

# evaluation of the NYA tailored support offer to local authorities: case studies report

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# evaluation of the NYA tailored support offer to local authorities: case-studies report

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# 1 Introduction

This document presents 11 case studies which highlight examples of the tailored consultancy support local authorities (LAs) have received from the National Youth Agency (NYA) to help LAs with their youth offer. It is based on the findings from the evaluation that the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is undertaking for the Local Government Association (LGA).

The case studies will be of use to local policy makers who make decisions about LAs' youth offer. It sets out:

- the NYA tailored support offer to LAs (see below)
- the case studies (page 2)
- details of the evaluation (page 20).

## The NYA tailored support offer to local authorities

The Local Government Association (LGA) provides funding to the National Youth Agency (NYA) through a top slice of the Revenue Support Grant to provide a youth support offer to LAs. This offer to LAs, called the Routes to Success programme aims to provide a comprehensive package of advice, tools, products and services to help LAs in these challenging times. The programme includes a number of aspects, some of which are available to all LAs and others which LAs can choose to apply for.

The tailored support offer is one part of the Routes to Success programme and provides a limited number of LAs with consultancy advice, training and peer support designed to meet the individual needs of the LA. The support offer is often focused on the following topics: supporting the redesign of young people's services;

enabling effective commissioning; improving quality and cost effectiveness; and workforce development. The offer allows LAs to apply for up to ten days of free support from an NYA associate who works as a consultant with the LA. The first LAs were able to apply for support in June 2011 and received support from autumn 2011.

## Types of report received

This document presents 11 standalone case studies. The type of support each of the case studies received can be summarised as:

- service redesign (case studies one and two)
- service redesign and measuring outcomes/evaluation support (case studies three and four)
- quality youth work/quality assurance (case studies five and six)
- quality assurance and commissioning (case study seven)
- integrated working (case study eight)
- planning and commissioning options (case study nine)
- commissioning and measuring outcomes (case study ten)
- developing an outcomes framework (case study eleven).

In all cases, support was sought in the context of service redesign, in light of, for example, budget reductions and staff changes.

## Bolton Council: support with service redesign

### What is the context?

Bolton Council applied to the NYA for support with their service redesign. The local authority (LA) had previously integrated their sport, health and inclusion, youth and play services into a single service and had made considerable budget reductions. They were now interested in developing this newly integrated service, focusing on frontline delivery. The LA hoped that this support would provide an agenda for change and justification for the journey needed to help them refocus on providing quality provision in light of budget reductions. The LA received ten days of support from an NYA associate, who was already supporting them on a peer-to-peer support programme.

### What support was received?

The LA sent the NYA associate a range of documents in advance of their first meeting to ensure they had an understanding of the LA and their youth service. These documents gave the associate an overview of the youth offer, the structure of the service and details of the service redesign to date. One interviewee believed this context setting was important to ensure they were able to get the maximum benefit out of a limited number of days.

The NYA associate and an NYA member of staff attended an initial scoping meeting at the LA to discuss and agree the parameters of the support. Three senior members of staff from the LA attended this meeting. The associate gave an overview of the programme of support and feedback on the initial information provided by the LA. The LA staff then talked through in more detail what service redesign they had already done and their aspirations for taking this further. After the meeting, the associate put forward a scoping paper, which the group then discussed at a second scoping meeting, where they agreed the details of the support to be provided.

The associate held **individual meetings** with three senior managers within the positive contribution division. These meetings explored their role and views on the service, including any opportunities they could see for improvement or change. Similar discussions were also held with senior staff who attended the scoping meetings.

The associate also facilitated a **focus group meeting with internal partners** who deliver similar services. This included representatives from Connexions, the teenage pregnancy and sexual health team, the drug and alcohol team and the youth offending team. The aim of the meeting was for the associate to understand the working relationships in the LA and how they have been affected by issues such as capacity, budget cuts and the change of climate.

After completing these activities, the associate analysed and synthesised the information into common themes. The associate then **fed back the findings and put forward recommendations** to the group of senior managers engaged in the support process. This was followed by a discussion of the findings. A similar meeting was then held with the Assistant Director of Children's Services (ADCS). The associate presented the LA with a final short report which included recommendations on how to take the service forward. The key themes within the report were: culture, resource allocation, how the LA works with young people, quality and systems, staffing issues, and voice and participation of young people.

The ADCS was involved with the support throughout, attending scoping meetings and meeting with the associate. The lead officer within the LA believed this involvement was very important to ensure that the recommendations would be put into practice: 'It is about that buy-in to take the recommendations forward – and we absolutely have that'.

### What is the perceived impact?

The LA has already taken forward some of the recommendations put forward by the associate. For example, there is now a direct dialogue between young people and elected members; the LA held an event for young people where they were able to engage with 15 of the council's 60 elected members, and the lead executive member and the young person's champion. They have agreed a set of issues they can work on jointly, including transport, bullying and positive activities for young people.

