



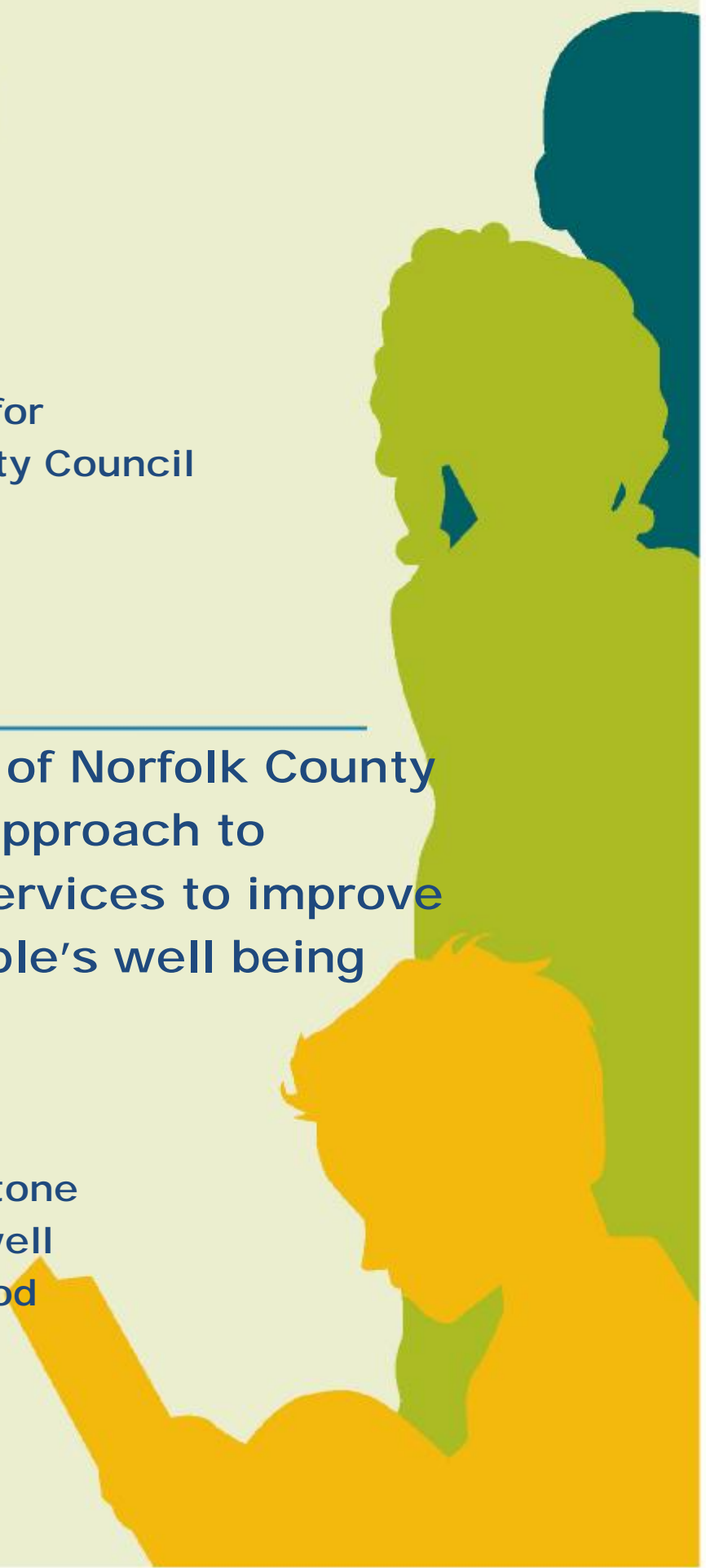
Final Report for  
Norfolk County Council

---

Evaluation of Norfolk County  
Council's approach to  
securing services to improve  
young people's well being

Claire Easton  
Gill Featherstone  
Kelly Kettlewell  
Nalia Thurgood

March 2013



Published in March 2013  
by the National Foundation for Educational Research,  
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ  
[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

© National Foundation for Educational Research 2013  
Registered Charity No. 313392

ISBN 978-1-908666-49-9

How to cite this publication:  
Easton, C.; Featherstone, G.; Kettlewell, K. and Thurgood, N. (2013).  
*Evaluation of Norfolk County Council's approach to securing services  
to improve young people's well-being*. Slough: NFER.

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction, aims and methodology</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The evaluation	2
<b>2. What approach has been adopted?</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 The structure and arrangement of YABs	3
2.2 YAB representatives	3
2.3 The set-up of the YABs	4
<b>3. Needs analysis and prioritisation of need</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Needs analysis	6
3.2 Prioritising need	9
<b>4. What services and activities have been commissioned?</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 Commissioning approaches	11
4.2 Role of youth and community provider organisations	13
4.3 Examples of commissioned services and activities	14
<b>5. Multi-agency involvement</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 Which agencies are involved?	15
5.2 Examples of good multi-agency working	15
5.3 Areas of difficulty	17
5.4 What will help facilitate agency engagement and buy-in?	18
<b>6. How are young people involved?</b>	<b>19</b>
6.1 Engagement of young people	19
6.2 Consultations	21
6.3 Participation and decision-making	22
6.4 Co-production	24
<b>7. Successes and Challenges</b>	<b>25</b>
7.1 Key successes	25
7.2 Key challenges	26
7.3 Ongoing and future challenges	27
<b>8. What are the plans for the future?</b>	<b>30</b>
8.1 Next steps for the YABs	30
8.2 Perceptions on sustainability	31
8.3 Monitoring and evaluation	32
<b>9. Advice to others</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>10. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix A: Youth Advisory Boards' Terms of Reference</b>	<b>38</b>



# Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank colleagues in Norfolk County Council for their support of this research. Our thanks go to the research participants for taking the time to talk to our researchers. Their insights have been invaluable and have made this report possible. Finally, we would like to thank Rachel Trout for her excellent project administration and help in setting up the field arrangements; and to Sally Bradshaw for her assistance in collecting the data.

# 1. Introduction, aims and methodology

## 1.1 Introduction

Across England, the youth sector is evolving significantly due to ongoing economic and social changes. Funding has been cut from local authority (LA) youth budgets (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) while the Government has set out a new vision for the future of youth services (HM Government, 2011). Together these factors have led to large-scale changes to LA youth services across the country.

