the YOF/YCF this year.

4.6.2 Changes to the nature of funded projects

As reported in the findings from the initial case-study visits report (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007), a range of projects and activities were reported to have been funded successfully through YOF/YCF. The main types of projects to be funded closely followed those reported in the first year, with **sports-based projects** and those that promoted a healthy lifestyle appearing to be the most frequently funded. Panel members gave some suggestions as to why sports projects, in particular, had proved so popular. One panel member suggested that sports-related projects were popular because of the excitement surrounding the London 2012 Olympic Games. Another panel member suggested sports projects were favoured by panel members because they '*bring people together*'. Young people from another panel suggested it was the fact that these projects often had clearly defined outcomes which were favoured by decision-makers, such as the purchase of new sports equipment, whereas for other projects the expected outcomes could sometimes be less clear. Indeed, in line with the findings from the previous report (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007), the **majority of funded projects appeared to involve clearly defined groups** of young people, including for example, projects that received money to pay for young people to go on a residential or trip.

Arts and drama projects also appeared to be very popular, as were day trips, residential and youth centre refurbishment projects. The high volume of sport projects in particular had encouraged at least some decision-making panels to reassess their priorities for commissioning projects. One panel member explained: *'We've had to start seriously scrutinising the sports projects because they are taking up way too much money'*. As a result, there appeared to be an ambition amongst many panels to fund **'more creative' and fewer sports focused** projects.

4.6.3 Projects that are given priority

While the projects listed above appeared to be funded the most often, due largely to the high volume of applications for such projects, panel members reported that they tried to prioritise certain projects. These included those projects that:

- involved or targeted young people from disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups
- had already raised some money towards the cost of their chosen activity/project
- demonstrated they could contribute to most or all of the five Every Child Matters outcomes
- would have a lasting impact or legacy.

The chair of one decision-making panel summarised the position held by most panels when he said:

If we have £5,000 left in the bank and we have an application that is going to benefit children with disabilities and one that is going to benefit children who live in an area of relatively high wealth, then obviously we are going to give the money to the disabled children because they feature higher on our agenda.

While the priorities for funding in year two are perhaps not new, panels now appeared to be in a position where they could be more selective in their funding, owing to greater awareness of the Funds (see Chapter 3) and of provision for young people in the local area and the subsequent rise in the number of applications being received.

4.6.4 Projects visited in case-study areas

The service providers and young people who were visited and interviewed for the case studies reported being involved in a range of different types of projects, similar to those already discussed. These 54 projects included the following facilities and activities:

- Trips or expeditions (eleven projects)
- Music and dance activities (nine projects)
- Sports and outdoor activities (eight projects)
- Sports facilities (five projects)
- Skills development courses (e.g. mechanics or parenting skills) (four projects)
- Gardening projects (four projects)
- Arts, media and fashion-related activities (four projects)
- Support groups (e.g. young mothers, LGBT groups) (three projects)
- Leisure and recreation facilities (e.g. cafes) (three projects)
- Refurbishments (two projects)
- Campaigns to raise awareness of an issue (two projects)
- Events (one project)
- IT facilities (one project)
- Health and fitness activities (one project).

The majority of these projects could be characterised as activities where a finite group of young people (usually the applicants) participated, or where equipment or facilities were paid for to be used by an unspecified number of young people (including, but not exclusively, the applicants) and the wider community. The types of projects were not notably different to those visited at the time of the first case-study visits (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). Interviewees were asked to give a breakdown of how the money they had received had been allocated. Table 4.2 below provides a summary of these costs for 32 of the projects visited.

Table 4.2 Summary of costs by project activity – across 32 projects

Cost area	Total cost of project		Paid for by YOF/YCF		Other sources	
	£	%	£	%	£	%
Staffing	7188	9	6688	8	500	1
Equipment/ materials	37183	47	33433	42	3750	5
Accommodation	18616	23	15366	19	3250	4
Transport	10000	13	10000	13	-	-
Staff development and support for LA staff	775	1	225	<1	500	1
Expenses	1896	2	1896	2	-	-
Other costs	3831	5	3781	5	50	<1
Total	79489	100	71389	89	8050	11

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Information provided by adults who worked with young people for 32 projects

It is worth noting that this data is influenced by the particular nature of the projects who provided the information and may not be representative of the profile of costs in YOF/YCF-funded projects as a whole. For example, one project had spent around £15,000 on equipment which inflates the 'equipment' figure in the table. Consequently, while generalisations should not be drawn from the data, the figures show that when combining the total amount of money received by the 32 projects is combined, almost half the funding (47 per cent) was spent on equipment or materials, while almost one quarter (23 per cent) was spent on accommodation. This supports the earlier finding that many of the projects involved the purchase of equipment (such as computers or sports equipment), while trips and residentials were also very popular. Interestingly, when looking at the combined total cost of these projects, 11 per cent was paid for by funding other than YOF/YCF. This supports the earlier finding that some panels prioritised projects that had some funding already in place, but also illustrates the fact that, for a minority of projects, the money awarded does not always cover the total cost of the project.

4.7 Reasons for funding these projects

In awarding projects, panel members continued to fund projects that scored highly against agreed assessment criteria, as reported in the findings from the initial case-study visits report (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). However, **to meet changing needs and priorities**, some LAs had adapted these criteria since the first year. Staff from two LAs, for example, had prioritised applications that benefited the wider community, while staff from another LA had prioritised applications from their Somalian community and those from young women. LA staff reported that panel members had also become more focused on achieving value for money and in taking into consideration existing provision when commissioning new projects.

These reported changes are broadly in line with findings from the telephone survey of LA staff, which revealed that more than half of the LAs surveyed (58 per cent) planned to change their approaches to spending YOF/YCF after April 2008 (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Plans to change approach to spending YOF/YCF after April 2008

Change	%
Yes	58
No	30
Don't know	12
No response	0
N = 129	

A single response item

Source: Telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Further evidence of these planned changes was explored through the case-study visits. With regard to the use of capital funding, staff from four LAs reported that their decision-making panels had decided to fund **more but smaller YCF projects**, to encourage more projects that would have a lasting impact, as illustrated by the following comment:

We are reviewing the way we spend the [YCF] money. We want to have a lasting improvement and we want to encourage more applications that do this.

Another reason for LAs favouring smaller capital projects was that, by distributing the funding across a range of projects, LAs felt that more young people would be able to access activities and/or equipment paid for by YCF. However, staff from one LA reported moving away from funding smaller YCF projects, as they had done in the first year, to funding larger ones in the second year. The panel, they said, had identified wider community benefits to committing more money to fewer projects. LA staff also recognised the difficulty of being able to get projects underway that involved large-scale building work. This in turn led to the belief, by some, that using YCF for the purchase of equipment was a legitimate and necessary use of the funding, as illustrated by the following observation from an LA strategic manager:

Two hundred thousand pounds won't buy a building, so a lot of YCF has been spent on equipment, IT and refurbishment projects.

4.8 Analysis of how YOF/YCF has been spent

Findings from the telephone survey of LA staff revealed that while the majority of LAs had been able to spend all of their money or carry over YOF/YCF funding in 2006/2007, a minority had returned Funds to the DCSF (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Amount of YCF and YOF spent in 2006/2007

Amount spent	YCF	YOF
	%	%
All Funds spent	37	55
Not all spent, some carried over	54	26
Not all spent, some returned to DCSF	9	19
No response	1	0
N = 129		

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

A high proportion of LAs had also already spent, or were on course to spend, all of their YOF/YCF funding in the 2007/2008 financial year (see Table 4.5 below).

Table 4.5 Amount of YCF and YOF spent or on schedule to spend in 2007/2008

Amount spent	YCF	YOF
	%	%
All Funds already spent	33	33
On course to spend it all	62	60
Not all Funds will be spent before the end of the year	5	8
No response	0	0
N = 129		

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

A third of LA staff interviewed by telephone also reported that, excluding YOF/YCF money, there had been no change in their total expenditure on youth service provision since April 2006 (see Table 4.6 below).

Table 4.6 Extent to which total expenditure on youth service provision has changed since April 2006

Change	% of LAs
Yes, it has increased	27
Yes, it has decreased	19
No, it has stayed the same	33
Don't know	22
N = 129	

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

The findings suggest that LAs experienced a range of changes in expenditure on youth service provision since the Funds were introduced with no one overall tendency. However, in most LAs, expenditure had remained the same or had increased since the Funds were introduced which may suggest that the Funds were contributing to an overall increase in expenditure on services for young people in the majority of LAs and had not replaced core funding. On the other hand, 39 per cent of respondents reported either that expenditure on youth service provision had decreased (19 per cent) or that they were unable to comment (22 per cent).

4.8.1 Numbers of applications that have received funding

Five of the 12 case-study LAs provided details of the numbers of applications received and approved since April 2006. Details are provided in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Numbers of applications received and approved in five LAs

LA*	Total YOF/YCF spent since April 2006 (approximate)	Number of applications received				Number of applications approved**			
		YOF		YCF		YOF		YCF	
(A)	(B)	2006/07 (C)	2007/08 (D)	2006/07 (E)	2007/08 (F)	2006/07 (G)	2007/08 (H)	2006/07 (I)	2007/08 (J)
LA 1	£1,085,000	73	81	71	64	65	75	49	59
LA 2	£1,360,000	103	164	64	62	75	89	46	47
LA 3	£184,000	53	59	3	3	32	27	1	2
LA 4	£1,189,000	81	91	26	63	57	58	26	43
LA 5	Not available	59	76	25	40	40	40	20	28

*The information presented is based on data provided by LAs between October 2007-January 2008, and may not reflect their current situation

**Note that the difference between columns C-F and G-J may not reflect the actual number of projects that were unsuccessful in receiving funding, as some applications had not yet been reviewed or had been deferred for further information.

Source: LA proforma, October 2007-January 2008

The details in the table show that, at the time the LA proforma was completed, the overall numbers of applications received and approved for the financial year 2007/08 had generally increased or remained similar in each year of the Funds. The figures also suggest that, overall, more YOF projects were funded than capital projects in both financial years. The number of YOF and YCF applications received and improved was broadly proportionate to the total amount of funding spent by each authority since April 2006.

4.8.2 The involvement of young people from disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups

The findings from the data provided by LAs also provide an insight into the participation of disabled young people and those from disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups in the decision-making and application processes (see Table 4.8 below).

Table 4.8 The involvement of young people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups in seven LAs

LA*	Number of young people participating with a disability		Number of young people participating from disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups	
	Decision-makers	Applicants	Decision-makers	Applicants
LA 1	2	64	5	139
LA 2	0	107	27	203
LA 3	6	26	8	-
LA 4	5	-	52	-
LA 5	2	245	5	2965

**The information presented is based on data provided by LAs between October 2007-January 2008, and may not reflect their current situation*

Source: LA proforma, October 2007-January 2008

The findings suggest that, in general, LAs had been successful in engaging young people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged/hard-to-reach groups in the Funds both as decision-makers and applicants. However, the number of young people varied across LAs and some appear to have had more success in engaging young people with these characteristics. It is also worth noting that some LAs were not able to provide this information about young people applying for funding. The definition of 'disadvantaged' and 'hard to reach' adopted also varied across LAs.

4.9 How has YOF/YCF been funded and how cost effective is it?

Staff in at least six LAs reported that there had been no change in the way funding had been distributed to successful projects. Staff in most LAs reported that funding was paid in advance to successful projects, with staff in only one LA reporting that funding was paid in a combination of arrears and in advance. These payments were largely made by cheque, and for the full amount. Staff from one LA said they now paid applicants by bank transfer (BACS) instead of by cheque, while at least one LA gave applicants a choice of how they received the money. In the authority in question, applicants could either receive the money by cheque made out to the full amount, or they

could choose to have the LA make project payments directly on the applicants' behalf. The latter approach was found to be particularly useful when dealing with applicants who did not have their own bank accounts. LA staff were all in agreement that the Funds represented good value for money in comparison with other expenditure on places to go and things to do for young people. One LA operational manager said that he thought the government were getting good value for money because of the additional time that LA staff were spending on the programme. He explained: *'The man hours are massive on it. The hours are nowhere near representative of the cost of what's actually spent'*.