The LA has also taken forward a recommendation on improving qualitative data and the service has now agreed a set of parameters that will ensure they collect a certain level of information on the young people across all the LA's positive activities. The LA has also run training for staff on youth work curriculum as a result of one of the recommendations from the report.

Overall, the LA lead officer believes the report and recommendations has given them focus and provided a justifiable platform to work from. The LA staff felt that the recommendations and the subsequent changes they will make, are to some extent legitimised and justified as the recommendations come from an independent and credible organisation supported by the LGA which provides further credibility.

### What next?

The LA plans to undertake significant work on their service redesign in the future in light of the report and recommendations made. However they planned to wait until after the May 2012 local elections.



# Oxfordshire County Council: support with service redesign

## What is the context?

Oxfordshire County Council applied to the NYA for support with workforce development in light of service redesign following a major restructuring across early intervention in children's services, which now encompass integrated youth support. In particular, the local authority (LA) wanted support to retain existing core specialisms of youth provision delivery in the restructured 0–19 service. The LA received eight days of support from an NYA associate, who was assigned to them based on their experience and areas of expertise.

## What support was received?

The NYA associate was sent a range of information in advance of the initial visit. This included documentation in relation to the service restructure, consultation papers, detailed plans and structures for the service and job descriptions.

The associate set up an **initial scoping meeting** with the LA which the early intervention manager, children's workforce manager, early intervention lead for workforce development, and the early intervention lead for youth, engagement and opportunities attended. The meeting was used to discuss the remit of the support, the direction that the LA wanted to move in and any developments since their initial application. During the initial discussion they decided that the focus of the support should be on how they measure impact and outcomes of youth provision.

Following the scoping meeting, the LA set up a **small steering group** with managers across relevant parts of the early intervention service to oversee the work. The associate ran two **workshops** with staff across the early intervention service to explain the approach in terms of identifying outcomes, basing practice on the achievements of those outcomes and looking at appropriate measurement processes and tools that

they could develop in their practice. It was suggested that staff would have welcomed further workshops or discussions in order to facilitate staff understanding of the concepts and different ways of thinking. The associate also undertook other activities as part of the support including:

- a **desk exercise** to identify good practice taking place in other local authorities
- **facilitating contact** with outside organisations such as the Young Foundation to explore an outcomes measurement tool currently in use for discrete client groups.

The LA perceived the support to be very helpful in terms of, for example, helping staff focus on the issues. One interviewee observed:

*There's so much going on at the moment...it was really useful having somebody else who was there to direct your attention towards certain things that were happening.*

Support from the NYA associate had also helped clarify thinking and facilitate discussion with external organisations such as the Young Foundation.

Both managers and frontline staff across the service engaged with the support. Managers were keen to ensure that the early intervention service has a strong evidence base for what it is seeking to achieve. The NYA associate felt that buy-in had been facilitated by the work being led by the early intervention manager who ensured that the appropriate staff were present at the workshops.

Staff reacted positively to the NYA associate: 'I think it's been a real boost for people, it really underwrites our commitment but it gives a different authenticity to it'.

## What is the perceived impact?

The LA is currently in the process of assembling the model that they want to use and exploring how to embed the changes that are taking place. Staff have started to consider how to measure outcomes and reflect on how applicable the model is across the work that is undertaken with children and families.

However, taking staff through the process of change is a current challenge, particularly in light of the restructure and that they are in the process of settling into their new roles.

In the longer term, the impact on staff will be more practical, including clarifying the performance management system and ensuring that they have measures in the recording database to allow them to record impact. There is also an expectation that staff will become more confident in using the outcomes framework in the future. This in turn would impact on young people who use the service as they will be able to provide a clearer analysis of the types of work that would enable them to reach the goals that they want to achieve.

The development of an outcomes framework is a substantial piece of work which is in the early stages of development and extends beyond the support provided by the NYA. The LA valued the role of a 'critical friend' and being introduced to new ideas but they recognise that work needs to take place internally, which, in part, is an organic process of change.

Overall, LA staff felt the support was collaborative, flexible and responsive to the position that the local authority had reached. The support had provided an opportunity for local authorities to take a step back and work through some of the difficult challenges they face.

## What next?

The next stage of the work for the local authority is to work with organisations such as the Young Foundation who have an outcomes model for discrete client groups and can develop this for the LA which can be used with young people.

## West Berkshire Council: support with service redesign and development of an evaluation framework

### What is the context?

West Berkshire's youth service has been in the process of change from universal provision to more targeted provision within a new integrated service. Alongside this have been budget reductions, the closure of some youth centres, and associated redundancies. The local authority (LA) wanted support to develop a common understanding of what youth work would entail within the new integrated service, encompassing team development, and support in refining a results-focused outcomes framework for in-house targeted provision.

### What support was received?

The LA provided their NYA associate with background information on the service redesign and implications. The associate arranged an **initial scoping meeting** with the youth service manager and the acting head of youth services and commissioning. At this stage the associate's deliverables were to include supporting the decommissioning of youth centres. As this process was already underway in advance of the tailored support, the associate adjusted the scope of the support to have greater emphasis on staff development in their new roles and to take account of the progress made in designing the outcomes measurement and evaluation process.