The government has proposed that local authorities should take a new approach to youth services based on local partnerships, which they believe will provide young people with the opportunities and support they require. This approach means that LAs are encouraged to draw on local community resources and partnerships to deliver the appropriate support to young people. Significantly, there remains a statutory duty on LAs to secure the provision of sufficient leisure-time activities, including youth work for young people's wellbeing, as outlined in 'Positive for Youth' (HM Government, 2011).

This new approach places a greater focus on *efficient* and *effective* local commissioning as a way of maximising the impact of the limited public spending. Norfolk County Council's response to these changes is a new model of youth services focusing on building sustainable and caring communities through local decision-making. Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) have been established across the seven localities of Norfolk to foster local partnership arrangements. YABs are expected to involve a wide range of local agencies and services and a County Council elected member. Each YAB is also supported by a qualified youth and community worker, employed by voluntary and community organisations<sup>1</sup>, who are contracted by the County Council. Central to the design of the YAB model is the involvement of young people. Norfolk County Council expect young people to have active involvement in the YAB decision-making process, particularly around setting local priorities and deciding on how funding will be spent.

YABs are responsible for ensuring young people's needs are properly identified. They are expected to do this through needs analysis and identifying local priorities. While all YABs have the same Terms of Reference (see appendix A) and core membership to ensure consistency across the county, YABs are meant to react to the needs of young people in their locality. In the first year of operation, the County Council provided each YAB with £45,000 to operate as a commissioning budget to enable them to respond to the needs of local young people.

---

<sup>1</sup> These are [MAP](#); [Momentum](#); [The Benjamin Foundation](#); [West Norfolk Consortium – Discovery Centre](#) and [YMCA Norfolk](#).

## 1.2 The evaluation

Norfolk County Council commissioned the NFER to undertake an evaluation of their new approach to securing services and activities for young people.

### Aims of the evaluation

The overarching aim of the evaluation was to ascertain whether the YABs, as part of the Youth Innovation Zone, are achieving their desired aims. The purpose of the research was to provide a process evaluation of the overall approach. While assessing impact will be important for the future, Norfolk County Council was clear that it is too early to assess change as a result of the new model.

Specifically the evaluation aimed to:

- independently engage with key stakeholders at the locality and county level to evaluate the new approach, its areas of strengths and those requiring development
- offer clear recommendations for future practice
- use the messages from the research and communicate these to Norfolk County Council to help them to further refine, develop and roll out the model in the future (where appropriate).

### Methodology

To meet the aims of the evaluation; NFER researchers undertook the following activities:

- **Observation of three YABs**, between September and December 2012, to help inform the research design more fully and the research team's understanding of how YABs work in practice
- **Two focus groups**, during December 2012. One focus group was with four adult YAB members while the other comprised 12 young people involved in the YABs
- **Sixteen telephone interviews**, between early December 2012 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013, with individual members of local YABs and strategic partners<sup>2</sup>.

Through the interviews and focus groups, NFER researchers spoke to 16 members of YABs spread across the seven localities (Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Norwich, North Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk) along with four strategic partners.

The interviews consisted of: four councillors; four district council officers; two youth and community workers; two police representatives; two provider organisations; two County Council officers; two college and school representatives; a housing representative; and a business representative.

This report draws on the findings from the research activities undertaken above to identify whether Norfolk County Council's new approach to securing services and activities for young people is meeting its aims.

---

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the report we refer to the strategic partner research participants as 'strategic interviewees'.

## 2. What approach has been adopted?

This chapter explains the new approach adopted across Norfolk, the agencies involved, who is represented on the YABs and how they became involved. We also discuss how the YABs are set-up and run.

### 2.1 The structure and arrangement of YABs

Norfolk County Council developed their new way of securing services and activities for young people following consultation with a range of agencies and professionals. While all seven YABs have the same Terms of Reference and the same core membership, it was intended that all would develop locally and organically, bringing in local members, as agreed by the group, to meet local needs. Indeed, a number of stakeholders are involved in the YABs both formally and informally.

Originally, when the YABs were established, some were aligned with pre-existing locality boards (similar to what was known as the Local Strategic Partnerships). Some interviewees felt that this undermined the agendas and objectives of each Board and instead that YABs should have specific representatives and separate meetings. This became the norm and most of those originally aligned with locality boards have since distanced themselves. One interviewee said:

*'We found that didn't work terribly well, it was just a logistical nightmare. The agendas were becoming compromised because of time and we then found that agencies were either delegating or identifying a more suitable officer in their organisation to attend the YAB.'*

Each YAB has the support of at least one Youth and Community Worker (employed by voluntary and community organisations that are contracted by Norfolk County Council to support the YABs) whose time is largely spent coordinating youth engagement in the YAB. It was intended that the work of the YABs would be strategic and that the youth and community workers provide operational support. For example, one of the key remits of the youth and community workers is to bring people and services together. The youth and community workers sit on the YAB they are supporting but are also often employed by one of the voluntary organisations. These organisations can bid for work commissioned by the YAB. This has led to some sensitivity which has needed to be addressed and this issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 on commissioning.

### 2.2 YAB representatives

The Terms of Reference, as established by Norfolk County Council, set out YAB membership requirements to ensure a balanced distribution of expertise and interests within the group. A range of agencies are involved in the YABs across the county. Most often, these include county, district and/or parish councillors and/or officers; police; health and young people (see Chapter 5 on multi-agency involvement). Across the YABs, youth and



community workers have a role in facilitating the meetings and developing youth and multi-agency engagement. Their role is also to provide information and expertise to support the YAB members when required.

Representatives are not elected to sit on YABs. Instead, they, or their organisation, were approached by the County Council to take part. The intention is that YAB representatives have a senior role within their own organisation, and therefore have the authority to act as a 'voice' for their establishment or work in a strategic position within the County. Councillors involved tend to be lead members for areas most relevant to the delivery of services for young people, such as Education, Health and Wellbeing or Children's Services.

There is some evidence that the role of YAB representative is now written into (either formally or informally) the job descriptions of some YAB members. This means that the responsibility to be involved in the YAB sits more formally within a professional role rather than staying with the individual. However this is not always the case and there is some concern over accountability where this has not happened (see Chapter 7 for further details). Overall, however, this formality is encouraging; it suggests that the YABs are becoming better established and will be embedded in local agency work. It also suggests that some individuals will 'inherit' the role, inevitably leading to some need to 'induct' them into the YAB and ensure they are given relevant information about working arrangements and group objectives in order to facilitate their full engagement.