This is reflected in the analysis of the costs that three of the case-study LAs were able to provide. In general, other LAs did not record their costs in such a way as to be able to attribute their LA staff time to the YOF/YCF. The information provided by three LAs indicated that they had used the five per cent of YOF funding and LA resources to support the YOF/YCF programme. The areas for which cost information was provided were: staffing, transport, marketing, training for panel members, panel expenses and equipment. They also included the costs of sub-contracting another organization to manage the YOF/YCF panel. The staffing costs included central staff costs for operational and senior managers and administrative support but not the time used by LA youth workers who supported applicants for the Funds.

Overall, these three LAs had spent £346,706 of LA funds in implementing the YOF/YCF programme. However, it should be noted that this ranged from £10,700 in a metropolitan LA which had bought in a partner to deliver the programme to £290,026 in a county authority. Most of the LA funds were attributed to staff costs although they had also been used for marketing, transport and panel expenses. On the whole, most of the five per cent of the YOF/YCF Funds were spent on LA staff costs or on a partner organisation that was helping the LA in coordinating the Funds. In the two metropolitan areas, the five per cent of YOF/YCF funds covered the majority of expenditure (65 to 70 per cent). However, in the county authority, the majority of the cost (88 per cent) was funded by the LA from its own resources. While it may be that the three LAs used slightly different approaches to estimating their expenditure, which may explain some differences in the amounts, the data indicates that there was a cost associated with implementing the Fund that was not wholly met by the five per cent allocation from the YOF/YCF budget.

In considering how cost effective the Funds were, LA staff highlighted the value offered by the young people involved in the decision-making process and those involved in running projects, as illustrated by the following comments:

The fact is young people are doing it, planning it and reviewing it, and they are not being paid a salary... [The Funds] are opening up the possibilities of young people doing some really exciting work. It's not about saving, it's about opening up opportunities.

The Funds have been very cost effective in terms of involving young people. However, it cost [the LA] money to hire workers, but we have been able to fund an incredible amount of projects.

I think it's been hugely cost-effective. The Funds have facilitated in empowering young people and given them the means to make things happen.

Staff in three LAs said they were operating similar schemes to YOF/YCF in their areas, albeit on a smaller scale, and, while acknowledging the challenges of evaluating the impact of individual projects, said they thought the Funds represented good value for money in comparison with these other schemes.

4.10 Conclusion

A wide range of projects had been funded in the 12 case-study areas, with many similarities to the types of projects funded in the first year. The most frequently funded projects continued to be sports-based projects, arts and drama projects, refurbishment projects and trips. The majority of funded projects appeared to involve clearly defined groups of young people. LA staff acknowledged the difficulty of assessing the impact of projects funded by YOF/YCF, but the majority were considered to offer short term as distinct from lasting benefits.

There were reported changes in both the application process and in the types of applications being received. Following feedback from applicants, some LAs had made their application forms more straightforward, while others had targeted funding towards LA-identified priority groups or areas. It was felt that applications from the voluntary and community sector were beginning to increase, as were those from hard-to-reach groups of young people. Support provided to applicants by LA and service provider staff appeared to be proportionate to the needs of the young people, and, for approximately half of the applicants, appeared to be 'light touch' in nature. Some LAs reported that they had been successful in shortening the time taken to process applications, and there was some evidence that local decision-making panels were in a better position to prioritise certain projects, including those that targeted young people from disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups. In some cases, panel members intended to fund more innovative and fewer sports-focused projects in the future. Some LA staff reported that, overall, the quality

of applications had improved since the first year. This was expressed in terms of increasingly realistic and accurate costings together with applications that were more closely aligned to the funding criteria.

5. What is the impact of YOF/YCF on provision and participation in activities?

Key findings

- The majority of LAs surveyed reported that the Funds had led to an increase in young people's participation in positive activities and that, to some or a great extent, this increase was among young people who did not previously participate in such activities.
- Half of the LAs surveyed said that there had been a small increase in participation among young people who could be described as 'hard-to-reach' and nearly two-fifths said there had been a large increase.
- The increase in participation was associated with improvements in facilities which young people found more attractive and 'up-to-date', more time for adults to promote activities or open facilities, and the availability of funding to allow young people to choose what they wanted to do.
- Young people who were surveyed had participated in activities more often since the Funds were introduced and this was more likely to be the case among young people who had accessed activities or facilities that were funded by YOF/YCF.
- The main impact on LAs was to provide evidence that an approach involving young people as the decision-makers with purchasing power was effective. The prevailing view was that they intended to continue and expand this approach in future.
- LA staff considered that there had been an overall increase in the number and nature of activities on offer for young people. Young people who were involved in projects had more mixed views and, while some had experienced an increase, others felt that this may be limited to individual projects and did not have a wider effect.
- The majority of LA managers, and around half of young people said that there was more choice of things to do as a result of the Funds and that facilities were more up-to-date.
- Around half of the young people, surveyed said that opportunities to learn new skills, access to computers and youth clubs had improved since the Funds were introduced.
- Young people who had participated in YOF/YCF-funded activities were said to have benefited from learning new skills associated with the specific project. Many had gained in self-confidence and, in some cases this had led to further outcomes as they engaged in other opportunities or activities. Young people said they gained socially from making new friends and some said that their behaviour had improved since their involvement.

- While some interviewees found it difficult to assess the impact of the Funds on the wider community there were indications of improved attitudes towards young people among the wider community arising from projects which engaged directly with the community and from adults' respect for young people bringing resources into their community.
- Interviewees and those surveyed, were more circumspect about the impact of YOF/YCF on anti-social behaviour and crime in their areas, primarily because they considered that the impact of the project would be contained within the project and not able to have a wider effect. However projects that had improved facilities for young people to go to were more likely to consider that they had led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the impact and outcomes of the YOF/YCF after they had been in place for nearly two years. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Funds aimed to improve provision of positive activities for young people, by giving young people power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. The main purpose of the Funds was to:

- Give a voice to young people, particularly disadvantaged young people
- Change the way that LAs and their partners provide activities and facilities for young people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, increasing the responsiveness of providers to what young people want
- Improve things to do and places to go in line with what young people want in their neighbourhoods
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge skills and abilities, gaining recognition and accreditation
- Increase the well-being of young people by contributing to the achievement of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes
- Increase young people's engagement with services and with the democratic process at a local level.

This chapter draws on data from the case-study visits to 12 LAs, the telephone survey of managers in 129 LAs and the survey of 323 young people and members of the wider community to explore the extent to which the YOF and YCF met their aims. More specifically, it presents the evidence of the impact of the YOF/YCF on:

- young people's participation in activities
- LAs and on the provision for young people

- young people who participated in activities and applied for Funds
- the wider community.

5.2 What has been the impact of YOF/YCF on young people's participation in activities?

The Funds appeared to have led to an increase in participation in positive activities in the majority of LAs. Around half (51 per cent) of the 129 LAs that were interviewed by telephone, stated that there had been a large increase in the numbers of young people participating in positive activities as a result of the Funds. A further 37 per cent said that there had been a small increase in numbers. The remaining 12 per cent said that they did not know if there had been a change or did not respond.

Further exploration of this increase in numbers revealed that 66 per cent of LA staff reported that, 'to some extent', this increase was among people who did not previously participate in such activities, while a further 23 per cent considered that this was the case 'to a great extent'. Only one per cent of interviewees said the increase was 'not at all' among people who had not previously participated and the remaining 11 per cent did not comment. As discussed in Chapter 3, while the Funds are available universally, there is an expectation that they would be targeted towards young people who are 'hard-to-reach' and/or disadvantaged and LAs had developed strategies to raise awareness of the Funds among these groups. The outcome of these strategies is reflected in respondents' comments, which showed that there had been some increase in young people from these hard-to-reach groups participating in positive activities resulting from the Funds. More specifically:

- 39 per cent said that there had been a large increase in such young people participating
- 51 per cent said that there had been a small increase
- nine per cent did not know and one per cent did not comment.

Their reflections on the characteristics of young people from 'hard-to-reach' groups who had started to participate reveal some variation, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Types of ‘hard-to-reach’ young people who started to participate in positive activities

Characteristics of young people	% of LAs
Young people from disadvantaged areas	96
Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds	85
Young people with learning difficulties	85
Young people with physical disabilities	83
Looked after young people	81
Teenage parents	64
Young offenders	63
Young carers	62
Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) young people	58
Other	21
N=116	

*More than one answer could be given, so percentages do not sum to 100
The base is those who indicated that the number of hard-to-reach young people participating had increased*

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs

The responses of LA staff suggest that, in most LAs, young people from across a range of ‘hard-to-reach’ and/or disadvantaged groups had started to participate in positive activities. LAs had been successful in increasing the numbers of young people from disadvantaged areas, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with physical and learning difficulties. Fewer said, however, that teenage parents, young offenders, young carers and LGBT young people had increased their participation. This also reflects the extent to which they had received applications from young people with these characteristics (see Chapter 3) and suggests that, within the ‘hard-to-reach’ groups, there may be some who are harder to engage in activities. Alternatively, it may be that young people with these characteristics are harder to identify and LA staff may be less aware of their involvement, therefore.

Among the young people who were surveyed, since April 2006:

- 44 per cent had participated in an activity that was funded by the YOF/YCF
- 40 per cent had used facilities that were paid for by the YOF/YCF.

In addition, there was some indication that young people who lived in more deprived areas were slightly more likely to indicate that they had participated

in YOF/YCF funded activities (54 per cent of those in band 2 and 58 per cent of those in band 3 compared with 46 per cent overall)⁶.

Evidence from the survey of young people also indicates that there has been an increase in individuals' participation in positive activities. Table 5.2 illustrates the extent to which young people reported that they engaged with a range of activities more or less often since the Funds were introduced.

Table 5.2 Extent to which young people aged 13-19 participated in activities in their spare time since April 2006

Activity	Do more often %	Do less often %	No change %	Never do %	No response %
Hang out with friends	64	12	20	2	2
Play or listen to music / DJ with friends	64	7	22	3	3
Use the internet / chatrooms	60	14	20	4	3
Go to a youth club	51	14	15	16	4
Sports activities	46	23	25	3	3
Shopping	44	20	27	6	2
Play video game	43	26	20	10	2
Eat out	38	25	30	3	4
Volunteering	35	12	22	28	3
Watch TV	33	40	24	0	3
Trips or days out	32	19	37	9	3
Go to discos, clubs, gigs	31	18	20	26	5
Watch live sport	31	19	24	23	3
Drama and dance	30	16	19	33	3
Outdoor / adventure activities	30	19	29	20	2
Go to the cinema	28	30	35	4	2
Take part in an organised group	28	8	22	41	2
Reading	26	28	28	15	3
Take part in local committees or forums	18	11	24	44	3
Go to a place of worship	17	15	20	45	3
Go to art galleries or museums	7	11	30	48	5
Something else	15	3	11	7	65
N=237					

A series of single response questions – due to rounding percentages do not sum to 100
Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community

⁶ Young people were grouped into bands based on their postcode and three deprivation measures derived from census data. Band 1 represented areas where <7% of households were deprived in three dimensions, band 2 represented areas where 7-12.25% were in this category, band 3 represented areas where 12.26%-<16% of households were in this category and band 4 represented areas where 16% or more were in this category. This analysis is based on all those for whom postcode data was provided and who were are of YOF/YCF (N=172).

Many young people said that they were participating in activities more often since the instigation of the Funds in April 2006. Indeed, all but ten of the young people who responded said that they had participated in at least one activity more often. In addition to illustrating changes in young people's participation overall, Table 5.2 reveals that young people had taken part in activities that might be funded by the Funds, as outlined in Chapter 4. For example, YOF/YCF funding had supported youth clubs, sports activities, trips or days out, discos and gig nights, drama and dance activities, outdoor activities and organised groups. In addition, the Funds had supported opportunities for young people to hang out with friends in safe locations, to play and listen to music, access the internet, watch sport and visit galleries and museums.