The NYA associate facilitated a **'new beginnings' workshop** with full-time staff, exploring what integrated working would be like, how to ensure quality provision, and what opportunities were available to them in the new service model. The associate also provided **feedback on an outcomes measurement tool**, an 'evaluation wheel', that the LA was piloting, to the relevant task group (comprising the operations manager, an assistant team manager and two youth workers). The associate, with the input of some of the full time staff, then designed and ran an evening session for

part-time frontline staff which included updating them on the development of outcomes measures.

Staff members at the LA were able to identify various benefits of the tailored support provided, including scrutiny of and support with their plans from the NYA as an independent and respected authority. The associate's personal experience of youth work was important, 'it made what she was saying ... very much worth listening to'. The associate's involvement helped sustain the momentum of change and reassure the LA about the service's direction of travel. Staff also valued the opportunity to hear from the associate about the process of change in other LAs.

One member of staff particularly valued having the associate present at staff events to act as a facilitator. This allowed the managers to join in the discussion rather than facilitate the event themselves, enabling the whole team to look at issues together: 'For me the best thing about the staff development day was having an external person facilitate'.

Given the pace of change within the LA, staff felt it was often a challenge to engage the associate in the most appropriate way, but they appreciated having the flexibility to change the scope of the tailored support according to internal developments.

### What is the perceived impact?

The process of restructuring is ongoing, so it will be some time before the impact of the changes can be fully evaluated. Nevertheless, the LA perceives short-term impacts have included staff being more aware of the national context of change in youth work and that **staff are embracing opportunities** brought about by teams working more collaboratively.

LA staff are now ready to move on to the next stages of the process, which includes developing the referrals system. There is a greater awareness of what a referrals system should look like, so that although

this has not been formally implemented yet, **'customer service' and cross-agency working is felt to have improved.** Similarly, staff report being clearer about what an 'integrated support' service should be and there is a level of confidence that the impact measurement tools being developed will enable them to prove their value as a non-statutory service. The evaluation wheel will enable young people to assess their own progress in a new and, the LA hopes, engaging way.

### What next?

The LA recognise the importance of sustaining the momentum of change beyond the tailored support programme, and continuing the consultation exercise with young people and the wider community, to explain the reasons behind closures of youth centres and change to a more targeted youth offer.

## Peterborough City Council: support with service redesign and recorded outcomes

### What is the context?

Children's Services in Peterborough is currently undergoing a full review and a restructure is anticipated. Concurrently, a significant budget reduction has prompted a reprioritisation of youth provision and there is a need to expand the range of targeted support offered. The local authority (LA) applied for support to help develop a 0–19 Early Intervention and Prevention Service, with a specific focus on moderation of current practice and assessment of the effectiveness of its interventions with vulnerable young people.

### What support was received?

In advance of meeting with the NYA associate, the departmental leadership team (DLT) met to discuss the focus of the support. The LA sent relevant information to the associate, including project board papers and an overview of their information management system.

The NYA associate set up a **scoping meeting** with the head of the youth service and the head and deputy head of the integrated youth support service. The associate conducted a desktop and observational analysis of the outcomes, impact and value for money of current activity in a selection of areas of work, including reviewing a quantity of sessional recording sheets and speaking with managers of locality teams and their line managers. The associate then produced a report based on the findings from this exercise.

The NYA associate **analysed the management information (MI) system** and advised personnel how to use it more effectively. From the sessional recording sheet review, the associate indicated that youth workers needed to incorporate the recording of more qualitative indicators to meet national standards, and that a quality assurance system was needed to ensure this was happening. The associate advised personnel on how to identify which activities

are delivering good outcomes, as part of a benchmarking process in the new Early Intervention and Prevention service.

The NYA associate delivered a **performance clinic for service managers**, focused on the analysis of data on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), at short notice. Following the workshop, the head of service produced a report on the data for the interim Director of Children's Services (DCS).

### What is the perceived impact?

The associate has helped to raise awareness of, and a more positive attitude towards, the importance of demonstrating impact and moving to a more targeted way of working. Alongside this, youth work personnel are better equipped to evaluate their intervention work: 'It has generated a real focus and reflection on our practice which has allowed us to think very carefully about how we create impact and how we measure that impact'.

LA senior managers feel that an important impact of the support has been implementation of the new Early Intervention and Prevention Service despite uncertainty around the overall restructure of Children's Services: '[The associate] helped us in building the confidence that we could be proactive rather than reactive'. The new support team has worked with Children's Social Care (CSC) in order to identify young people who meet the Early Intervention and Prevention criteria. This has significantly reduced a backlog in referrals to CSC:

*It has marked a real sea change in the understanding of what we can do as a service, so it has had a significant impact. Before we would have picked up some of these referrals in an ad hoc way but now we've got a more systematic approach for dealing with them.*

As a result of the NEET data analysis, the LA has implemented a system of locally reviewing, with higher-level moderation, the needs level of individual young people who are NEET. Senior managers have identified the need to target the high proportion of young people who are NEET who have learning difficulties or disabilities: 'We are far more efficient about using the data and responding appropriately to the data'.