There is evidence that in some organisations, colleagues are able to deputise for YAB members in their absence from any meetings (considered a likely scenario given the inevitable workload of individuals with strategic and/or senior roles). Managing this to ensure consistency of message and approach could be a role for the YAB chair but also a responsibility of representatives themselves. Indeed, the minutes of some early YAB meetings reflect the need to agree some clarity on how new Board members are recruited, how substitutes are agreed and how replacements are identified.

On the whole, interviewees seemed positive about their involvement and could see the possible benefits for achieving their organisation's own objectives. However, attendance has been a challenge for some YABs (reported in Chapter 5) and, in one case, an interviewee representing a business forum stated that he had taken on the role as he felt it was important that the forum was represented on the Board, but that no one else on the forum was willing to be involved. Partnership working and engagement is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

## 2.3 The set-up of the YABs

Norfolk County Council tasked YABs with developing their own working arrangements, and as such most have established and reviewed the frequency of meetings. Most YABs have settled on monthly or bi-monthly meetings, although one reports that their meetings are held '*depending on our time-scales*' and so there is no regularity to the meetings. It was clear from the YAB meeting minutes that a very thorough introduction to the aims and objectives

of the YAB approach had been conducted by the County Council Officer in the early stages of YAB development. However, the interview and observation data suggested that this activity had not been revisited recently. Although information packs are available, new members or those who have not been able to attend all meetings may benefit from having these aims revisited until YAB membership becomes more consistent.

Each YAB has an elected Chair (and deputy Chair) whose role includes, but is not limited to, chairing meetings, producing agendas and determining frequency of meetings. In some YABs, the Chair has taken a strong role for leading the group in developing objectives or a 'statement of intent'. For example, one YAB completed this through the 'Hopes and Fears activity'.

#### Example: 'Hopes and Fears'

The Chair introduced an exercise where people put their hopes, fears and expectations for the YAB on post-it notes and placed them on a flip chart. This enabled them to get a better understanding of what people wanted from the YAB. This was used to inform a future statement of intent which sat alongside the Terms of Reference.

Local Council officers tend to provide administrative support by producing minutes and following up with non-attendees. Of particular note, however, is the practice in two YABs who have their Youth and Community Worker make notes for the other YAB. This has been put in place to help share learning as well as ease the load. Each YAB also has input from a County Council Officer (more specifically, their Youth Policy and Practice Adviser) whose time is mainly dedicated to working with and supporting the YABs. This person attends most meetings and their role was explained by one interviewee as: *'a mix between allowing the local interpretation of the role of the Board and having some consistency and promoting best practice around the County.'*

Observations of meetings revealed that members were not always familiar with the 'day jobs' of other representatives and did not appear to know each other well enough to remember names. This suggests that more could be done within some meetings to regularly remind representatives about the focus of their 'day jobs'. For example, ensuring introductions take place at the start of every meeting. This is particularly important as we understand that attendance at each meeting can differ. Alternatively, YABs may want to consider offering networking or opportunities to work in sub-groups which would help members to build better rapport.

To support the commissioning of services, Norfolk County Council allocated each YAB a budget of £45,000. The intention was that the YABs would add to the commissioning budget, through local partners and that resources would be pooled or aligned. The extent to which the different YABs have secured additional funding has been variable. In one area the District Council has match-funded, in another area the District Council is putting in £20,000, while another area has aligned £200,000 of local spending on young people with the YAB.

One of the key areas of focus for the YABs was needs analysis, which in turn, could assist with commissioning decisions. In the next chapter we discuss how YABs have completed their needs-analysis and identified priorities.

## 3. Needs analysis and prioritisation of need

This section discusses the approaches YABs have taken when undertaking needs analysis and prioritising the needs of local young people. The need to undertake a thorough needs assessment at the local level is central to Norfolk County Council's key principles for commissioning, which include that it:

- should be flexible but fair and transparent
- should have full involvement of young people
- must address Youth Advisory Board Terms of Reference.

To this end, each YAB undertook a needs assessment during mid to late 2012.

Interviewees generally felt that the needs assessment had been an area of success for their YAB reporting that they had drawn on a range of information in order to make commissioning decisions. They commonly stressed their obligation to ensure that needs analysis is based on youth feedback, with one interviewee observing that *'it's really about what the youths want not what adults think the youths want.'* However the extent to which the views of young people led the process of needs analysis and prioritisation varied across YABs. This is explored in more detail throughout this chapter.

### 3.1 Needs analysis

The approach to needs assessment consisted of a multi-pronged process. For example, each YAB had used the following approaches:

- consultation with young people
- review of local data
- utilising the knowledge of YAB representatives.

#### Consultation with young people

Youth and community workers generally led consultation work with young people within each YAB. They designed online surveys,<sup>3</sup> paper-based surveys or face to face interviews and focus groups. One YAB member reported that they had carried out all of their surveys face-to-face in the style of an interview in order to engage each young person in discussion about their responses. Young people were generally consulted on their views of current provision and any gaps in provision.

---

<sup>3</sup> These surveys were often developed using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) which is an online survey development, administration and analysis website which enable users to create their own surveys, often for free.

Surveys had been distributed through drop-in sessions in a wide range of settings (such as schools, youth clubs and activity sessions) or forwarded via practitioners from a range of services. In order to collect the views of 'hard-to-reach' young people (for example, those not attending schools or accessing services) some surveys had been performed in the street with passing individuals. This would appear to be good practice in terms of securing a wider sample of responses from local young people. Another example of positive approaches to youth engagement is included opposite.

YABs had engaged varying numbers of young people in consultation. One interviewee reporting that over 200 young people have been engaged by some YABs. Interviewees also recognised the need to survey young people across all the towns within their geographical area and aimed to involve young people from a full cross-section of age groups and backgrounds. However, some did admit that it had been easier to reach secondary school-aged children and those engaged in some kind of activity or service already. There was also some confusion about the target age group for the needs assessment and the activities and services to be commissioned. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Norfolk County Council recognise that they have a role in ensuring that the needs assessment is underlined by a clear, transparent and robust consultation with young people, and YABs will need to be prepared to demonstrate how well and to what extent they have been able to achieve that. The Commissioning Plans produced by individual YABs contain varying information about needs analysis process. Norfolk County Council may consider asking YABs for more consistent and comprehensive information about this process to better understand and justify commissioning plans (further discussion on this issue is included in Chapter 8 (monitoring and evaluation)).