Further analysis revealed a relationship between individuals participating in some activities more often and whether they said that they had taken part in YOF/YCF funded activities or use of facilities. More specifically, it appeared that young people who had participated in YOF/YCF-funded **activities** were more likely than all respondents to report participating more often in the following:

- Sports activities (51 per cent compared with 46 per cent)
- Going to a youth club (63 per cent compared to 51 per cent)
- Going to discos, clubs or gigs (36 per cent compared with 31 per cent)
- Playing music or DJ-ing with friends (67 per cent compared with 64 per cent)
- Participating in an organised group (37 per cent compared with 28 per cent)
- Volunteering (47 per cent compared with 35 per cent)
- Drama and dance (35 per cent compared with 30 per cent)
- Trips or days out (43 per cent compared with 32 per cent)
- Local forums (27 per cent compared with 18 per cent)
- Outdoor activities (39 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

In addition, young people who reported that they had used YOF/YCF-funded **facilities** were more likely than all respondents to report increased participation in:

- Going to a youth club (65 per cent compared with 51 per cent)
- Going to discos, clubs or gigs (36 per cent compared with 31 per cent)
- Playing music or DJ-ing with friends (73 per cent compared with 64 per cent)
- Volunteering (43 per cent compared with 35 per cent)
- Drama and dance (38 per cent compared with 30 per cent)

- Trips or days out (49 per cent compared with 32 per cent)
- Local forums (30 per cent compared with 18 per cent)
- Outdoor activities (38 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

It appears, therefore, that young people who reported that they had engaged in YOF/YCF-funded activities, or used facilities, were more likely to report participating in activities more often. Moreover, the nature of the activities where this was the case, is associated with the type of activities that are known to be funded by the YOF/YCF whereas other activities, such as reading, shopping, using the internet, were not identified more often by young people who said that they had engaged with YOF/YCF-funded activities or facilities. In addition, young people who participated in YOF/YCF funded activities or facilities were more likely to report their engagement in volunteering and local forums.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the activities that were funded through YOF/YCF were diverse and dispersed and included those which operated over an unspecified period of time and were accessible to a wide number of young people. Consequently, senior managers in LAs reported that they did not have quantitative evidence of an increase in the numbers of young people participating in activities or using facilities, as a result of the Funds. Nevertheless, managers in all 12 case-study LAs said that there were now more things to do and more places to go for young people in their LA and some perceived that a wider range of young people were now becoming involved. As one observed: *'young people are putting something on that is reaching out to other young people, and they are getting those young people in'*. Furthermore, across the interviews with young people who applied for the Funds, those who participated in projects, and adults working with young people, there were indications of an increase in participation, as summarised below.

- **Youth clubs that had been refurbished** as a result of the Funds were experiencing an increase in numbers of young people making use of them according to managers in three LAs. Indeed, some young people who were interviewed reported that they were going to the youth club more frequently because *'this is the sort of thing young people like and want. You can hang out with your friends rather than sit at home'* or because *'it has got new sofas and a TV...you can do cooking now there is a new kitchen'*.
- While some projects visited did not report an increase in the numbers participating because their project was for a specific group of young people, a total of 18 projects said that **more young people were now participating** in their projects or were **participating more regularly**. In one instance the number of attendees on an average night had nearly doubled from 20 or 30 to 40 or 50 and in another the numbers had

increased from around 15 to 100. Adults who worked with young people attributed the increases in improvements to:

- facilities that had been funded by YOF/YCF such as an IT suite or a café
 - YOF/YCF funding enabling them to offer young people what they wanted so they remained involved
 - better promotion which YOF funding had facilitated either through funding a positive activity so people were aware of '*something good coming out of the centre*' or through funding a '*health bus*' which enabled youth workers to reach out to a wider group of young people and encourage them to attend the project too.
- Young people who were interviewed were participating in 12 YOF/YCF funded projects, but were not involved in applying, said that the **project was entirely new, or that they had not previously taken part**. Young people also said that, if they had not been taking part in the YOF/YCF funded activity, they would be '*on the streets*', '*watching TV*' or '*[in the] park or something*'.
 - While most of the groups of young people who had applied for the Funds were members of existing statutory or voluntary groups, 13 of the groups that were visited were **newly formed** specifically in relation to the Funds. This included instances of young people within an institution such as a school or care home identifying a need among their peers and forming a group to apply for Funds. There were also instances of outreach youth workers from the voluntary, community and statutory sectors consolidating their emerging relationships with a group of young people through focusing on applying for the Funds and then engaging in the project.
 - Young people who were involved in the decision-making panel in four areas said that they had been participating more in activities since YOF/YCF funding had been available most often because they were **more aware of projects and activities on offer**.

Although it was evident that some young people who responded to the survey had been participating more often in activities (Table 5.2), their responses indicated that there remained some scope for further involvement as 60 per cent or more of the respondents reported that they would like to do more of the following activities:

- Hang out with friends (79 per cent)
- Sports activities (75 per cent)
- Go to the cinema (74 per cent)
- Trips or days out (74 per cent)

- Outdoor / adventure activities (71 per cent)
- Play or listen to music or DJ with friends (65 per cent)
- Eat out (64 per cent)
- Shopping (60 per cent)
- Go to discos, clubs and gigs (60 per cent)
- Go to a youth club (60 per cent).

To some extent, the YOF/YCF has the potential to enable young people to fulfil their wish to undertake these activities by making more, and more appropriate, activities available. However, as can be seen in Table 5.3, young people encountered a variety of barriers to participation which were principally logistical barriers of not having enough money and difficulties travelling. Furthermore, young people's commitment to their homework or coursework was identified as a barrier by two in five young people. In addition to these barriers, it emerged that the nature and extent of activities available was a barrier for around one third, while the extent to which young people were aware of any activities was an inhibiting factor for around one fifth. Further analysis reveals some differences in the barriers in relation to the type of area where young people lived. More specifically:

- Young people in **rural areas** were more likely to indicate that there was nothing available (39 per cent) and that it was difficult to travel (50 per cent).
- Young people in **urban areas** were more likely to indicate that the activities on offer were not what they wanted (38 per cent), that they did not know anyone who does what they want to do (34 per cent), that they did not feel safe (17 per cent) and that they just do not want to do anything (24 per cent).

This suggests that barriers in urban areas are more likely to be related to provision, while those in rural areas are associated with access. Different solutions may, therefore, be required in different types of areas.

Table 5.3 Barriers to doing what young people would like to in their spare time

Barrier	True for me %	Not true for me %	Don't know %	No response %
Not enough money	57	31	8	4
I'm too busy with homework / coursework	41	44	10	5
It is too difficult to travel to	40	46	11	3
There is nothing round here for young people to do	33	45	16	6
The things on offer are not what I want	33	41	20	6
I don't know anyone who does things that I want to do	27	60	8	5
I don't know how to find the things I want to do	22	63	12	4
Nothing stops me, I just don't want to do anything	19	68	9	5
I don't feel safe	15	68	13	4
No-one has encouraged me	13	74	8	5
I don't like meeting new people	11	75	10	4
My parents or carers won't let me	8	77	11	4
Other	10	11	8	71

N=237

A series of single response questions – due to rounding percentages do not sum to 100
Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community.

Young people who were interviewed during the case-study visits, and were panel members or involved in YOF/YCF-funded activities, identified a number of barriers to young people's participation in activities. The most widely mentioned was the lack of **self-confidence** and feeling intimidated or fearful of meeting people that they did not know, or because different 'groups' of young people '*do not get along*'. One panel group suggested that more use of team building activities with young people could help to address this and develop their self-confidence. A second widely mentioned issue was young people's **lack of awareness** of the activities available for young people. As one young person observed '[LA] is good at running stuff, but not so good at telling people'. Interviewees said that this could be addressed by more publicity, including through internet social networking sites, more outreach and by '*word of mouth*' among young people. Nevertheless, some noted that young people '*themselves*' could be a barrier by ignoring publicity material or by lacking in motivation and '*get up and go*'. Moreover, some said that young people could **choose** to participate or not and some chose not to. The extent to which young people have a choice is, however, related to the opportunities on offer and some young people said that there was either **nothing available** in the area, nothing for a specific age range (16 to 20 year olds, for example)

or that what was available was not engaging for them. In addition, the **quality of the facilities**, which were sometimes said to be '*run down*' was a barrier. Young people recommended improving facilities and identifying '*what interests young people and then try and relate the activity to that*' to address these barriers.

Panel members in two London Boroughs observed that '**crime is the main issue**' and that young people or their parents were concerned about going out. In addition, young people in another area noted that the **timing** of activities at night was a barrier for some. Members of one panel suggested that the fear of crime could be addressed by youth clubs working closely with community police officers who could prioritise being in the area of the youth club on the evening that it opened. Other less widely mentioned barriers noted included lack of time and other responsibilities such as homework, poor transport, cost, peer pressure and it not being '*cool*' to go to a youth club. Finally one young person observed that one barrier was the disappointment experienced by some young people in the past where adults '*make promises they don't keep so young people don't want to be disappointed – they've had enough of broken promises*'.

Sustainability

In terms of the sustainability of projects that had received YOF/YCF funding, in general, young people who were panel members made a distinction between projects that were one-off activities, such as residentials, trips and putting on a show and those where equipment or facilities had been provided or upgraded such as youth shelters, a skate park, dance floor, youth centre refurbishment and ICT equipment. They considered that the latter would be more likely to lead to sustained participation by young people than the former. Nevertheless, some considered that even one-off activities could lead to ongoing sustained participation because of the enjoyment of the one-off activity as one young person observed: '*if they see the benefits then they are going to keep coming, like, 'oh yes, we can go on trips'...then they are going to keep getting involved*'.

In order to support sustainability of projects some panel members said that they would provide further funding to a project that had already received Funds. In addition, they noted that some projects applied for other funding and noted the value of voluntary workers in supporting the ongoing sustainability of projects.

5.3 What has been the impact of the YOF/YCF on LAs and on provision for young people?

5.3.1 Effect on LAs

There was widespread consensus among managers across the 12 case-study LAs that a major impact of the YOF/YCF on the LA had been the successful demonstration that **giving decision-making power to young people was an effective and worthwhile approach** to developing provision for young people in an area. The distinctive feature of the Funds was that young people were not only consulted but they had real power as a result of having resources to distribute. As one senior manager stated: *'£40,000 is not tokenism, it is real money and can make a change'*. A second illustrated the change of approach when he commented that *'we have had small pots of money to give as grants but it has always been adults that have led that, it's never been young people...I see it as giving a bit more control and power to young people, and the community itself'*. While some managers said that they had previously consulted young people and involved them in decisions, the Funds *'put us on the map'* and raised the profile across the wider LA of involving young people. Consequently, they reported that they had generally been able to overcome any reticence among LA staff and councillors by providing evidence that this approach could work. In one area, local councillors were reported to have noticed projects in their area and were *'seeing young people as a priority'* and *'want training on communicating with young people'*.

In addition, implementing the Funds had provided an opportunity for LAs to **learn how best to approach involving young people in decision-making** of this nature. The impact of this on four LAs was to consider, or already implement, greater involvement of young people in deciding about the youth budget and through representation on other groups, committees and forums within the LA. As one manager explained: *'having seen what I've seen, I would have no hesitation to give them more money to do it in this way for the future'*, while a second reflected a wider realisation in the LA that *'if we are about creating a market for youth services, then actually, we need to butt out and let the purchasers have a say'*.

In addition to the impact on the culture of the LA in involving young people in decision making, managers in eight LAs said that **enabling young people to apply for funding** was a further impact on their LA. They commented on the value of *'young people believing that they can get some money...and getting really excited when they do'* and it giving *'hope'* to young people that there were opportunities for funding available. Indeed, one senior manager felt that the approach which they had adopted of allocating some of the Funds to small grants had facilitated this. Receiving YOF/YCF funding was said to have, *'given young people ownership of projects'* and a sense of achievement such as when they found that *'we didn't realise we could do this and we've*

done this for ourselves'. Managers noted that the young people who applied were able to '*be creative*' and develop '*innovative*' ideas and were also able to challenge perceptions that young people were selfish by applying for Funds that were '*not about them [but] about improving other people's lives*'.

A third impact of the Funds on LAs, that was identified by managers in seven areas, was the impact on **improving or increasing provision for young people overall**. There were two aspects to this impact. Firstly, managers said that the Funds had paid for facilities or activities that the LA would not otherwise have been able to fund, including innovative projects, and had led to new and refurbished equipment in the LA. This applied also to the voluntary and community sector, in the view of one manager, who observed that such organisations often did '*good work*' but with limited, or no, resource. Secondly, it had led them to improve their core provision through involving young people more closely and they had begun to use their core funding in a different way. As one explained, their understanding of what had been funded by YOF/YCF assisted them in identifying '*what's missing and how do we fill those gaps, and how do we respond to the young people?*' while a second manager said that their experience of the Funds had reinforced the fact that young people are different from adults and '*strengthened the need to involve young people in the decisions, the planning, and not assume we know what is best for them*'. In one LA, core funding had been used to supplement the YOF/YCF resource where a project represented the LA's strategic priority areas.