### What next?

The LA will receive further days of support from the NYA associate once the restructure is in place, with a view to developing an internal inspections programme, and also establishing the working culture of the new staff teams.

## Leicester City Council: support with developing a 'gold standard' youth service

### What is the context?

Leicester City Council applied to the NYA for support with defining the place of, and their aspirations for, youth work within the local youth offer, in response to a mayoral pledge to work toward a 'gold standard' youth service. To this end, the local authority (LA) set up a task group, chaired by the lead elected member for Children & Young People's Services, which included, a representative from the NYA, and researchers from a local university (who worked on the evidence base). The LA particularly wanted the support to focus on developing evidence-based practice in youth work, linked to national initiatives such as Positive for Youth. This work was to take place within the context of a strategic commissioning review for 0–19 activities to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.

### What support was received?

The LA sent the NYA associate some **key documents in advance** of their first meeting, to set the scene of where they were currently in the restructure and the task group's initial thoughts on objectives and priorities. The NYA associate conducted a **scoping exercise** with members of the task group and helped to develop the group's terms of reference. LA staff found this process helpful in clarifying their needs and expectations for the tailored support.

With the LA's operations manager, the NYA associate planned and facilitated a **programme of staff workshops**. During the first workshop, the senior management team discussed the definition of high quality youth work and its place in the overall youth offer, including the challenges and opportunities of providing a gold standard service. The associate helped staff to consider the national and local context and how to engage key stakeholders, including potential third sector providers of services, in the process.

The NYA associate then facilitated a second workshop for youth work personnel to consider similar themes. Throughout the workshop the associate challenged some of their perceptions about youth work and helped them to focus on the positive contribution they can make going forward. Heads of service and operations managers supported their youth work colleagues to identify existing cases of high quality work. The LA staff felt that the input of the associate helped to address staff anxieties about the increasing emphasis on evidence-based practice and the implications for them of service remodelling, by putting these developments in a national context.

Overall, the external and impartial support and expertise from the NYA associate was valued in helping the task group gain an overview of the service and sense of direction. As one interviewee commented: 'it's been impartial, it's risen above some of the local issues'. Interviewees believe it has encouraged the task group to reflect on their current practice and possibilities for the future, and has provided challenge in a safe environment.

### What is the perceived impact?

The tailored support has **helped to gain high-level support for the role and potential of youth work**, as well as highlighting areas of further work. Interviewees now have greater clarity about the purpose of youth work and are better able to articulate what they want from their gold standard service, although it will take some time to consolidate.

The workshop for youth workers has helped staff see the need to demonstrate the impact of youth work, and reinforced the message for staff at a strategic level: 'it's certainly made me think how do we implement this, how do we record this'.

The LA's aspirations for building on the support include having a clearly articulated evidence base

that will inform their future commissioning for 13–19 services and, within that, youth work. Part of this will be enabling youth workers to identify the most vulnerable young people in their areas who require targeted support, and more generally ensuring consistency of provision of the core offer across Leicester, so that young people are assured of the service they can expect to receive.

### What next?

The NYA associate and LA will be running workshops with the voluntary sector to help develop a common understanding of their proposed contribution to the future of the service.

The high-level strategy document produced by the task group will be translated to the local context to inform the operational action plan for the next phase of service remodelling.

There will be a period of representation on a final core offer of 0–19 activities and interventions which incorporates the local youth offer. This will inform future strategic commissioning of services before service remodelling to deliver a local universal offer of positive activities provided at a neighbourhood level enhanced by targeted youth work at more vulnerable groups.



## Surrey County Council: developing a quality assurance system

### What is the context?

Surrey County Council applied to the NYA for support with developing a quality assurance system and a quality mark for youth centres. The local authority (LA) had already begun working in partnership with the NYA to develop a bespoke quality mark for individual youth centres and they applied for tailored support to extend the development of this work. They have developed web-based communities of practice whereby staff are able to upload evidence of quality. The LA was allocated eight days' support, which they match-funded.

### What support was received?

The NYA associate undertook an **initial scoping meeting** with the Contract Performance Officer and the Assistant Director for Young People. The scoping meeting clearly outlined timescales and milestones to be achieved.

The NYA associate supported the LA with development and drafting of the quality mark for individual youth centres through a series of meetings, telephone and email communication.

Once the LA had drafted the quality mark, the NYA associate facilitated a **training event** for all youth workers in youth centres on the quality mark, the assessment criteria and the assessment process. The Assistant Director for Young People spoke at the event and outlined his vision of youth work. In addition, the NYA associate led a two-day training process with the contracts and performance officers, contract performance manager and equalities officer on how to inspect within the framework of the quality mark.

The experience, expertise and the breadth and depth of knowledge that the associate brought with her was particularly valued by staff – 'she knows what

she's doing so when she comes in, she can work efficiently and effectively'.