## Using local data

Local data had been another key feature of the needs assessment process. Norfolk County Council provided all YABs with local and County level data which included demographic information and data on, for example, youth offending, school exclusions, youth unemployment rates and substance misuse. It also provided information on youth provision that had been in existence through the previous Youth Service but had recently been decommissioned. Representatives in one YAB area explained how they had used the hard data to lead the youth consultation as follows:

### Example of engaging young people

In one YAB multiple films had been made about young people's stories and their experiences. These had then been acted out by drama students. The resulting video was to be made accessible via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a large screen at the local shopping centre. It was hoped that people will comment on the films and this will then form part of the consultation of the Youth Advisory Board. Advertising for this was to be done through leaflets, stickers (which were passed around the Board), Future Radio and other forms of press. It will be useful for the County Council to monitor the extent to which this approach has been a success and to share key messages with other YABs.

Firstly, the YAB used the local data to identify possible objectives for their funding, in the same way that policy might be developed. For example, the data might suggest a significant issue with obesity or teenage pregnancy in the local area which could be tackled through youth provision. The outcomes of this activity, or evidence, was then discussed with the young people and provided a focus for the consultation. Some focus group members were aware of this approach and felt that it would have made their own youth consultation more manageable. They explained, for example, that they had collected a wealth of data but it was difficult to analyse and identify clear themes. Had they based it on the data, they may have found clear emerging themes to focus their youth consultation. In light of this, they explained that they intended to adapt their approach in the coming year.

The YAB completing their needs analysis in this way, however, did note one caveat. Using themes identified in the data to lead the debate allowed for YAB representatives to see an opportunity to again promote the agendas of their own organisations rather than allowing the views of young people to truly lead the debate.

There was a perception that the information on local data may not have been shared across YABs consistently or that some representatives had found it inaccessible. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that some interviewees reported that the information had been slow to transpire, had not been accessible to them in electronic format or that the data had not been disaggregated at the local level. However, this information was made available in March 2012 and both district and local level data (at the YAB area level) is clearly displayed.

It is possible that YABs would benefit from data that is disaggregated even further. Focus group participants felt that the data should be presented in such a way that they are able to identify 'hotspot' areas or pockets of deprivation within their YAB area. Given this limitation, one YAB representative noted that they had also drawn upon data at the Borough level which had been collated by local councils. In particular, they collated information from their 'quality of life' surveys. Norfolk County Council may wish to make clear the extent and focus of data that they intend to issue to YABs, and indicate other possible sources of local data which YABs could themselves explore.

Other issues regarding local data were also reported. For example, interviewees felt that the information on existing local provision was not 'fit for purpose' and could be more accessible. In fact, accessing this data was an early focus of many YAB meetings which highlights its importance. Focus group participants felt that an interactive tool such as an online map or app could be useful and make this data truly accessible. The minutes of one YAB revealed that they had been mapping provision themselves using Google Maps which suggests that this might be a useful tool for a more centralised system. Another had developed a table of existing provision which they intended to send out to other organisations, who could help to identify gaps. The intention was then to upload this information online in a searchable map.

In more general terms, information that is available electronically is clearly of importance. Focus group representatives explained how the folder of hard copy paper documents provided by Norfolk County Council could have been more accessible, particularly to new members, had it been made available electronically or online. Norfolk County Council might consider holding information for YAB representatives in an online space.

### Knowledge of YAB representatives

Interviewees recognised that a number of YAB representatives already had a great depth of knowledge about local needs. In particular voluntary and community organisations and the police were highlighted as having this insight about the communities they worked with. The meeting minutes demonstrated the huge extent to which representatives contributed to discussions around local need. To this end, YAB members were asked about local need from their perspective and to share any data they collected in-house.

## 3.2 Prioritising need

Once data collection had been completed the YABs implemented a variety of strategies for prioritising need. For example, one YAB very much focused on ensuring young people led on this stage of analysis. In this YAB, the Youth and Community Worker had trained a group of young people in needs analysis and commissioning. This enabled the young people to review the data and present the findings of the needs analysis to their co-members. The results of any youth consultation took precedence when prioritising need, with the top five priorities drawn from the young people survey results. As a caveat to this approach, it should be acknowledged that meeting minutes reveal some discussion amongst the YAB representatives about the need for priorities to be. One member explained:

*'...based on the whole evidence base, including data that had already been collated as part of the process. [One representative] had some unease with the commissioning process if it was based only on consultation responses as presented today. Consultation should test out with young people their views upon the issues as identified by the needs profile [identified by local data].'*

Indeed, some interviewees strongly observed a need for youth consultation data to lead the prioritisation process (in the same way that their views had led the needs analysis process in most YABs). A minority questioned the extent to which young people can fully understand local need and that of other people. Perhaps for this reason, other YABs allowed adult representatives to take stronger control of the process, with young people involved and represented in the ensuing discussions. Generally, interviewees reported the value of detailed reports drawing together the results of the needs analysis and presented this to the Board followed by a full discussion. During these discussions, YAB members had to deal with a number of competing priorities and employed various strategies and systems for dealing with this. For example, one YAB scored needs as 'Top priority', 'High priority' or 'Not needing attention now', while another held an open vote.

In an example of good practice, one YAB had removed a priority from their local YAB list by recognising that it was, in fact, a County-wide issue. This related to access to affordable local transport. This was then fed-back to the County Council and now young people across the County receive a third off local transport. This is also a good example of how YABs can act as 'lobbyists' on issues they cannot afford to fund from the allocated budget but feel are priority needs for young people (this was the observation of the YAB itself and is made reference to in their meeting minutes).

The following chapter examines the commissioning process and the decisions made as a result of the needs assessment discussed above.