Managers in five areas discussed how the Funds had contributed to the **strategic aims of the LA**. The decision-making panel approach and the projects that had received funding contributed to the achievement of the Every Child Matters outcomes and to individual LAs' aim such as for increased involvement of young people in local decision-making, anti-violence, teenage pregnancy and peer education campaigns.

The impact of the Funds on the case-study LAs appears to be more widely reflected in the telephone survey of 129 LAs. As can be seen in Table 5.4, nearly all LAs agreed that young people were more involved in decision-making since the Funds were introduced and 81 per cent said that consultation with young people had increased across the LA. The Funds had also had a wider impact within the LA in the majority of cases as more councillors were said to be taking an interest in activities for young people and most LAs had developed links with the voluntary and community sector.

Table 5.4 Impact of the Funds on Local Authorities

Since the Funds were introduced:	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	No response %
Young people are more involved in making decisions across the LA	92	4	4	1
Links with the voluntary and community sector have been developed	86	8	5	1
Consultation with young people has increased across the LA	81	10	7	2
The level of interest in activities for young people among councillors has increased	76	18	5	1
New ways of consulting with young people have been developed across the LA	68	18	12	2
N=129				

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

5.3.2 Impact on provision for young people

As noted above, LA managers considered that one impact of the Funds for their authority was an increase and/or improvement in provision for young people overall. It emerged that there were three dimensions to this change:

- more access to a wider range of activities for young people
- involvement of more and new providers of activities and facilities for young people
- improvements in the quality of provision.

Further perspectives on these dimensions from the view of LA managers, young people who were panel members and applicants, and adults who supported provision for young people, are discussed below.

Greater access to a wider range of activities

Across the 12 case-study LAs, young people and adults considered that there had been an increase in the number of activities available as a result of the Funds. Managers in ten LAs cited examples including:

- Opportunities that would not have been funded from core funds such as residential trips with an educational focus, running coffee shops and buying and maintaining minibuses

- Young people taking part in more activities because funding for them was available
- ‘*Innovative*’ and ‘*creative*’ activities resulting from young people being in a position to challenge adults in situations where ‘*it’s about what they [adults] do, rather than the young people*’
- Mobile provision, such as a mobile dance studio, that ‘*attempts to broaden provision and to take services to the young people*’.

While this increase was welcomed, in one area, the LA manager cautioned that there was a need to explore and consider how to sustain this increase after the Funds ceased in 2011.

This perspective was reflected in the views of some service providers who tended to comment more that the YOF/YCF had impacted on the scale of what they could offer and, to some extent, the nature of what they could offer but did not suggest a widespread refocusing or change in their provision. For example, funding to support more outreach work, either through covering staff costs or contributing to a bus, enabled projects to increase awareness and the number of young people participating.

Young people on the panels in seven LAs similarly considered that there had been an **overall increase in activities** and that this was also supported by an **improvement of facilities**. They provided examples of music, sports and arts activities that had increased the numbers of young people participating and also cited increased attendance at refurbished youth clubs, as noted previously. In addition, applicants from ten projects in six LAs said that provision had increased in their area as there were more things to do or greater access through longer opening hours. However, in two cases, the young people observed that they could not attribute this solely to YOF/YCF as there were other organisations and facilities that had changed that may have led to this change.

Members of two panels, and applicants from five projects in five LAs, indicated that they were **unsure whether provision had increased** in their areas. They explained that their uncertainty was related either to their awareness of remaining gaps in provision, for example in particular areas or for specific age groups, or because they felt that while individual projects may have made a difference, this may not have led to an overall increase in places to go and things to do for young people in the area. Nevertheless, some considered that there was a potential for such an impact when they commented that provision was ‘*getting there*’ and that the YOF/YCF approach of involving young people would contribute to this because ‘*who better to make decisions than young people themselves as they know best...and sometimes adults think that they know best*’.

In addition to the young people who were uncertain, members of one panel and applicants from 14 projects in eight LAs said that they had **not experienced an overall increase** in places to go and things to do for young people. Young people from two projects commented that they were aware of youth centres that had closed and applicants from four projects said that more youth clubs and youth centres were needed. Once again, some of these young people felt that the YOF/YCF funded project might make a small difference but that this would not have an overall impact on provision for young people in their area.

Involvement of new providers

On the whole, it appeared that where an increase in provision as noted above was evident, this was a result of existing providers extending their provision. However, managers in five LAs observed that **new providers** had become involved following the advent of the Funds. Indeed, representatives from two LAs commented that this included providers who were previously unknown to the LA. The Funds were said to have contributed to raising the LAs' awareness of smaller providers, particularly community groups, and that it provided an opportunity for such groups to access funds that they might not otherwise have been able to use. It is worth noting the observation of one manager who commented that it was necessary to have appropriate systems in place to check on the quality and eligibility of new providers.

Improvements in the quality of provision

One of the aims of the YOF/YCF was to improve the quality of provision for young people. Interviews with young people and adults who work with them, including LA managers, suggested that they defined 'quality' in terms of the facilities, and the extent to which they were '*up-to-date*', and in terms of whether the facilities and activities provided young people with '*what they want*'. Overall, if '*quality provision*' is defined in this way, as it was by some LA managers and young people, then the Funds had contributed to this in the view of a senior manager who stated that '*it has enabled the youth service to respond to young people in a way that is not possible through the normal youth service budget*'.

The improvements to the facilities noted previously in this section were felt to have contributed to improving the quality of provision for young people. As one LA manager explained, the LA had '*shabby, run-down resources...it doesn't value young people at all...it's a tremendous difference having that opportunity to get funding for what the young people want to do*'. The impact of this is reflected in the views of young people who were members of the panel and those who applied for the Funds who commented that there had been improvements in quality, as there was now better lighting, computers and music equipment, and more attractive coffee bars, for example. Consequently, more young people were participating because '*there's better stuff, so we want to go*'. In addition, some said that as there were '*good*

quality things to do they were more inclined to participate. However, there remains some scope for improving the quality of provision as young people in seven projects in six LAs said that they had '*not really*' seen any improvements in the quality of provision.

Adults who worked with young people as service providers had mixed views in relation to any change in the quality of provision. Some considered that there had been an increase in consultation with young people and, consequently, provision was more closely meeting their needs. As one explained: '*I think more and more young people are being consulted in what's going on...and if they are not interested, they will vote with their feet*'. Others felt that there remained scope for improvement, such as the youth worker who said that '*we need to be more creative in how we engage with young people*'.

Surveys of LA managers and young people and the wider community

The perspectives of managers in the 12 case-study LAs appear to be reflected in the wider survey of 129 LA managers, illustrated in Table 5.5. This reveals that more managers considered that providers were offering the activities that young people want, and that young people have a greater choice of things to do since the Fund. In contrast, fewer managers said that new providers were involved or that the quality of activities or facilities had improved. Nevertheless, it is evident that, across the majority of LAs, managers agreed that provision had increased and improved and was more likely to offer young people what they wanted.

Table 5.5 Extent of change in activities for young people

Change	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
Providers are offering more of the activities young people want	40	54	5	2	0
Young people have a greater choice of things to do	27	67	5	1	0
There are better quality activities for young people to do	26	61	12	2	0
The facilities available to young people are better	22	61	11	6	0
The number of facilities for young people in the area has increased	18	55	15	12	0
There are new providers offering more of the activities that young people want	16	47	11	25	1

N=129

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

The views of young people aged 13 to 19 who were surveyed (Table 5.6) reflect, to some extent, the views of LA managers and the perspectives of those who were interviewed through the case-study visits, in so far as around half considered that there was more choice and that facilities were more up-to-date. A minority (15 per cent) felt that nothing had changed but around one third (34 per cent) were unsure whether anything had changed. Nevertheless, around two in five young people thought that there were more places to go and meet friends and a similar proportion said that things for young people to do were more interesting since the introduction of the Funds.

Table 5.6 Changes in the area

Since the Funds were introduced:	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	No response %
There are more choices of things for young people to do	51	29	18	3
Facilities are more up-to-date	50	27	18	4
It has become more expensive to do things	49	34	13	4
There are more places for young people to go and spend time with friends	44	25	28	3
Things for young people to do are now more interesting	41	33	21	5
Young people know more about what is going on in their area	40	35	19	6
Young people are more involved in the community	38	32	25	6
Young people are not as bored	35	34	27	4
It is more difficult to travel to things to do	23	49	23	5
It is safer for young people	26	37	34	3
Nothing has changed	15	34	44	7

N=237

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

The base is those aged 13 to 19

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community, 2007/8

The table above excludes the responses of respondents who were aged 20⁷ or over who responded to the survey as their responses differed notably from those of younger respondents. Those aged 20 or over were more likely to agree that there were more choices for young people (62 per cent), that things for young people were now more interesting (63 per cent) and that facilities are more up-to-date (56 per cent). In addition, they were more likely to consider that young people were more involved in the community (51 per cent) and less likely to agree that it was safer for young people (12 per cent) or that young people were not as bored (27 per cent).

To examine in more detail the extent and nature of any change in provision for young people, Table 5.7 presents young people's views on whether particular activities or facilities had improved since the Funds were introduced. It appears that around half of the young people who responded felt that opportunities to gain new skills, access to computers, youth clubs and sports facilities had improved. Overall, around one-third or more of the young people who responded considered that at least one activity or facility had

⁷ 81 people aged 20 or over responded to the survey

improved, and few said that an activity or facility had become worse since the Funds were introduced. Nevertheless, it is notable that parks and outdoor spaces were the most commonly mentioned facility that had deteriorated since the Funds were introduced.

Table 5.7 Extent to which activities and facilities for young people had improved since the Funds

Activity / facility	Improved %	Unchanged %	Got worse %	Don't know %	No response %
Opportunities to learn new skills	51	20	5	17	7
Access to computers	49	26	3	17	6
Youth clubs	49	23	6	16	6
Sports facilities	46	27	3	19	5
Trips or residentials	44	22	7	21	6
Fitness activities	42	22	6	27	5
Outdoor activities	41	22	8	23	6
Access to films / DVDs	39	30	4	21	6
Music activities	39	23	7	25	6
Parks and outdoor spaces	38	27	12	17	7
Somewhere to hang out with friends	37	36	7	13	7
Sports coaches to work with	34	24	6	31	5
Dance or drama activities	31	25	6	31	7
Arts activities	30	28	6	29	6
Discos, clubs and gigs for young people	28	30	8	29	5
Media activities	28	24	8	33	6

N=237

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

The base is those aged 13 to 19

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community, 2007/8

People aged 20 and over who responded to the survey reflected a slightly different perspective to that of 13 to 19 year olds on the activities and facilities that had improved or become worse since April 2006. Respondents aged 20 plus were more likely to agree that there had been improvements across a range of activities as follows:

- media activities (40 per cent)
- access to sports coaches (48 per cent)
- dance or drama activities (51 per cent)

- music activities (52 per cent)
- arts activities (54 per cent)
- outdoor activities (54 per cent).
- sports facilities (57 per cent)
- access to computers (57 per cent)
- fitness activities (64 per cent)
- opportunities to learn new skills (68 per cent)

However, they were less likely to agree that there had been improvements in access to films and DVDs (26 per cent) and youth clubs (41 per cent), which may reflect the extent to which they felt able to comment on any improvements in these. It is worth noting that the number of questionnaire respondents who were aged over 20 was small (81 individuals) so these findings may not be indicative more widely of those aged 20 and over.

5.4 What has been the impact of YOF/YCF on young people who applied or participated?

Thus far, this chapter has discussed the impact of the YOF/YCF on the LA and on provision for young people. In addition interviews with young people and supporting adults explored the extent to which the YOF/YCF had more direct benefits and effects for young people who applied for Funds or participated in activities that were funded. This is the focus of this section.

All of the projects that were visited considered that their project had been a success, where it was completed. The young people who were interviewed cited the attendance of young people at their project, the positive feedback that they had received and the tangible outcomes such as an improved facility, or the production of a CD of music, as evidence of their success. As the following comments illustrate:

'a lot of people are using the track at weekends so I think the project has been really successful'

[young people] *'love us because they have fun at gigs'*

'so many people wanted to be involved'

'the coffee bar looks better and young people like it'

Some interviewees felt that their success was reflected in the opportunity afforded by the Funds for young people *'to show the best in themselves'* and *'the opportunity to show how we feel'*.