The support was delivered in a period when the LA was undergoing a transformation of services for young people and there had been some teething issues around that. However, the LA staff believed that the associate has been flexible in order to cope with the changes resulting from the transformation as the process has moved forward.

### What is the perceived impact?

The support received so far has provided an infrastructure that they can build on in terms of quality and quality assurance. It has resulted in a recognised means of assessing quality in youth provision. As a result of the training received, staff are now equipped with the skills and knowledge to undertake assessments.

In the future, the support received will enable staff to focus on quality outcomes for young people and evidence the impact that youth work has had on young people. In addition, the LA expects that there will be an increase in the number of young people receiving the service; the growth in voluntary support to young people will result in a better infrastructure for involving volunteers and, in turn, lead to more sessions being run and more young people receiving the service.

### What next?

The NYA has agreed to continue to provide a background service to support the inspection framework that will be put in place to underpin the quality framework they have implemented. The NYA will monitor the inspections undertaken by the LA and will be undertaking some joint inspections as part of the monitoring process.

## London Borough of Haringey: support with the development of a quality assurance framework and commissioning

### What is the context?

Haringey Council applied for support with a quality assurance framework the local authority (LA) was already developing. Due to the changing context in the council's aspirations, the LA also sought support in relation to commissioning. The LA had experienced significant budget reductions to the youth service and Connexions as well as staff changes.

### What support was received?

The associate was sent a range of documentation prior to the initial visit including background information from the member officer working group and the briefing that had been undertaken for the cabinet advisor.

The NYA associate spent some time **reviewing the draft quality assurance framework** that had been produced by the LA following consultation and discussions with staff. The quality assurance documents from the youth service and Connexions were combined into one for the youth community and participation service. The associate also undertook a thorough piece of work with a few members of staff, taking them through the documentation to see how it could be amended and proofreading it from a professional perspective.

**A series of workshops** were undertaken with the management team which focused on how the service could become a commissioning body. The first session looked at how staff could become commissioners, what commissioning is and how different types of commissioning roles can be adapted to their service and the LA. This was followed by a more focused session based on the needs of the service. The final day involved staff being provided with a specific commissioning scenario to work through.

**A training session** was held with senior practitioners and managers which focused on their

roles, possible role conflict and providing a sense of confidence about their roles.

LA staff valued the support they had received, including the 'critical friend' role adopted by the associate and the opportunity to consider and reflect on practice from a wider perspective.

### What is the perceived impact?

Following revisions to the quality assurance framework based on input from the associate, the LA has arranged to roll out training for staff across the service. This will result in a measure of quality for their own service and, in the next stage, a measure of quality of colleagues in the voluntary sector. The framework can also be used as a measure of peer inspections for young people's inspections which helps provide a level of objectivity.

The funds that the LA has had as part of the youth innovation fund have been used to train 15 young people to become youth commissioners. The member of staff involved in this work used the quality assurance framework, in part, to involve the training of young people with that.

In the future, it is hoped that the service will have money to commission and have a greater strategy with the LA's overall commissioning framework with young people being at the heart of that. The service will also work with the young inspector's team to ensure that there is synergy between the quality assurance framework and their own checklist.

### What next?

The next step for the LA is for training to be delivered by another body to all staff on the quality framework.

## Suffolk County Council: support with strengthening integrated working

### What is the context?

Suffolk County Council has implemented an Integrated Services Operating Model (ISOM) across its Children and Young People's Service, involving reconfiguration of its workforce so that its seven locality teams include, among others, an education welfare officer, and former youth work and Connexions staff who have been transferred to a newly created Youth Support role.

The local authority (LA) applied for support to correspond with their objective of 'taking responsibility and taking action', with a focus on local priorities such as reducing the number of NEET young people, alongside embedding effective practice within locality teams. The LA wants to ensure its priorities and targets are data and needs led, and to strengthen the relationship between the county and locality youth support services with more joined-up strategies.

### What support was received?

The associate set up an **initial scoping meeting** with senior staff from across the integrated service and a key voluntary sector partner. At this stage, the LA planned to use the support to work on integrated service delivery principles, development of an adolescent strategy and workforce development.

The LA then had a Youth Offending Service (YOS) inspection and senior staff members were also required to focus on another priority project, so the LA and associate renegotiated the deliverables agreed at the scoping stage to change the content and timeframe of the **planned workshops**.

The associate facilitated a workshop with the integrated service managers, where they considered the service's strengths and priority areas for development, the referral process for young people and outcomes measurement. For the LA, this

workshop highlighted the need to develop a common set of priorities and consistent approach to measuring outcomes across the seven locality teams and externally commissioned provision.

The second workshop comprised integrated service and team managers, youth workers and information service staff. At this session, the NYA associate and another facilitator from the NYA supported staff to reiterate their objectives and priorities, discuss data needs, and consider the potential for developing an additional assessment tool for use in line with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

At a time of considerable change within the LA, staff were impressed that the associate got to grips with complexities of their structure and implications of reorganisation, helping them clarify what they needed from the support: '[The associate] put in lots of ground work in the scoping and that has paid dividends ... in terms of planning'. The LA also valued the associate's flexibility in renegotiating the support provided: 'the programme evolves and works within the LA's history and its circumstances; the associate is very adept at doing that'.