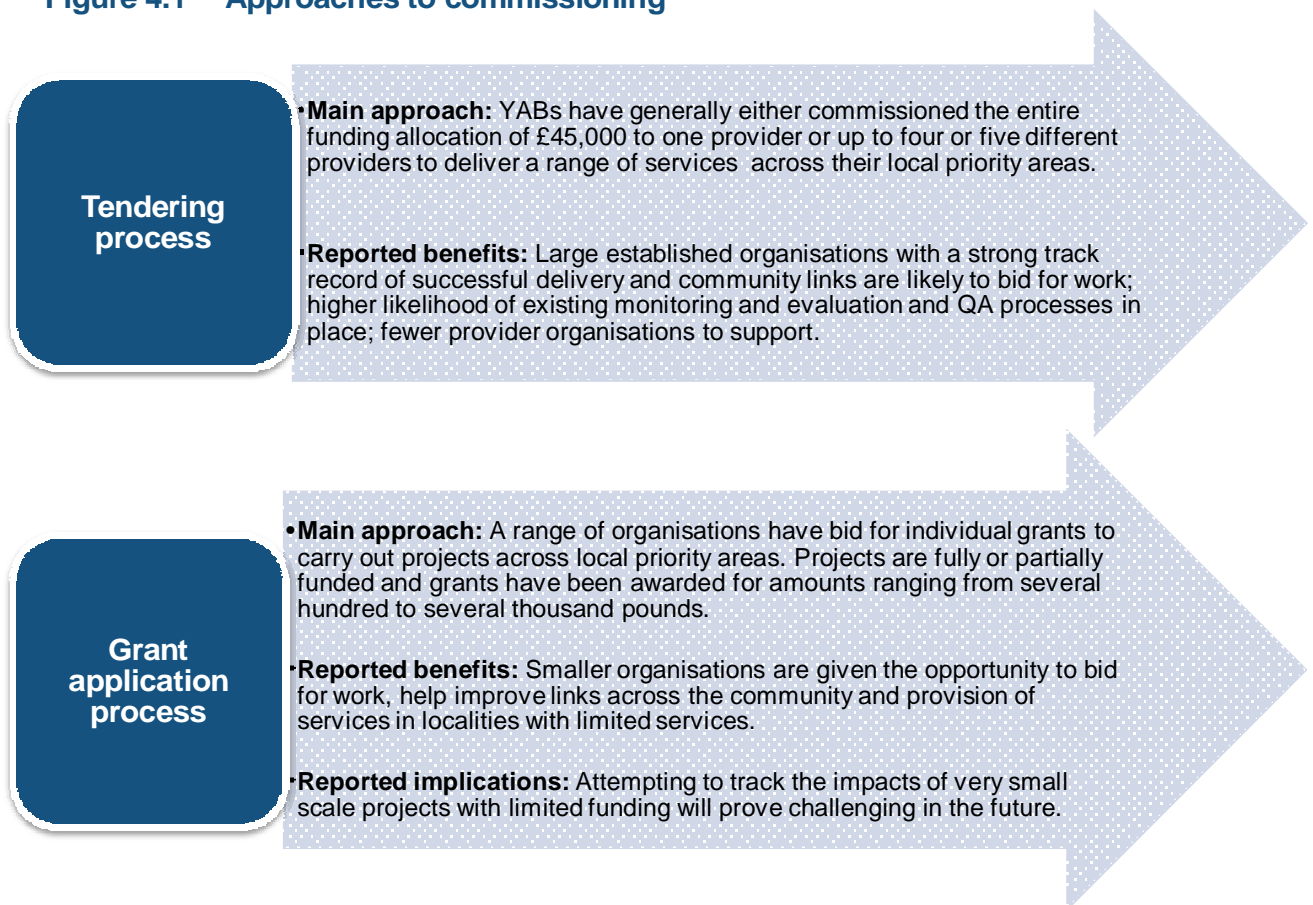
## 4. What services and activities have been commissioned?

This chapter explores the approaches YABs have taken to commissioning services and activities, and the role of youth and community providers. It includes some case-study examples of the services commissioned to date.

### 4.1 Commissioning approaches

Following the needs assessment process and prioritisation of services, YABs produced commissioning specification documents. Across all YABs, this role has mainly been undertaken by the youth and community provider organisations, in conjunction with the chair of the YAB and a limited number of relevant YAB members. Due to the legal nature of the specification documents, this exercise was limited to staff with the relevant expertise. As shown in Figure 4.1, the main approach to commissioning services has followed a tendering process, and to a lesser degree, YABs have adopted a grants application approach. These differences in approach have generally occurred as a result of local historic ways of working.

**Figure 4.1 Approaches to commissioning**





For both of these approaches, organisations and youth and community groups were made aware of the commissioning process and invited to tender. Interviewees reported using historic ways of working to contact known organisations, for example by using existing databases and known contacts. Therefore, the majority of organisations that subsequently tendered to deliver services were already known to some YAB members and many had previously delivered youth provision on behalf of the County Council. The benefits of working with known organisations included their existing awareness of local community needs, meaning they were well placed to deliver services.

Following the receipt of proposals, all YAB members were involved in appraising bids and there was a consensus amongst interviewees that this process was extremely successful. One interviewee felt that the skills of the YAB members were well suited to carrying out this task:

*'There is a good breadth of understanding about youth provision on the YAB and what represents value for money, so everyone had the skills to do this.'*

In particular, young people were said to have played a key role in helping to assess the proposals and provided valuable input in this area. The support given to young people to assist them in this task varied. Some YABs provided training activities and residential weekends to up-skill young people and to prepare them for the commissioning process, whilst other young people received no training. The involvement of young people is further explored in Chapter 6.

Proposals submitted to the YABs were appraised against pre-defined criteria. These included some of the following:

- the extent to which priority areas were met
- value for money
- the number of young people expected to access services
- access to services from all young people across YAB areas, particularly in YABs where rurality posed challenges.

In a minority of cases, due to the lack of applications received or where applications were deemed not to be fit for purpose, some YABs subsequently re-tendered for new providers. A strategic interviewee reported that where this had occurred, it was a good example of the robust approach YABs were taking to commissioning services and establishing high quality provision. Some interviewees reflected that while this resulted in delays to the commissioning process, the benefits of more robust and relevant bids were welcomed. In YAB district areas where a lack of applications were received from certain localities, some YABs granted funding to providers on the condition that funding was also allocated to provision for young people in these localities and that outreach work was undertaken to ensure smaller communities also benefitted.