In addition to the overall success of their project, young people, and adults who supported them, identified a number of outcomes for them personally. These included:

- Learning outcomes
- Personal development and emotional outcomes
- Social outcomes
- Behavioural outcomes.

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Learning outcomes

Young people in 20 projects said that they had learned something as a result of their participation in YOF/YCF. For some young people this related to their **participation in applying for the Funds** and their roles in organising or managing the activity or facility. They explained that they had learned about the processes of applying and had developed their organisational skills. Young people also said that they had developed generic skills such as team working and budget management.

Other skills and knowledge that were gained related to the **aim of the individual activities**. Young people cited examples including gaining parenting skills, bike maintenance, musical and dance skills and design skills. Where young people had travelled as part of their activity they noted the effect of learning about other cultures and one commented that *'we have changed as people, the visit has made us humble'*.

Adults who had worked with young people also identified learning outcomes for participants. These included skills and knowledge related to the project activities such as skills and knowledge relating to IT skills, mechanics, plants and dance. Young people who had special needs had developed their independence and young people who had travelled had learned about different cultures. Some adults noted a difference in the experience of learning for young people participating in projects. They observed that it provided an opportunity for young people to *'learn creatively'* and *'learning in an active way rather than just sitting at school'* and one noted that achieving small realistic goals had made the participants feel positive.

Personal development and emotional outcomes

Young people in 18 projects identified outcomes that could be defined as relating to their personal development. The most frequently mentioned was the improvement in their self-confidence gained through, for example, negotiating travel arrangements or giving presentations about a fact-finding trip they had participated in. Related to this improvement in their confidence was the sense of achievement that some said that they had gained from obtaining the funding and undertaking the project. As one explained, the project had given *'the confidence to believe I can accomplish something if I put my mind to it'*. Another young person, who had special educational needs and had gained funding for the school to provide trips, said *'I feel I have achieved something, and I don't achieve much'*. This young person said he felt *'happy'* to have been able to help others in his school which was also reflected by another interviewee who had gained funding for gym equipment and said that he was *'happy that I have been able to do something for the community'*.

Participation in the activities had also contributed to young people's self-perception and confidence which then led to further outcomes. For example, young mothers became involved in other activities when they *'wouldn't have come a year ago'* and a young person, who was very shy and was not confident, started a higher education course and felt that she had learned *'how to present myself'*. A third young man said that he was now represented on the board of a sports club having changed the minds of board members, who had initially considered him too young, by managing the YOF/YCF-funded projects well. Young people in one project identified a sense of *'empowerment'* as contributing to developing their confidence when they observed that the adult *'gives us a lot of responsibility and trust and sees skills in people'* and that while *'at this age you don't often feel you have much power'* in this instance *'this was totally different....we were in charge'*.

Adults who had worked with young people in delivering the projects also identified an improvement in participants' self-confidence and sense of achievement. This was gained from showing *'other young people what young people can do if they set their minds to it'* and a realisation that *'if we jump through these hoops, we get this money'*. Moreover, young people in one project in a disadvantaged area were said to be *'just really chuffed to think that somebody wanted to give them money and believed in them'*. The young people were also said to have taken *'ownership'* of projects and facilities and felt *'proud'* and responsible.

Social outcomes

Young people in 14 projects noted the value to them socially resulting from their participation in a YOF/YCF funded project and many mentioned making new friends. Young people with a common interest, such as young mothers,

had formed friendships and become a supportive group. Young people who had previously not known each other, or even '*picked on*' each other, said that they had begun to get on well following a YOF-funded trip. In addition to young people within groups becoming '*closer knit*', projects such as a café that was a shared space with young people and adults had helped to '*bring all sorts of people together...it builds a bridge*' and, because it was free, it was '*inclusive*'.

Adults who had worked with young participants were also conscious of the development of their social skills and, in some instances, noted the value of the YOF/YCF-funded project in providing an opportunity for young people to '*meet and mix*'. This was particularly important in the view of one interviewee in an urban area who noted the positive effect this could have in an area with '*territorial issues and gangs*'. Adults who were working with young people who were Looked After, noted an improvement in the relationships between the young people and staff following funding to provide leisure equipment for their homes.

Behavioural outcomes

In nine projects, young people who were interviewed indicated that their behaviour had improved since they had been involved with the YOF/YCF-funded project. Two young people who were Looked After confirmed the views of the adults they worked with, mentioned above, when they explained that their relationships had improved. Other young people commented that:

[I'm not] making trouble as I used to before...getting arrested. So since the project started I stopped being arrested and now I am back at school

If it wasn't for the football I would probably be getting into all kinds of trouble

There's nothing really happening in [LA]. If it wasn't for the downhill track, I would probably be out getting into trouble on the streets

Young people who had successfully bid for Funds for a Multi-Use Games Area explained that they would not vandalise it because they had been involved in getting it and would protect it from others because '*we know that it's ours, so if anyone did try and burn it, it would be like "you...worked hard for that"*'.

Adults also commented on the change in behaviour among young people. For example, one adult supporting a project that had gained funding for a football pitch and for gardening equipment had observed '*huge changes at the behavioural level and their ability to interact*'. A second project that had received sports equipment observed that young people could now '*hit a punch ball*' rather than break a window when they felt angry or frustrated. It

was not only new equipment that led to behaviour change. In the view of one youth worker, young people's behaviour was improving as a consequence of them being able to spend more time in a project due to the increased funding.

In addition to these widely mentioned themes, interviewees also noted that participants benefited in terms of:

- their YOF/YCF experience being useful for their CV (three projects)
- becoming involved in decision-making groups including the YOF/YCF panel and community groups (three projects)
- re-engaging with school or concentrating more at school (three projects)
- gaining offers of employment (one project)
- improved fitness (one project).

Overall, participation in a project that had received YOF/YCF funding had been a positive experience through which young people gained a range of outcomes, depending on the nature of the project. In this way, their experience reflects that of the decision-making panel who, as noted in Chapter 2, benefited from their involvement in the panel in a variety of ways. Each of these reflects the direct impact of the Funds on those involved. The indirect outcomes are discussed next.

5.5 What has been the impact of YOF/YCF on the wider community?

Senior Managers in four case-study LAs were cautious of identifying any impact of the Funds on the wider community as a whole across the LA and they commented that they did not have reliable evidence of any impact. While evidence of a measurable impact of the Funds on the wider community was not available, managers said that individual projects may have made a difference within their local community. This section presents the perceptions of this impact from the views of LA managers, young people who were panel members and participants and adults who worked with them. In addition, the responses of young people and wider community to a postal survey provide further insights into any impact.

Attitudes towards young people

Young people who were interviewed were often aware of the negative perceptions of young people among the wider community. While some had actively sought to challenge this perception, others considered that one of the outcomes of the YOF/YCF was an improvement in how young people were perceived in their local community. This was particularly the case in projects where young people had actively engaged with the community. In one case,

young people had applied for funding to establish an area for young people within a community coffee shop which was said by the adult who supported young people who had applied to *'help break down the view [among adults] that young people are dangerous'* by providing an *'opportunity for the community to meet each other...breaks down the 'them and us' divide'*. Another interviewee, who had applied for the Funds to support a gardening project, also noted the value of interaction with the wider community in improving relationships and said that *'all old people think kids are bad. When we are doing gardens and interact with them they can see that not all kids are bad and it gives us confidence and them confidence'*.

Improving the perception of young people was also achieved where projects had not aimed to do so. For example, in one project which was redeveloping a park, young people's opinions were now sought by those running the park and they were represented on steering groups. In a second project, adults were said to be nervous of young people but the youth worker said *'I always tell young people to smile at them'* and the adults in the community had been surprised at their achievements.

One LA manager cautioned that improved perceptions may be limited to those adults who had direct contact with young people, and that others may not notice *'because the media is telling them a different story'*. Nevertheless, the views of managers in six LAs reflect the experience of these projects as they commented that adults' perceptions had changed as a result of young people being *'seen more positively as contributing rather than being part of the problem'*. Indeed, they were seen as bringing valuable resources in to the area from which the wider community could benefit and, as one manager explained, the community had *'new respect'* for the young people who had applied for the Funds.

Extent to which young people felt listened to

Young people who were members of seven panels, and those who had applied for Funds for 14 projects, said that they believed that adults listened to them. While project participants felt that the adults with whom they worked listened to them, some were more circumspect about the extent to which adults in the wider community would do so. Nevertheless, in some cases they noted that community police officers or councillors had been supportive or that members of community groups had sought their opinions or they had begun to attend residents' meetings.

Similarly those involved in the panel felt that adults with direct involvement listened to them, as one explained *'adults who were involved, or linked to it, would have a greater appreciation for what young people do, but those who don't know [about the Funds] are still the same'*. Nevertheless, panel members considered that the experience of the YOF/YCF was assisting in gaining the respect of adults as they began to see them as responsible

citizens and one thought that, over time, more decision-making opportunities would become available for young people.

Young people on three panels, however, and those involved in eight projects were more sceptical about whether adults listened or knew what to do when they heard young people's views. As one young person said '*adults don't really listen to us and they don't deliver when they do. What we need is some kind of forum to get the voice out.*'

Community cohesion

In addition to improving perceptions of young people among older people, interviewees said that some projects had improved a sense of community cohesion. Some projects had actively reached out into the community.

Examples included:

- Young people making a film about the local area and interviewing others in their community, including minority communities such as travellers
- Young people gathering the stories of community members and producing a play
- An anti-homophobia publicity campaign
- A football tournament for young people watched by the wider community.
- An awareness raising event to gain the community's support to seek funding to improve a local park
- Involving a community cohesion worker and community police officer in the YCF application for a sports area.

In these instances, those involved said that they had a positive response from the community including receiving telephone calls from the public who were pleased that they were '*fighting my corner*' and a '*huge change in attitude*' as a result of local residents seeing a project that was working with young people where it was '*visible*' that young people were being engaged.

Managers in nine LAs also noted that some projects had focused on the wider community and improving cohesion through being actively linked to community partnerships and by involving residents. In one LA, where community cohesion was a particular priority, the manager was considering prioritising funding for projects that could contribute to building this cohesion as he observed that '*cohesion does not happen by default, it has to be by design*'.

Changes in the area

Young people in around 25 of the projects that were visited did not perceive any improvements in their area in terms of a reduction in anti-social behaviour

or crime. In most cases, they felt that the situation had remained the same, while a few said that it had become worse. They made these observations despite feeling that the project that they had participated in had made a difference to them. They explained, however, that the impact of the Funds was only going to be for those who had participated and would not affect the wider issues in their area. Some commented that, even with the YOF/YCF-funded project, there were still insufficient youth clubs, or that their opening hours were too short, and consequently, young people continued to *'hang around'*. Their view was reflected in comments made by some adults that the *'small projects'* and *'one-off'* activities funded by YOF/YCF were not enough to address the issue of anti-social behaviour or youth crime.

An alternative view was expressed by other adults, young people involved in around 13 projects and members of seven panels, some of whom had noted that there were *'a lot less people on the streets'* and that it was *'quieter outside, not much crime'*. Some of these interviewees made a direct link between the projects that had received funding and this improvement in the area, as the following two comments illustrate:

'more young people are going now because the facilities are good...when the facilities are good then people go "are you going to the youth club?"'

'[the project] stops young people hanging around on the streets on a Friday night...if there were more projects like this one you would see more an effect in the local area'.

In addition, in one LA, the youth centre had held an event on the night known locally as *'mischief night'* and the police had said that, as a result, they received 550 fewer nuisance calls than in the previous year.

Overall, it appears that the YOF/YCF had not led to a notable reduction in anti-social behaviour or crime in the view of young people within the communities and the adults who worked with them, but that there were instances where YOF/YCF-funded activities and facilities had helped to contribute to reducing the numbers of young people with nothing to do. Some young people observed that the types of young people who cause trouble would not be participating in YOF-YCF funded activities or using facilities and some youth workers commented on the need for more outreach to support young people at risk or offending.

Extent of change: Survey of LA managers and the wider community

The views of interviewees are reflected in the wider survey of LA managers (see Table 5.8) in so far as the majority considered that there had been an increase in positive behaviour, that adults had a better impression of young people, that relationships between young people and adults were better and

that there was increased community cohesion. As was the case among interviewees, they were more circumspect about the effect of the Funds on anti-social behaviour and the extent to which young people were hanging around with nothing to do but more than two-fifths considered that this was the case.