Staff at the LA felt that the workshops were well facilitated, and appreciated having a second facilitator with the larger staff group. The facilitators helped to generate useful and inclusive discussions, giving staff a sense of shared ownership of the agenda.

Staff benefited from the associate's experience and knowledge regarding the national context of youth work and relevant publications, for instance, Young Foundation research into outcomes frameworks.

The LA experienced some challenges in undertaking the support, primarily the slippage in timeframe brought about by pressures at the LA which included a change in the personnel with responsibility for the support within the LA. One interviewee felt that the LA could have carried out more preparation in

advance in terms of identifying options for the support and determining staff involvement in the workshops in order to make most efficient use of the available time with their associate.

### **What is the perceived impact?**

As it is early days for the restructured youth service, the LA is yet to see the full impact of the support. The associate's guidance has enabled staff to begin to identify common goals across the integrated service and in turn the relevant outcomes to be measured.

Staff felt the workshops were very valuable in encouraging joint working across county and locality teams: 'it felt like there had been real movement and more of a sense of understanding'.

### **What next?**

The LA will continue to refine its overarching strategy for provision and its outcomes framework, and decide on the process for piloting and evaluating the assessment tools under development.

## London Borough of Brent: support to identify options for planning and commissioning the youth offer

### What is the context?

As part of Brent's One Council programme to use limited resources efficiently and effectively, and in light of the changing national context around positive activities for young people, the local authority (LA) established a project board to review local youth provision. Prior to applying for the tailored support, the LA had mapped youth provision with input from voluntary sector partners, and staff viewed the support offer as an opportunity to get an external perspective in order to build on this work. Specifically, the LA wanted the NYA associate to support the development of a concept paper outlining a strategic approach to planning and commissioning the youth offer. This work was to be coordinated across departments including Children and Families and Environment and Neighbourhood.

### What support was received?

The NYA associate set up an **initial meeting** with key strategic staff, including the Assistant Director for Policy & Planning (who was the nominated lead officer for the work) and the Head of the One Council Programme, to be updated on the project board's progress and to discuss the scope of the support.

In the first stage of the support, the associate undertook **desk-based research and produced an interim report** assessing the extent to which provision was meeting priorities set out in Brent's Children & Young People's Plan and Corporate Strategy. The associate reviewed the mapping and needs analysis done by the LA and individual service strategies, and identified gaps and areas of potential duplication across services relevant to young people. The associate's report made initial recommendations for addressing local priorities efficiently.

In the second phase of support, the associate conducted **interviews and round-table discussions** with key personnel to build up a picture of

the planning, deployment and quality assurance of youth provision across Brent. In particular, these discussions explored the place of youth work in a tiered youth offer model. The associate reviewed expenditure across the LA and identified the likely resource that would be available for commissioning positive activities.

The associate supported the LA's Policy and Performance Officer in developing a **concept paper** which outlined the rationale for the work, realistic options and suggested timescales for planning and commissioning positive activities.

LA personnel commented that the associate's experience and specialist knowledge of youth work in LAs provided them with a valuable and credible external perspective on their work: 'Having an external person dispelled any myth [among staff outside the corporate directorate] that the project was being centrally dictated'. The associate's facilitation of meetings was also helpful in this regard: '[The associate] created an environment where everyone felt that they had a stake [in the project]'.

### What is the perceived impact?

The associate brought together information and analysis in a comprehensive way and supported the delivery of a high-level concept paper, helping to consolidate the direction of travel of the youth services project board: '[The support] has been helpful in encouraging us to think about our youth offer in a more holistic way, not just about what the youth service does'.

### What next?

The LA plans to undertake a more detailed financial review to identify how to make necessary savings. The LA is also giving further thought to its options for the future delivery of the youth offer, for example, exploring the extent to which services may be commissioned externally.

## London Borough of Merton: support with commissioning and outcomes

### What is the context?

Merton's youth service is transforming in order to minimise loss of provision following budget cuts. This will involve expanding the commissioning out of local authority (LA) services to the voluntary, community and faith sectors. To lead this transformation, the LA has set up a transformation board which includes the head of the youth service, youth inclusion manager, integrated youth support service commissioning manager, and third sector partners. The council applied for support to assist its transformation board with the ongoing development of their commissioning framework. In addition, they sought advice on how to improve the recording of outcomes so that practitioners, both within the LA and in partner providers, record outcomes consistently and produce more robust evidence of impact in their work with young people.

### What support was received?

The associate set up an **initial scoping meeting** with the head of service to discuss the transformation process to date. In light of this meeting, the associate suggested broadening the scope of support to include a more comprehensive review of the transformation process. As a result of this review, the associate advised the LA to revisit data they had collected and undertake a thorough analysis to achieve a profile of the youth service's clients. This analysis was undertaken by the LA's information and research department.