## 4.2 Role of youth and community provider organisations

Youth and community provider organisations, contracted to support each YAB, played a key role throughout the commissioning process. All interviewees commented on their wealth of experience in youth provision, their knowledge of the YAB areas and their positive relationships with young people and the community. One interviewee, highlighting this point, said youth and community providers *'care more about the work they are delivering than the money, they are bringing in more value for money than they are being paid'*. A youth and community worker explained that in addition to setting up youth forums, the youth and community provider organisation was also trying to source a mini-bus that a number of services will have access to. This is likely to have a greater benefit to young people as other services, not just those commissioned by the YAB, will be able to access this valuable resource.

Despite agreement amongst interviewees about youth and community providers' positive contribution, some interviewees reported receiving conflicting messages about whether or not youth and community providers supporting YABs through youth and community workers were allowed to tender to deliver YAB-commissioned services. One interviewee reported being initially told by the County Council that their youth and community provider organisation could tender to deliver services, but were later told that the youth and community provider could not be commissioned to deliver services due to a conflict of interest. Across other YABs, youth and community provider organisations were involved in delivering services and therefore were omitted from involvement in the tendering process. This included youth and community providers not being involved in some stages of drawing up the specification document and being omitted from parts of YAB meetings when they were making commissioning decisions.

There were also instances where youth and community providers expressed a wish to bid on services and were therefore omitted from the tendering process, but later changed their minds and decided not to bid. This resulted in the youth and community worker from the organisation being left out of a large part of the process. One interviewee explained some of the mixed messages they felt they had received:

*'There's no direct criticism of the County Council or the [youth and community] provider but when you're first ever talking about the YAB structures and going to different voluntary sector groups and who was wanting to be the [youth and community] provider, would that mean that they wouldn't be able to bid for any other funding? It was very clearly communicated to them that they could do both and then it was forgotten about.'*

Interviewees were concerned that where youth and community provider organisations were bidding for work and therefore not involved in some stages of the commissioning process, their role was subsequently being undertaken by other YAB members. This resulted in a scenario where the skills and expertise of youth and community workers were not being used during the commissioning process. In addition, it was felt that youth and community workers had been tasked to deliver work that was subsequently being carried out by other YAB members, adding to increased resource and workload pressures for YAB members.

Interviewees welcomed further clarity on the role of youth and community workers and their responsibilities.

### 4.3 Examples of commissioned services and activities

All the YABs had either already commissioned services or were in the process of commissioning, at the time the research was undertaken, although in some cases activities had not yet started. A range of services have been commissioned, which relate to the priority areas across each YAB, as outlined in Chapter 2. These included skate parks, coaching sessions, music activities and art sessions. Below are three examples of some of these commissioned services and activities.

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<b>Priority area:</b> Young people had been reported for anti-social behaviour as a result of drag racing and other related activities involving cars in public car parks. The YAB identified a need for young people to have access to spaces and information about cars.</li><li>•<b>Provision:</b> Two motor projects were commissioned to teach young people about car maintenance. Within one area, the YAB hoped to engage with local garages and a motoring community group to work with young people to develop their motoring skills.</li><li>•<b>Outcomes:</b> A reduction in the level of anti-social behaviour and provision of information skills and experience for young people about car maintenance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<b>Priority area:</b> A need was identified to provide young people with information about employment, careers and education.</li><li>•<b>Provision:</b> Evening drop-in advice sessions also offering structured activities such as cookery and craft and other activities, such as board games and film nights. Young people will also have the opportunity to get involved in volunteering activities.</li><li>•<b>Outcomes:</b> Provision of employment, careers and education information, improved sign-posting and promotion of services, reduction in antisocial behaviour and improvement in young peoples' health.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<b>Priority area:</b> A combination of health data and focus groups with young people identified gaps in provision as a result of the cessation of Connexions.</li><li>•<b>Provision:</b> A drop-in venue where young people can receive advice about sexual health, careers and housing.</li><li>•<b>Outcomes:</b> Information sexual health, careers and housing information.</li></ul>

These examples show the range of commissioned activities which reflect some of the priorities of YABs. Interviewees were content with the type of activities commissioned but added a note of caution, stating that once activities and services had started, they would have a better idea of how effective the commissioning process has been. There was also evidence that agencies within YABs were making commissioning decisions and sharing practice. This was to both avoid duplication of provision and to feed into other service development thus ensuring current provision remained accessible to young people when needed.

## 5. Multi-agency involvement

This chapter discusses multi-agency engagement in the YABs. We reflect on which agencies are involved; provide examples of good practice; reported areas of difficulty and facilitating factors.

Alongside youth engagement, from the outset, Norfolk County Council perceived multi-agency involvement in the new overall approach as a key factor to support the model's success. While the County Council see multi-agency engagement as an evolving journey, strategic interviewees reported being pleased with the level of engagement demonstrated by the YABs to date. On the whole, all interviewees reported that multi-agency engagement was good given that it is early days. But, this is an area they want to develop in the future. There was a sense that as relationships and trust develops, co-commissioning will become more common place (indeed, some early examples of co-commissioning are given below). Interviewees felt that YABs provide a '*level playing field*' that facilitates multi-agency working, particularly between some core services, the community and young people.

### 5.1 Which agencies are involved?

As discussed in Chapter 2, a wide range of local agencies and services had representatives on the YAB, including local councils, police, housing, health, business and the education sector.

Across the YABs there seemed to be particularly good police and council engagement. Also engaged, but reported as being to a lesser extent, were the health, business and education sectors. Where education representatives were engaged, these included primary and secondary school colleagues and colleges. Within one YAB, a former learning and skills council representative also attended meetings.