Table 5.8 LA manager's views on whether the Funds had an impact on the local area

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%	%	%
There is an increase in positive behaviour	9	67	25	0	0	0
Adults have a better impression of young people	9	64	22	5	1	1
There is less anti-social behaviour in the area	5	36	55	3	0	1
There is increased community cohesion	5	67	23	4	0	1
There are better relationships between young people and older people	4	64	26	5	0	1
Fewer young people are hanging around with nowhere to go	3	48	42	5	0	2

N= 129

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: telephone survey of staff responsible for the Funds in LAs, 2008

The survey of young people and the wider community also found that, for a notable minority, the area where they lived seemed calmer and safer and had fewer fights, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and noise, as can be seen in Table 5.9. In addition, around one third said that fewer young people were hanging around and just over one fifth thought that fewer young people were causing trouble. However, it is notable that the majority of respondents did not feel that this was the case and young people and members of the wider community who responded to the survey were noticeably less likely to report that their area had improved in these respects than the LA managers (Table 5.8).

Table 5.9 Young people and the wider community's views on whether anything has changed in the area

	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	No respons e %
Adults listen more to what young people want	47	23	26	4
Fewer young people are hanging round with nowhere to go	34	27	34	4
The area seems calmer	29	33	33	5
The area seems safer	28	32	36	4
Adults have a better impression of young people	27	31	37	5
Adults have more respect for young people	26	33	36	5
There are fewer fights	26	29	41	4
There is less anti-social behaviour	24	31	40	5
There is less noise and disturbance	23	32	40	5
There is less vandalism	23	34	38	6
Fewer young people are causing trouble	22	32	42	5
There is less crime	18	38	41	4
Nothing has changed	17	31	46	6

N= 323

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Evaluation of YOF/YCF: survey of young people and the wider community, 2007/8

Those aged 20 and over who responded to the survey were less likely than all those surveyed to agree that there were now fewer fights (17 per cent) and fewer young people hanging around (27 per cent) or that the area seemed calmer (21 per cent) or safer (17 per cent). They were also less likely to report that there was now less crime (11 per cent) or less vandalism (16 per cent). However, the number of people over 20 who responded to the questionnaire was small (81 individuals) so these findings may not be indicative more widely of those aged 20 and over.

In support of the evidence from the case-studies, there were also different views from the survey of young people and the wider community on the extent to which adults listened to young people more as a result of the Funds. While around half of respondents felt that this was true, a similar proportion were not sure or disagreed. Those aged 20 and over who responded to the survey were more likely to agree that adults listen more (58 per cent) and that adults had a better impression of young people (31 per cent).

5.6 Conclusion

Overall, the young people who participated in YOF/YCF activities, were able to benefit from the learning outcomes, social outcomes and personal development outcomes outlined earlier for a numbers of reasons. Firstly, some were able to participate because the YOF/YCF project offered an **opportunity that was not previously or otherwise available**, such as accessing a race track or taking part in a residential. Secondly, they participated because the YOF/YCF provided an opportunity that was **attractive and engaging** for them such as accessing an improved youth centre, an IT suite or attending gig nights. Thirdly, young people engaged with YOF/YCF activities because they had been involved in identifying a need and seeking funding for it. They therefore had a sense of **ownership and commitment** to the project such as a games facility or creating a film about their area and what it meant for young people. While in some instances all three of these reasons were related to young people's participation, the research did not suggest that it was necessary for all three to be the case for a project to have been successful in engaging young people.

Overall, the evidence indicates that there is some increase in participation, however, it is also apparent that there remains a desire among young people to participate in more activities than they do currently and some barriers remain for young people. While the YOF/YCF can seek to address those relating to the opportunities and choices available, and to some extent accessibility of opportunities, there are other barriers such as those relating to transport, finance and to young people's other commitments to homework and coursework that are less likely to be addressed by YOF/YCF but are an important part of the context in which the programme is operating.

Overall, after nearly two years of implementation, the impact of the YOF/YCF was more evident among those directly involved than among those with less direct involvement. LAs were affected by the experience of young people performing a decision-making role which was leading to the further development of their approaches to involving young people more widely in decision-making. Young people, and adults who supported them, observed an impact of participating in funded activities, or using facilities, on their personal development, social opportunities and development of skills. However, the emerging indications that the Funds had helped to improve adults' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, young people and changes in anti-social behaviour may be observed over the medium to long-term rather than more immediately.

6. What have been the lessons learned and how will YOF/YCF develop in the future?

Key findings

- LA managers had monitored the projects that had received YOF/YCF funding through visits by panel members or by youth workers, by requesting the completion of monitoring or evaluation forms and by gathering photographic or other visual evidence of the projects' activities or facilities.
- The main challenges that LA staff had encountered in implementing the Funds included ensuring that the Funds were led by young people within a LA infrastructure and that sufficient time and resources were available to support this approach. The administration of the Funds was more demanding in terms of resources and planning than had been anticipated, and the funding process was also viewed as a challenge.
- Project staff identified delays in receiving the funding and the support required by young people who applied for the Funds as challenges.
- In future, LA managers were considering reviewing and adapting the types of projects that would receive funding and were exploring making changes to the decision-making panels to refresh them or to provide more local decision-making. They also intended to develop further their approaches to marketing and to monitoring and evaluation.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on interviewees' reflections on the Funds after nearly two years of implementation and examines:

- the approaches they adopted to monitoring the projects funded by YOF/YCF
- the main challenges LAs and projects experienced, and the main lessons they had learned
- their plans for the future of the Funds.

6.2 How have LAs monitored the Funds and sought the views of young people?

As discussed in Chapter 4, LAs had established systems to monitor expenditure of the Funds. In addition, LAs had procedures in place to monitor how projects spent the funding they received and, to some extent their outcomes. These included:

- **Visits to projects** – ten of the LAs had a system whereby YOF/YCF-funded projects were visited. In some instances panel members undertook these visits while in others, youth workers did so, mindful of the burden on young people's time. Due to the number of funded projects and the demands on staff and young people's time, LAs had adopted various strategies to manage the number of visits. These included a voluntary approach whereby panel members could choose projects to visit; a sample method whereby a percentage of projects were visited; or a targeted strategy through which '*larger*' projects were visited. In some cases, they noted that they would like to increase the number of visits but time and resources precluded this. In one area, projects were visited before they received the second half of their funding and in another area the young people had a check list to complete as part of the monitoring visit.
- **Monitoring or evaluation forms** – nine of the LAs asked projects to complete forms to indicate the numbers of young people who had participated in their projects and, in some cases, to provide feedback on the project's progress. One LA was using the NYA's toolkit and the 'what's changed' form while a second had a form completed after six months and a year that asked young people to outline '*What have you done? What has it done for you?*'. Two areas asked projects to provide attendance lists. Such forms were one of the main mechanisms by which LAs sought the views of young people who participated in YOF/YCF-funded projects. While projects were asked to complete these forms, staff in two LAs mentioned that projects did not always do so and highlighted again the time required of LA staff to 'chase' monitoring forms. As one manager explained, '*it is difficult because, once you have given them the money, you've got no hold on them*'.
- **Photographs and videos** – staff and panel members in eight LAs said that projects provided evidence of the activities and facilities that had been funded by YOF/YCF through photographs, videos, DVDs and websites.

Overall, while the LAs had systems in place to monitor the progress of the Funds in their area, some managers felt that there was scope for this to be

further developed and enhanced now that the Funds were more established. Indeed, two LA interviewees considered that there would be value in a national monitoring system, which could be common across LAs, and could be used to provide evidence to councillors and Government Offices of the implementation of the Funds.

Among the projects that were visited, many adults and young people reported that they had not been required to undertake any formal monitoring or evaluation other than recording expenditure. However, some had provided photographic or video evidence to the LA or the young people's panel and some had provided a report to the panel. In addition, a number of respondents mentioned that they had gathered evidence of attendance and minutes or notes of meetings. Within the projects, adults had often used evaluation forms or questionnaires to establish young people's views on the project in addition to informal feedback and group discussions.

6.3 What have been the challenges and lessons learned in implementing the Funds?

6.3.1 Challenges experienced by LA staff

Managers in the case-study LAs identified a range of challenges that they had experienced in establishing the Funds in their area. In addition to three interviewees re-iterating the challenge of setting up the Funds in a short timescale in the first year, which was identified as a significant issue during the first visits (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007), the main concerns that were identified towards the end of the second year of implementing the Funds related to:

- ensuring that the Funds were young people-led
- administration
- staffing
- funding
- planning.

Ensuring that the Funds were **led by young people** was mentioned by managers in five LAs who had not always resolved these issues. In some cases, the challenge was related to the need to operate within the LA's systems and procedures. For example one manager highlighted the difficulty of ensuring that the public were aware of the legitimacy of the panel of young people who were not just '*that group of young people making the decisions*' but that they were elected through a clear and transparent mechanism. In a second LA, the manager outlined balancing young people in the decision-making role with the LA's strategic priorities and questioned how far to guide them to make decisions that were aligned with these priorities, or accepted

their own choices and decisions. In a third LA, the manager noted the need to balance financial procedures and *'yet give the freedom for young people to be in control'*. A further issue related to having a young person-led process within an LA infrastructure, which was largely bureaucratic, particularly with regard to YCF projects that involved buildings. One manager noted the difficulty of maintaining young people's engagement through a long process and commented that *'really when you are waiting eight weeks for planning, in a young person's life, a lot happens'*.

A young person-led process was also reported to be demanding in terms of time. One manager noted the amount of support required for young people to take the lead in decision-making and the need to re-prioritise youth service resources in order to provide this support. In addition to staff time, the commitment from young people themselves needed to be taken into consideration. One manager, for instance, reported that the decision-making panel had completed at least 100 hours of voluntary work as a result of their involvement in the Funds and that managers needed to develop creative ways of consulting with young people to minimise the burden on their time. This was reflected in the view of a panel member who was interviewed and said *'by the end of today I will have been out of the house for 12 hours'*. Finally, staff in two LAs noted the ongoing need to re-emphasise to young people that they should be taking the lead, and that the application process enabled and supported this strategy.

The **administration** of the Funds had been a challenge for managers in six LAs who generally highlighted both the extent of the administration that was associated with the process of implementing the Funds, and the lack of sufficient administrative support. While one manager said that there was *'no additional resource for administrative support'*, others had used LA funding including their YOF/YCF five per cent allowance, but felt that the amount was insufficient. As one manager said *'our current budget is not enough to do what we really need to do'*. Operational managers had sometimes taken on this role or *'it's just left to the goodwill of people'* but it was felt that this was not an effective approach.

Three LAs reported **staffing** issues in relation to the management of the Funds. Managers emphasised the time required to support the implementation of the Funds, which one felt could be a full-time role: *'it's huge – so time consuming – a lot of work in a short space of time'*. Another manager felt that the time spent on managing the Funds had been to the detriment of other youth participation work that staff should have been undertaking.

There were also issues surrounding the **funding process** for managers in four LAs. Two managers were concerned that clear guidance regarding what was acceptable to receive YOF/YCF funding was not available. Ensuring that

efficient mechanisms were in place to provide the funds to the successful applicants which combined a *'proper audit trail'* with the capacity to release Funds quickly, particularly for the voluntary sector who do not have money in reserve, had been an issue. One LA had developed a 'pack' for successful applicants, which helped to ensure that a clear audit trail was in place. Some managers, were also concerned about the lack of flexibility to carry funds over to the following year.

Managers in four LAs said that the short-term nature of the YOF/YCF had made effective **planning** difficult. One commented that LAs needed earlier confirmation and a ten year plan while another felt that a *'three year rolling programme'* would be preferable to the current *'year-on-year'* approach. More effective planning and use of Funds would have been possible if LAs had been advised at the outset that funding was going to be available for more than two years.

6.3.2 Challenges experienced by project staff

Adults who were engaged with projects mainly identified issues associated with the specific project's activities or aims. However, adults in eight projects in four LAs also cited **delays in receiving the Funds** once they had been successful, or not having a clear timeframe established between an application being successful and the project receiving the Funds. In some cases, the delay in receiving the funds had delayed the start of the project which, in one case, had meant that young people in Year 11 were no longer able to use the project because it coincided with their GCSEs. In other cases, the funding had been provided in two parts and the delay in receiving the second part of the funds had led to *'lost momentum'*.