To guide the transformation board in developing their commissioning framework, the associate developed a **commissioning options appraisal paper**. The paper outlined possibilities for the extent of provision across the borough and suggestions for monitoring and evaluation, underpinned by value for money considerations.

**Other activities** supported by the NYA associate included clarifying and finalising the transformation board's **statement of purpose**, and **planning a workshop** for providers around the emerging commissioning model.

Overall, LA staff benefited from the external expertise and challenge offered by the associate. They were already committed to the transformation process and the support has strengthened this by offering senior managers the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on the process. Some interviewees indicated they would have liked the associate to have been able to provide more examples of other LAs which have implemented outcomes frameworks.

### What is the perceived impact?

For Merton youth service, the support has had positive outcomes 'in more ways than envisaged'. The prompt to interrogate their client data more closely has reassured managers that a high proportion of the young people they work with live in priority areas of the borough. During the support period, they developed a case-study recording format to capture best practice and good outcomes. The service now plans to include broader impact measures, and value for money indicators, in commissioning specifications.

### What next?

The LA would like the support to continue into the 2012–13 financial year, when they will be holding a workshop with providers to communicate their choice of area-based commissioning model. The service will pilot the new commissioning model, and also work on implementation of the case-study outcomes recording system.

## Dorset County Council: support with the development of an outcomes framework

### What is the context?

As a result of the localism agenda, strategic managers at the LA identified the youth and community service as a delivery area that might be subject to a Community Right to Challenge<sup>1</sup> bid. The LA felt that it was appropriate to seek some objective support for a project that was already underway and wanted to focus on defining good outcomes in their youth service and ascertaining the actual costs incurred in running a youth centre. The support was offered at a time when the LA had written the brief about how they were going to investigate their youth provision – ‘we thought the two agendas were fairly timely’.

### What support was received?

The LA prepared a project brief detailing what would happen as part of their review in advance of the associate’s initial visit. The **initial scoping meeting** comprised the NYA associate, the senior responsible officer for the youth service, head of commissioning, planning and performance, and the project manager who was responsible for day-to-day contact with the NYA associate. The LA viewed the meeting as a two-way conversation which enabled the NYA associate to understand the challenges experienced by the LA and their motivations for change. Similarly, the LA wanted to get a sense of similar work being undertaken by other LAs and any barriers they were experiencing. In the original brief the NYA had also planned to support the LA with financial analysis and benchmarking data but due to a lack of reliable national data they were unable to provide this.

Following the scoping exercise, the NYA associate led a **one-day workshop** for staff and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The workshop included a series of presentations from colleagues at the NYA who updated staff on the national picture, the research that the Young Foundation had undertaken (on behalf of Catalyst<sup>2</sup>) into outcomes and the types of work that other LAs were considering. The LA had the opportunity to feed in their thoughts and ideas about how the outcomes agenda was being developed.

The LA identified **work streams following the outcomes workshop**. The LA developed a draft outcomes framework as a result of the workshop and a focus group that followed. The NYA associate provided feedback on this. Some of the support received was also directed into their **young inspector programme**.

There was buy-in from staff at all levels which, in one instance, was perceived to have been facilitated by the involvement of the assistant director who set up the working groups, identified relevant staff to be involved in meetings and sent out invitations to the workshops. The LA ensured staff and other stakeholders were informed about the work that was taking place: the project brief given to staff was shared with the joint consultative body comprising senior officers from children’s services and representatives of trade unions and professional associations. Staff were also briefed on the workshop agenda in advance.

The LA wanted to review activity and outcomes data from statistical and regional neighbours, but at the time there was no current benchmarking data available for youth work.

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- 1 As part of the Localism Act, the Community Right to Challenge gives community groups, parish councils and local authority employees the right to submit an ‘expression of interest’ in taking over and running a local authority service. The local authority must consider and respond to the challenge.
  - 2 The Catalyst Consortium acts as the Department for Education’s (DfE) strategic partner for young people. The consortium is supporting the youth sector to become more sustainable as part of a two-year transition programme with the Department for Education.

## What is the perceived impact?

The associate provided independent challenge and insight into different ways of thinking about youth provision outcomes. 'It allowed us to be a bit more forensic about what we were looking at'. As a consequence of the NYA's involvement, the outcomes work has taken on a greater significance in the LA's review than it might have done otherwise.

The LA has undertaken a 'snapshot' survey of one week's youth provision in Dorset. Staff have been asked to provide information on, for example, the number of people being supported, the types of issues they are dealing with and any outcomes. The LA will produce a report on these findings and share it with staff.

The support will help to ensure that the services being provided are appropriate, timely and meet the needs of the young people. The LA hopes that through this piece of work, youth work and youth provision will be more readily understood and therefore supported through difficult decisions about budgets and priorities.

## What next?

The outcomes work and learning from the NYA associate is feeding into the development of minimum standards for youth provision, a programme which is being funded by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) in the South West. The voluntary sector are meeting with a range of commissioners from across the South West to develop these minimum standards.