### 5.2 Examples of good multi-agency working

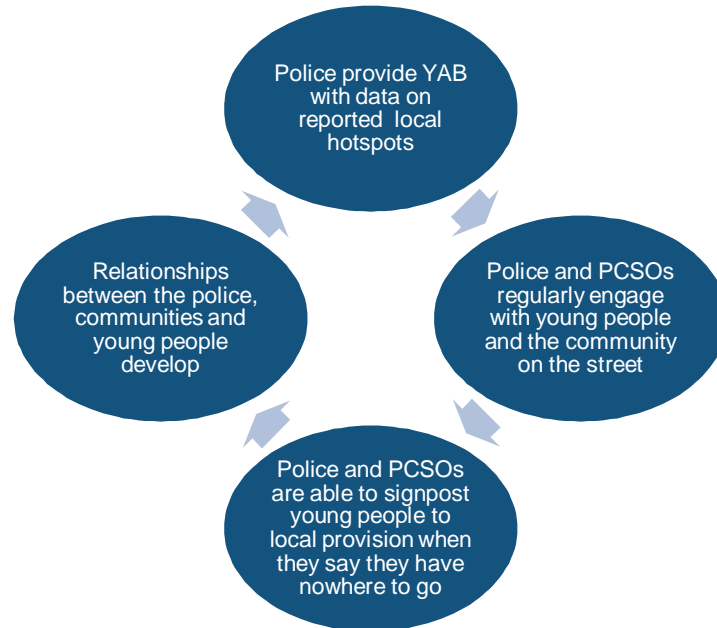
As discussed in Chapter 3, multi-agency engagement has been evident from the outset. Interviewees talked about agency representatives sharing local data and evidence to support YABs to better understand and meet young people's needs.

When YABs were identifying local priorities, having representatives from different agencies was seen to have a number of key benefits in helping YABs meet their aims.

Collective local information from multi-agency members was used to better inform commissioning decisions. Within one YAB, a local provider submitted a tender to introduce pop-up cafes for young people. Pop-up cafes had been suggested as a way of giving young people somewhere social to go with friends but also access to information and advice. YAB members were able to support the local provider in identifying which towns or villages most needed this service, thus ensuring that a wider range of young people's needs were being

addressed. Furthermore, where frontline workers regularly engaged with the community and young people, they were passing on information about the YABs' locally commissioned services and provision (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1**



Outside of the YAB meetings, YAB members are engaging with other local boards and community forums. This illustrates how some YABs were undertaking their broader remit of recognising needs and suggesting changes as opposed to focussing on making commissioning decisions. Two YAB interviewees spoke about working with local Safer Neighbourhood Boards to see how, collectively, they could better meet the needs of the community and young people. Another YAB offered feedback to a local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about young people's health needs. Some interviewees mentioned that some agencies and community bodies need educating about the valuable and sensible contribution young people make to local decision making. The YABs are seen as a way of facilitating this.

Being involved in the YABs, interviewees reported, is a valuable way of engaging with young people and raising the profile of young people in their services. Some district council officers particularly welcomed this, as their core work tends to be working with the community, of which, young people are a small part. Interviewees talked about how working

#### **Example: YABs supporting local service development**

The health representative explained how young people were not accessing sexual health information available at local General Practitioner (GP) surgeries due to unsuitable appointment times during the school day and/or young people feeling uncomfortable in the doctor's surgery waiting rooms. As a result of the feedback received through the YAB, some local GP surgeries have been able to make small changes to help better engage young people. It is hoped that young people will be able to access the information they want and need and it has also helped ensure provision is not duplicated.

with the young people helped them to develop their own skills and they expressed making a commitment to further engaging young people in consultations in the future.

### 5.3 Areas of difficulty

Multi-agency engagement was slow to get started but seems to be developing well. Interviewees raised the issue of patchy engagement and attendance at YAB meetings as an ongoing challenge.

The research team observed examples of some agencies not engaging in key YAB meetings, for example, which prevented some processes from moving forward. This was

*'I think it's very, very difficult to keep members engaged'.*

further supported by the interview and focus group data.

While it can be difficult for YAB members to commit the time and goodwill to participate in meetings, there was a perception that some representatives and sectors were unwilling to engage or commit at all. Some agencies were overcoming this challenge by ensuring their representative has a deputy. Some YABs were also planning on tackling this issue by putting procedures in place (see Chapter 2).

There appeared to be greatest concern that the education sector was not fully engaged in some YABs. Interviewees felt that one of the core services that have access to their target cohort of young people, and who could offer invaluable insights, was not participating.

Meeting times and locations have been moved to accommodate the school day to help school leaders or teachers (and young people) attend

meetings. Even where education colleagues were engaged, some interviewees were concerned, about the extent to which local school leaders are aware of the needs of other schools' pupils needs. Furthermore, while headteacher forums exist to support mainstream school networking, which could then be shared with the YABs, there is also concern about whether academies will choose to engage in YAB work in the future.

*'You feel like you are missing bits of the jigsaw and something might come up as an issue, you think "What is education's perspective on this?"'*

Difficulties also related to travel and geography. Within some YAB areas, members had very long journeys to attend meetings (up to two hours each way). While for some, this did not prevent them from attending meetings, for others, this is an obvious barrier. YABs are mindful of this issue when setting up meetings and rotate the venues to ensure the same people do not always have the furthest to travel. However, the County Council and/or YABs may want to look at investing in online meeting software (such as Skype or Go To Meeting) to enable adult and young people representatives to either dial into a meeting via phone or video-conferencing. This may facilitate continued engagement.

While interviewees discussed the good work that is happening between agencies, and that the new overall approach provided opportunities for multi-agency working, sometimes the practicalities made it difficult. Interviewees agreed that agency representation was important for the approach to succeed.

## 5.4 What will help facilitate agency engagement and buy-in?

To support multi-agency (and young people) engagement, interviewees suggested some tips. These included:

- At the start of every YAB meeting, go round the room asking everyone to give introductions (their name and the agency they represent). For members who are either new to the meeting, or where the role is shared, this will help to ensure everyone knows each other and can develop relationships and joint working. Furthermore, it is essential that members are encouraged to avoid using agency specific jargon throughout discussions (see case study example: 'In a nutshell').
- Agency representatives should provide feedback to their colleagues about YAB developments. This will help raise the profile of the YABs within agencies and communities; it will also help embed this way of working and perhaps support joint commissioning. Some interviewees talked about the need to embed YAB representation in local service plans in the future.
- Disseminating success: Interviewees mentioned that the community and young people need to start seeing the impact that YABs are having on change within the County. They felt that once people saw the value of the YABs' decisions they would be more willing to engage; indeed they would also know where to take ideas and/or concerns.

### Example: In a nutshell

This is an activity to help all Board members understand each member's role outside the YAB and enable young people in future to understand the composition of the Board. Board members were asked to use 140 Characters (in similar fashion to a 'tweet') to describe their day job. These were then 'tweeted' from the YAB tweet site and brought to the next meeting.