The second main issue related to the **support** that the adults had to provide to young people who were applying for the Funds. This was mentioned by adults in six projects and was said to have taken additional time for the adult who, in some cases, was a volunteer. In addition, it had been challenging to maintain the motivation of the young people to complete the application form because they did not want to be writing in their free time *'like at school'*. One youth worker, who said that a key challenge had been *'getting [young people] to stay focused and complete the application form,'* found that *'it works much better when the designate a lead person to make decisions and help direct the others'*.

6.3.3 Lessons learned by LA staff

In the two years of implementing the YOF/YCF, LA managers had developed strategies to implement a programme whereby young people were decision-makers and applicants and many LAs were continuing to develop. They identified the following issues to effective implementation:

- **Involving young people** – identifying young people who do not usually get involved and involve them. Recruiting young people *‘taking account of the guidance and principles of the YOF/YCF. Otherwise, you may get some nice young people to work with but are they really representative of the groups the funding is aimed at?’*
- **Train and support young people** – providing training at the start and on an ongoing basis and *‘treat them like members of staff’* and consider peer support when new members join the panel.
- **Manage expectations** – identifying what young people want but be realistic *‘be really careful about not setting them up to fail and making promises that you can’t follow through with’.*
- **Promotion** – clarifying target groups and how to engage with them.
- **Application process** – ensuring that the YOF/YCF is accessible and that the paperwork associated with it is simple and not off-putting.
- **Distributing Funds** – adopting a maximum and minimum project size and consider ring-fencing funding for specific target areas (geographical or characteristics of applicants). Recognising that *‘a little money makes a great impact on a small project’.*
- **Systems / infrastructure** – *‘set it up properly’* by ensuring that the systems for finance, monitoring and reporting are in place and recognising and planning for the time required for administration.
- **Monitoring** – establishing a monitoring system and requesting monitoring information requirement as part of the application form.
- **Celebrate** – promoting the success of projects that received money through the Funds with events or through existing communication mechanisms such as LA magazines.

Finally, senior managers in two LAs made the following observations about LAs’ overall acceptance of a new approach and towards developing and adapting their culture in the light of the experience of the Funds.

‘LAs should embrace the concept of the market and let go of their strategic priorities...let the purchasers purchase’

‘I would advise people to embrace the YOF/YCF as added value and not see it as additional work. This is a fantastic opportunity to empower young people and working with them in helping them get the things they want. But it will also hit the targets that we need to be hitting in terms of engagement of hard-to-reach young people’.

6.4 Future planning

6.4.1 Development of the Funds in LAs

In considering the future development of the Funds, managers in some LAs observed that this would be influenced by restructuring within their LA and noted the importance of core funding to support the administration of the Funds. Notwithstanding these wider developments, the LA managers identified a range of ways in which they were seeking to develop the Funds. Managers in seven LAs reflected on the **types of projects that had received funding**. Two were considering aiming to fund more longer-term projects where the benefits could be more sustained while another thought that there should be a reduction in the funding of 'one-off' activities. A manager in a fourth LA said that the panel would no longer fund '*run of the mill stuff*' but was seeking more innovative ideas. In another LA, the manager said that they were considering not funding projects that had already received some funds through the YOF/YCF.

In three LAs, managers were exploring making **changes to the panel**. This included adding more local panels for '*local accountability*' in two LAs, while the third highlighted the need to '*refresh*' the panel. This manager felt that young people could become too established and that '*there comes a point where they are not young people but representatives of the youth service*'.

Managers in three LAs planned to improve their **monitoring and evaluation** procedures. In addition, managers in two LAs felt it was timely to review and enhance their approaches to **marketing** the Funds. Finally, interviewees in three LAs identified a need to '*do more*' with the YCF. In one case, the manager aimed to address the complexity associated with building procedures with a view to simplifying it for the YCF. This manager also identified a need for greater flexibility in the YCF which was a view echoed by another manager who said that setting up a combined Fund, as distinct from the two separate Funds, would enable the flexibility which he felt was required.

6.4.2 Development of the Funds in projects

The adults who had worked with young people in applying for the Funds and delivering projects also discussed how they anticipated that their project would develop in future.

Overall, the projects that were visited aimed to continue and to develop or expand in future. Adults working in five projects commented that they planned to maintain the sense of ownership among young people and their involvement in directing the future of their projects that had been further developed by their experience of the Funds. However, adults associated with the YOF/YCF-funded projects often stated that more funding would be

needed in order for them to continue or develop further. The YOF/YCF was seen as a potential source of funding by interviewees in 14 projects (six of which were from the voluntary or community sector) across seven LAs. Their representatives said that they planned to apply again either '*to keep the project going*' or to enhance their projects such as adding floodlights or an art room to their facilities. Many emphasised the importance of the Funds and, as one explained '*if the money stays, we can offer lots of things, but if the money goes we will be left in a situation where there are a lot of disappointed people*'. While funds for individual projects was the main concern among interviewees, one mentioned the need for more LA core funding for youth workers to help support provision for young people in the community and commented that '*it all comes down to young people's relationship with adults, so if there is more money to support the community to develop this relationship it would be good*'.

6.4.3 Impact on future youth budget spending

The survey of LA managers suggested that Funds had an impact on the way in which LAs planned to spend their **youth budget** in the future. Managers in nearly two in three LAs (63 per cent) said that they planned to adapt the way in which they spend their youth service budget as a result of their experience with YOF/YCF. A minority (14 per cent) said that they would not change and the remaining 23 per cent were unsure.

Of the 81 LAs who said that they planned to change their approach, nearly all said that they planned to consult more with young people (91 per cent), planned to change how they spend their budget to reflect more closely what young people want (91 per cent) and that they planned to consult more with young people in individual local areas (90 per cent). Fewer (68 per cent) said that they planned to ring-fence some funds from their budget for young people to decide how to spend.

Other ways in which LAs were going to adapt how they spent their youth service budget, in light of their experience of YOF/YCF, included making more use of youth councils, youth forums and area forums in decision-making. Some LAs mentioned that they had already involved young people more in, for example, allocating neighbourhood renewal funding.

The increased involvement of young people in making decisions about how funding on youth provision was allocated was also evident in the responses of managers in the case-study areas who were commenting on how the Funds would fit with the government's **new programme of capital investment to improve facilities for young people**. This new funding will be administered by the Big Lottery Fund, and will involve the voluntary and community sector as well as LAs. The prevailing view among LA managers was that the YOF/YCF would fit well with the new funding stream. While, many managers

felt that they did not yet have sufficient information to inform their future planning some reported that they would undertake an audit of provision and that they would draw on their experience of YOF/YCF to involve young people in the process of deciding on the direction of future sources of funding. As two stated:

The ethos that has been encouraged and supported around YOF is healthy and will have an impact on how we spend more funds. It is important to keep young people on board in the design of new building, kitchens etc.

The decisions young people have made with YOF/YCF have been fantastic and they have been very thorough in their selection process.

Overall, 85 percent of LA managers who responded to the telephone survey said that they would involve young people in decision-making about the new funding and 79 per cent planned to review the types of activities and facilities that were funded by YOF/YCF to identify what young people, want. Fewer (40 per cent) said that they were considering combining the YOF/YCF with additional funds. Only ten per cent said that they would not and the remaining 51 per cent either did not know or did not say.

Although many managers said that they aimed to involve young people in decision-making, some noted the complexities involved in some capital projects. Therefore, young people would need the right ‘*back-up and support*’ in place to enable them to contribute to the process.

Many LA managers noted that the YOF/YCF and the new funding would complement each other. For example, one manager explained that if they received a YCF application they could examine it to see if additional money from the supplementary fund could be added to make the YCF application more sustainable.

6.5 Conclusion

Overall, the administration of the Funds and particularly the time required by LA staff to support their implementation effectively had been the main challenge experienced by LAs. Related to this, they had experienced associated issues with staffing, the funding processes and the planning required to support the Funds in particular linked to management and resource requirements.

While the LAs had instituted some processes for monitoring the projects that had received YOF/YCF funding, this was seen as an area for further development. This perception is supported by the insights from the visits to projects, many of whom were not conscious of formal monitoring other than

financial audit. However, the research has indicated that any monitoring would need to carefully balance the need for robust information with minimising burdens on young people who are panel members or those who participate in projects.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Overall, towards the end of the second year of implementing the Funds, there was evidence of positive outcomes for young people and improvements in the provision of activities. LAs continued to develop and adapt their practice as the Funds became more embedded and LAs moved from the early implementation start-up phase to reflecting on their practice and refining strategies and processes.

7.1.1 To what extent has giving young people control and decision-making power increased levels of participation in positive activities?

The evidence shows that there had been an increase in participation in positive activities in the case study LAs and in the wider survey of LAs. Moreover, it was evident that the YOF/YCF-funded activities were engaging some young people who did not otherwise participate. In the majority of cases (88 per cent), LAs managers said that there had been a large or small increase in the number of young people participating in positive activities as a result of the Funds. Moreover, 89 per cent of LAs said that this increase was to some or a great extent among young people who did not previously participate. The increase in participation appeared to be associated with improvements in facilities which had been updated and were, consequently, more attractive to young people. In addition, the availability of funding, which enabled young people to choose what to do, was also said to have contributed to the increase in participation. These findings show that the active involvement of young people in applying for Funds, and in deciding how those Funds should be allocated, had led to the increase in participation that was observed.

7.1.2 To what extent has giving young people a voice led to an increase in the provision of quality activities?

In order to comment on the impact of the YOF/YCF on the quality of provision, it was necessary to explore with interviewees how they assessed and defined 'quality' provision. The adults and young people defined 'quality' in terms of facilities being up-to-date and provision being what young people wanted. The finding that the majority of LA managers (and half of the young people who were surveyed) believed that there was a greater choice of things to do and that facilities were more up-to-date indicates that the Funds had contributed to improving the quality of provision for young people. The perceptions of some young people, and the adults who worked with them, presented a rather more mixed picture and this suggests that there remains a

need for a mechanisms like the Funds to further enhance the quality of facilities and to ensure that provision meets young people's requirements.

The perceptions of young people and adults of the extent to which the Funds had improved quality of provision may be partly related to the relatively contained and small-scale nature of many of the projects that had received funding. Young people in an area where the youth centre had been refurbished would be more likely to perceive an improvement in the quality of facilities than young people who lived a short distance away but who had no youth centre, or only one that had not been refurbished. In addition, if quality provision is providing young people with what they want, then the guidance that they receive in identifying what they want is important. It was evident from the case-study projects that adults had played a crucial role in assisting young people in applying for the Funds, not only in terms of the process, but also in supporting them in generating ideas. It may be, therefore, that the process of applying for the Funds, and the support of adults in doing so, contributes to enhancing the quality of provision to a greater extent than young people independently seeking funding without guidance or support.

The quality of provision could also be enhanced through the young people's ongoing ownership of the project, through which they ensure that it continues to deliver what they want. The evidence from visits to projects revealed that, in general, the approach of engaging young people in the decision-making process would continue and that young people who had applied for the Funds had a sense of ownership and commitment to the projects which would lead to them shaping and directing its development in future.

7.1.3 What was the impact of the Funds on empowering young people and increasing their influence over the design and delivery of services?

The decision-making panels of young people in the 12 case-study LAs had maintained their commitment and momentum over the two years of the Funds. The level of interest for participating in these panels among young people appeared to be high, with evidence in some areas that there were many more applicants for a role on the panel than there were places available. In addition, the LAs appear to have been successful in engaging young people from a range of backgrounds in the decision-making panels and, across the surveyed LAs, they included people from each of the hard-to-reach target groups in the YOF/YCF guidance. LAs had adopted a range of strategies to achieve this including promotion through existing groups, widespread promotion through information and marketing materials, actively recruiting young people who had been successful applicants in particular target groups or areas, word-of-mouth and open days for young people who were interested in joining the panel. LA staff continued to reflect on the representation of the panel and to seek to address the apparent under-

representation of some hard-to-reach groups including young people who were carers, LGBT, young offenders and young parents. However, the extent to which LAs achieve this will be influenced by the number of young people with these characteristics in the area or the extent to which they are identifiable.

Young people themselves were sometimes surprised to have been given the role and responsibility for deciding about the allocation of the Funds, as they were aware of a general perception of young people amongst adults that they might not be considered responsible enough to fulfil this role. Nevertheless, the young people had responded well to the challenge and nearly all LAs who responded to the survey considered that the young people had done a good job in managing the decision-making process. Consequently, LAs had decided to use this approach more widely and were considering involving young people, or had already involved young people, on other forums. Some were also considering involving young people in decision-making about the spending of other funding, for example, part of their core youth service funds or neighbourhood renewal funding. In addition, the positive experience of working with young people on YOF/YCF funded projects had led to adults who were involved with these projects to increasing the areas in which young people had involvement in decision-making. Young people who had proved themselves through their participation or management of a YOF/YCF project were invited onto community boards for sports clubs, park management committees and residents associations.