## About the evaluation

The LGA commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake an evaluation of the tailored support programme in its first year of operation.

The key aim of the evaluation is to undertake a formative and summative evaluation of the LGA commissioned NYA programme of tailored support to LAs. The evaluation aims to identify in particular:

- reasons for LA involvement
- benefits of involvement and challenges faced
- short- and long-term impact of the support
- the extent to which the programme of support is meeting the needs of the LA, both at a strategic and operational level
- how LAs are measuring success
- longer-term developments of the programme and any recommendations for change over time.

The evaluation comprises three stages; the first of which involved baseline telephone interviews with the lead officer in each of the 19 LAs receiving support, a face-to-face interview with the NYA manager and observation of a programme team meeting an analysis of scoping reports of those LAs receiving support.

Phase 2 of the evaluation comprised telephone interviews with up to three stakeholders involved in the programme across 11 case-study authorities including:

- strategic staff who had been involved in the management of the support
- operational staff involved in receiving support from the NYA.

In total, 28 interviews were undertaken at LA level between February and April 2012. The interviews build on findings from Phase 1 of the evaluation and provide a more in-depth understanding of the tailored support offer in each of the LAs.

Telephone interviews were also conducted with five NYA associates<sup>3</sup> who are working with the LAs to provide support.

The final stage of the evaluation will involve telephone interviews with LA lead officers to explore impact of support received.

### Next steps of the evaluation

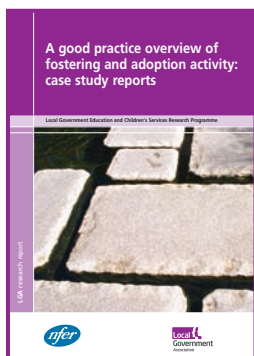
The final stage of the evaluation will involve follow-up telephone interviews with LA representatives across all 19 authorities involved in Phase 1 of the research. The interviews will explore the impact of the NYA tailored support offer and outline suggestions and recommendations for how the programme could be improved in the future.

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3 In those cases where NYA associates work across more than one LA, interviews focused on those areas included as case studies. In a few cases, LAs declined to participate in the research after interviews had been conducted with associates. However, associates were offered the opportunity to provide any feedback via email about the additional LAs.

## Recently published reports

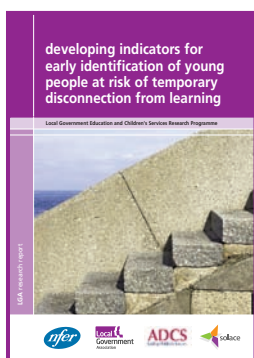
The Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Programme is carried out by NFER. The research projects cover topics and perspectives that are of special interest to local authorities. All the reports are published and disseminated by the NFER, with separate executive summaries. The summaries, and more information about this series, are available free of charge at: [www.nfer.ac.uk/research/local-government-association/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/local-government-association/)



### **A good practice overview of fostering and adoption activity**

Councils seek to improve looked after children's outcomes; increase the pools of foster carers and adopters; enhance service provision and reduce delays in finding children an adoptive family. The case study report outlines seven councils' models of practice to achieve these aims, their benefits, challenges and advice for others.

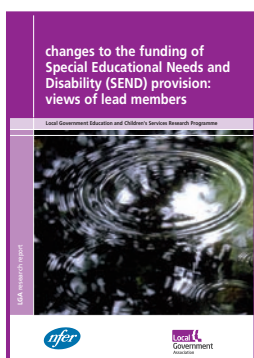
[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGFP01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGFP01)



### **Developing indicators for early identification of young people at risk of temporary disconnection from learning**

This scoping study investigates indicators for early identification of young people at risk of temporary disconnection from learning. Based on discussions with staff from seven local authorities and three schools it explores how young people at risk of temporary disconnection from learning are currently being identified, whether it is possible to differentiate between young people who are likely to become temporarily disconnected from learning and those who might become more sustained long-term NEETs and whether there is a need for indicators.

[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/INDIO2](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/INDIO2)



### **Changes to the funding of special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision: views of lead members**

This report outlines the views of lead members in relation to the funding changes proposed in the 2011 Green Paper on special educational needs and disability. Lead members generally welcomed the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans and personal budgets, although they identified a number of practical issues that would need to be resolved prior to their introduction.

[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGPB01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGPB01)

For more information, or to buy any of these publications, please contact: The Publications Unit, National Foundation for Educational Research, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ, tel: +44 (0)1753 637002, fax: +44 (0)1753 637280, email: [book.sales@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:book.sales@nfer.ac.uk), web: [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications).

The LGA has commissioned the NFER to undertake an evaluation of the National Youth Agency (NYA) programme of tailored support to local authorities. The evaluation aims to help NYA tailor their support offer more effectively in order to help local authorities to improve their youth service.

This document presents 11 case studies which highlight examples of the tailored consultancy support local authorities have received from the NYA to help with their youth offer.