While the panels were widely regarded as successful, and a positive learning experience for LA staff and for the young people involved, LAs were moving from the initial establishment of the panel to sustaining and adapting it. In general, where they were considering changes to the structure of the panel, they tended to be planning to introduce more local-level decision-making groups rather than moving to a centralised model. In addition, they were exploring refreshing the existing panel with new members. The importance of providing training and support to panel members was emphasised by managers and, as they move into the next phase, the nature of training may need to develop to reflect the need for initial training for new members and ongoing training for those who have been members for some time. LA managers also recognised the value of the knowledge and experience that panel members had built up over time and the need to avoid losing this knowledge through managing the process of changeover among panels through, for example, peer support.

7.1.4 How far had LAs engaged hard to reach young people?

As the Funds became more established in the second year, LAs' strategies for engaging hard-to-reach young people had begun to lead to outcomes in terms of an increase in applications from young people from the target groups, as well as young people who did not previously participate. For

example, one LA reported that the funding provided to young people with disabilities had increased by 50 per cent in the second year. In addition, funding for voluntary sector organisations had increased from 15 per cent to 38 per cent in the second year and this was attributed to the LA proactively targeting such groups. The key strategies adopted entailed making use of organisations that already link with the target groups of young people, including voluntary and community sector organisations, detached youth workers using outreach techniques and adults working with young people to guide and motivate them through the application process. These promotion and support strategies were supplemented, in some areas, by the use of ring-fenced funding for specific groups, and prioritisation of particular groups as part of the decision-making criteria.

7.1.5 How far did LAs engage with the other agencies and sectors?

As noted above, LA staff acknowledged the value of linking with other partners and agencies in order to ensure that the Funds meet their aims of providing young people with an opportunity to have a say over things to do and places to go. To achieve this they had made use of the statutory agencies that work with specific groups, such as Connexions and the Looked After Children's team. In addition, they had linked with the voluntary and community sector organisations, including extending their existing links to new organisations. Moreover, YOF/YCF applications from young people associated with voluntary and community sector organisations had extended the number and range of the organisations that LAs were aware of.

7.1.6 How far had applications developed?

The emerging view among LA staff and panel members was that the nature of the applications that they had received was improving in so far as they were more creative and innovative and better costed than during the first year of the Funds. In addition, and as noted above, the numbers of applications from the target hard-to-reach groups, and from voluntary and community sector organisations, were beginning to increase. At the same time, panels were beginning to review their funding criteria and were considering becoming more selective in what they funded, so they would not fund projects that had already been successful, and that they would look out more for projects that were sustainable and those that were creative and innovative. In addition, some LAs were moving towards funding bigger and larger team projects.

Such developments in the way in which decision-making panels approve funding need to be communicated to those who may apply, since these young people may also benefit from greater promotion of the types of projects that successfully received funding. In some areas, LAs had run showcasing events or promoted projects' success through the local press or LA magazines. These were considered valuable in allowing young people who

might apply for Funds to see what could be achieved and had potential as a catalyst for ideas. Such approaches could be usefully extended to support the development of innovative and creative ideas for applications for the Funds.

7.1.7 How important are adults to the process of the Funds?

The Funds were intended to be led by young people and, on the whole, the young people experienced the process of using the Funds in this way. Panel members felt that the decisions that they made were ultimately theirs, while at the same time welcoming the guidance and support of LA staff. Young people who applied for the Funds appreciated and valued the opportunity to choose what they wanted to do and to have resources to enable it to happen. Moreover, there were indications that because projects were identified and created by the young people, they were appealing to other young people and so led to them participating in the activities.

Nevertheless, it was evident that the success of this young people-led approach was dependent on the support and guidance provided by adults. In terms of the panels, the adults enabled the young people to make informed decisions while allowing the decision to rest with the panels and not with the adults. For the projects, adults were often the mechanism by which the young people became aware of the Funds and the catalyst for helping young people to generate ideas and see the opportunities the Funds presented. Adults were then instrumental in supporting and motivating the young people through the application process. It appeared that the role of adults was particularly important in relation to engaging hard-to-reach young people. LAs used them as 'gatekeepers' to raise awareness of the Funds and it was noted that such young people generally required more support with the process of applying for the Funds. The role of adults in the process should not be under-estimated, therefore, and may increase as more young people from hard-to-reach groups become involved in the Funds.

7.1.8 What has involvement in the Funds meant for LAs?

Overall, establishing and maintaining the infrastructure to implement the Funds had been a considerable undertaking for LAs and there was a cost associated with staffing and supporting its implementation that was generally greater than the five per cent budget allowed for in the YOF/YCF. Nevertheless, LAs were positive about the Funds and they appeared to have been important for LAs because they added value through increasing the number of opportunities available for young people. These opportunities could not have been supported from the core funding budget, because they had assisted in augmenting links with the community and voluntary sector who supplemented provision for young people in the LA area. As such, they provided a means through which LAs could meet targets to engage hard-to-reach young people because, when LA staff and other stakeholders were reaching out to engage such young people, the Funds provided something

concrete in terms of a resource and a mechanism by which young people could choose what to do. Without the Funds, such opportunities, which contributed to consolidating emerging relationships with hard-to-reach young people, would not be available, or would not be on such a scale.

7.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations for the DCSF, LAs, young people involved in YOF/YCF decision-making panels and adults involved in supporting young people emerged from the findings in this report. These are presented below.

Recommendations for DCSF

- Although the Funds were led by young people, they required the support of LA staff in managing and administering the processes. While some start-up costs, such as developing application forms and budget monitoring procedures would not recur significantly, the process of supporting the panel and the application processes were ongoing requirements with associated costs. LA staff reported that they were spending more time managing the YOF/YCF than was costed for by the Funds, particularly at the day-to-day operational level. LAs were generally supplementing the five per cent allocation from the Funds budget with core LA funding to pay for this work. DCSF may wish to consider ways in which they could support LAs further in this process through **additional funding** or, as LAs were spending a lot of time developing systems for the allocation and monitoring of YOF/YCF funding, developing a **national monitoring system**, which could be common across LAs. This could help to reduce the administrative burden on LAs, ensure consistency across the country, and could be used to provide evidence on the implementation of the Funds.
- LAs and panel members may benefit from some additional guidance from DCSF and Government Offices (GOs) on the **allocation of the Funds** (for example, on the use of YCF funding, or on whether young people can apply for funding more than once), to help ensure that opportunities for young people applying for funding are more consistent across the country. Such guidance would, however, need to allow LAs and panel members to retain sufficient flexibility that they could continue to allocate YOF/YCF funding in a way that best suits their local context and needs.
- Both LA staff and young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels noted the time and commitment given by panel members in implementing the Funds. While young people enjoyed the experience, and felt that they were benefiting from it, some indicated that they would like more recognition for their contribution. DCSF, therefore, may wish to

consider ways in which they can **recognise and praise the work of young people** involved in implementing the Funds.

- DCSF/GOs should continue to encourage the **interchange of innovative and good practice** between LAs.

Recommendations for LAs

- In some cases, LA staff and panel members were less confident with regard to the commissioning of large YCF projects. Some panel members and LA staff spoke of being '*out of their comfort zones*' when evaluating the suitability of these projects. In addition, the extended timeframe for the processes associated with LA buildings was said to be a challenge for adults trying to maintain the interest and motivation of young people. It is recommended that LAs put in place clearly-defined **strategies for the commissioning of capital projects**, to better guide and support the decisions made by panel members, and to ensure that these funds are used to maximum effect. LAs may also want to consider providing **additional training and guidance for panel members** on how best to evaluate applications for capital projects. Exploring any opportunities for streamlining the process of approving buildings in LAs might also be of value for YCF projects.
- LA staff acknowledged the need to process Fund applications more quickly, and indeed some reported that the time taken to process applications had shortened since first implementing the Funds. However, a minority of service providers and applicants expressed disappointment in receiving funding after key project deadlines for payment had been passed. LA staff also reported that the commissioning of large capital projects could be a particularly slow process. It is recommended that LAs continue to make improvements in reducing the time taken to process applications and that they **communicate any delays in payment to applicants** so that applicants are aware of the situation and can make alternative plans if necessary.
- After two years of implementation, it is suggested that there may be scope for **sharing of practice** between LAs. This would be particularly beneficial for exploring the different ways in which LAs had targeted funding towards particular areas or groups of young people, including those from hard-to-reach groups.
- While most LAs had systems in place to monitor the expenditure of the Funds in their area, the **monitoring and evaluation of funded projects** seemed to be an area for potential development. A review of the types of projects funded, and their progress and success, would also help to inform future decision-making about YOF/YCF applications. LAs would, however, need to carefully balance the requirement for robust information on the Funds with minimising the burden on panel members and projects.

- The ways in which YOF/YCF funding was allocated varied across the LAs, although most had a number of rounds throughout the year when young people could submit their applications. The evidence suggests that LAs might find it helpful to **divide their YOF/YCF funding evenly** across these application rounds to ensure that they do not spend all of their funding at the start of the year.
- Given the time and commitment that young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels were giving to help implement the Funds, it is recommended that LAs seek opportunities for this work to be **accredited**.

Recommendations for panel members

- The suggestion given in the first report, that young people may wish to consider **sharing ideas and practice** with other panels around the country, is as relevant now as it was then. Panels have developed a lot of expertise and experience and could benefit from sharing their experiences with their peers, especially as, after two years, some LAs were considering refreshing their panels.
- Many panel members reported that they wanted to see more varied and innovative projects being funded. It is suggested that panels could achieve this by clearly communicating this intention to applicants, and by **signposting the types of projects** they would hope to commission through, for example, showcasing successful projects.
- There was some evidence that young people needed support in generating ideas about what to apply for through the Funds, as they were not sure about the types of projects or activities that could be funded, or the amount of money they could apply for. Subsequently, panel members may wish to consider ways in which they could 'showcase' or **promote successfully funded projects**. This would not only help to give other potential applicants ideas of the types of projects they could apply for, but would also celebrate the achievements of successful YOF/YCF projects.
- The importance of providing constructive and accessible feedback to unsuccessful applicants was again highlighted through the case-study visits. It is recommended, therefore, that panel members give careful consideration to how they feed back panel decisions to young people, to ensure that applicants are not discouraged from making future applications. Panels that are not already doing so may wish to consider providing structured feedback to unsuccessful applicants, making clear how they could strengthen their applications. In order to minimise the demands on panel members, they may wish to consider simplifying this process by, for example, using a pre-prepared list of reasons for unsuccessful applications where the relevant reasons could be ticked, or from which relevant reasons could be cut and pasted into a letter.

Alternatively, panel members could supply unsuccessful applicants with a summary of the minutes of the meeting.

- While most applicants who were interviewed were comfortable with the YOF/YCF application process, there was evidence that some young people found it too difficult and daunting, and needed support from adults. Panel members may, therefore, wish to consider giving young people the opportunity to **apply in a range of different ways**, (e.g. through a video or presentation to the panel), to ensure that the Funds are equally accessible to all young people. Panel members could also become involved in providing support and guidance to young people applying for funding, for example, through support sessions for applicants.

Recommendations for adults who support young people in applying for the Funds

- As noted above, young people may benefit from support in generating ideas and adults can have a key role in assisting with this. There may be value, therefore, in promoting **examples of innovative and creative projects** that had received funding through professional journals and through community and voluntary sector networks, so that relevant adults are fully aware of the Funds. Adults working with young people may also wish to develop ways of helping young people to generate ideas for potential YOF/YCF applications, for example, through discussions about how they feel about their local community.
- Adults who had worked with young people in applying for the Funds, and subsequently managing and organising activities, sometimes observed that they would like young people to take increasing ownership of projects. There may be value in **projects sharing practice** in their experience of developing young people's confidence to take ownership of projects and the outcomes of this approach.
- While young people were involved in the application process, the financial aspects were sometimes left to adults to source and manage. In general, young people involved in the YOF/YCF process appear to have risen to this challenge and there may be value in adults working with young people increasingly **involving them in the financial aspects** of the projects.

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