## 6. How are young people involved?

This chapter will discuss the extent of young people's involvement in Norfolk's new approach to commissioning services and activities to meet the needs of young people to date, what has worked well and where further development is needed.

### 6.1 Engagement of young people

Both adult YAB members and young people reported a high level of engagement and involvement of young people across all YABs. Youth and community workers from provider organisations have primarily been responsible for consulting with and ensuring young people's participation. The most common mechanisms for engaging young people with the YABs has been through existing youth and community groups, schools and youth parliaments. In addition to their YAB involvement, youth and community workers were engaged in a range of activities with young people, therefore relationships with young people were already very well established. One youth and community worker explained: *'It's not just about the YAB – [the provider organisation] do wider things which means they keep [young people] engaged'*.

The YABs' Terms of Reference states the target age for provision of youth services and activities is aimed at 11-25 year olds. However, different YABs have targeted and engaged with a variety of young people. Some had primarily engaged young people aged 11-16 or 11-18, whilst others had focussed on the 14-19 age group. Some YABs were trying to engage hard to reach groups, while others had not, under the understanding that there were existing strategies for targeted support aimed at hard to reach and vulnerable groups. The range of approaches to targeting provision suggests that further clarity on the age group and target population of young people is required.

Young people's attendance at YABs meetings has been good and numbers attending range from one to several young people across different YABs. In order to provide all young people with the opportunity to get involved in YAB meetings, young peoples' attendance has mostly been rotated. This helped ensure young people were able to keep engaged but that it was not over burdensome. Young people felt this was a good idea and worked well, as long as key points from meetings continued to be fed back to all young people who were unable to attend. YAB meetings are held late in the afternoon to accommodate as many members as possible, particularly young people and school representatives.

#### Representativeness of young people

YABs are committed to trying to achieve representation across the groups of young people that have been engaged, but interviewees conceded the challenges associated with this and acknowledged it was 'work in progress'. Both adults and young people explained that the majority of the young people engaged in the YAB were typically very articulate and eloquent and did not always represent the young people that some of the priority areas were targeting. A YAB councillor explained that:



*'the young people that have already contributed to the process, they're either already on the youth parliament; they're the ones that are confident and relatively skilled up in working on and making decisions'.*

Young people also shared this view:

*[YABs] 'are talking to people in school councils, youth clubs and saying "do you want to get involved?" But actually, if you're looking at people who are going to be on the school council, they are not going to be the people who maybe have the issues that we're tackling and they are the people who need to be getting involved.'*

In order to tackle this issue and achieve wider representation, YABs were engaged in ongoing work to improve community links and actively engage young people in areas outside of the usual forums. Youth and community provider organisations and police representatives were reported to be well placed to help support this work, due to their community links. Some interviewees also hoped schools will have a more active role in recruiting young people. The example below outlines the strategies used by one of the YABs to engage wider groups of young people and raise awareness of the YABs work.

#### Strategy to engage a wider range of young people

The provider organisation which supports the YAB has produced a 'three-step' A4 information sheet explaining how young people can get involved in the YAB, for example through the YAB's Facebook page, surveys, youth clubs, by participating in focus groups or attending YAB meetings. The leaflet has been given to police officers and PCSOs, in order to further engage and reach a wider cross-section of young people.

Interviewees felt that within their YAB district areas, young people offered good geographical representation. Strategies to ensure representation, particularly across large rural areas, have included:

- setting up satellite youth advisory group meetings with young people within YAB districts, in order to feedback views across the whole district
- youth and community provider organisations using a range of forums and avenues to engage young people, including attending small youth and community groups
- maximising the existing community links of all agencies on the YAB, such as the police and housing association.

#### Raising awareness of YABs

Interviewees agreed that raising awareness of the YABs amongst young people was ongoing. It was acknowledged that awareness of the YABs was mainly limited to young people that: had taken part in consultations; had been involved in commissioning work (further discussed below); or those who were actively involved in attending YAB meetings. Some young people felt that although awareness amongst their peers was low, the YABs were still very new and it was therefore too early to expect wider knowledge of their work.

However, others felt that despite this, priority should be given to further publicising the work of the YABs. This is reflected by the following comment by one young person:

*'No one at my school knows about [the YAB]. I found out through where I live. I tell people that I'm on the YAB and they have confused faces. That's quite bad because if it's meant to be for young people's views then there's not actually many young people that know about it.'*

Young people highlighted a number of suggestions for raising awareness of the YABs, such as through:

- youth and community groups
- school assemblies
- an online resource
- through workshops and district and county-wide events.

Adult YAB members agreed with these suggested approaches and particularly felt that an online resource or database to inform young people about local provision would help to both raise awareness and engage more young people (and multi-agency representatives and the community). In one YAB, the provider organisation had set aside £10,000 of their allocated funding to raise awareness of the YABs work over the next year. Strategic interviewees reported that the County Council is currently exploring different strategies to raise awareness of the YABs.

## 6.2 Consultations

Young people across Norfolk have been consulted about their needs and this has formed a fundamental part of the YABs' needs assessment processes. Adult YAB members were very positive about the involvement of young people and agreed that their input into the consultation process has been critical to the commissioning process. One interviewee explained that young people were central to this process and often offered a unique insight that adults could not, further adding that *'something very small to adults might actually be key to young people'*.

The number of young people involved in the consultation exercises varied across YABs and interviewees reported consulting between 30 and 500 young people. Typically, young people were asked about their views on the data collected by YABs around priority areas. Young people were also invited to share their views on their own areas of concern, where these differed from those identified by the YABs. Consultations took place through surveys, workshops and focus group meetings. Although young people reported that the consultation exercise was not necessarily representative of the views of all young people across Norfolk, some felt that overall the exercise gave young people an opportunity to share their opinions, as reported by the young person below:

*'Before we started up the YABs our coordinators did a big survey of [the district] and got an idea of ... what the young people's needs were. They did get it from a large source, young people didn't have to get involved, they just had to give their opinions, so in that way we are helping to meet young people's needs.'*

One strategic interviewee had doubts about the huge variation in the numbers of consultations that took place and felt that in some cases, commissioning decisions had been based on 30 young people, whilst in others decisions were based on 350 young people. It was felt that across some YABs a better approach to consultation was needed, illustrated by the comment below:

*'With demographics and looking at each of the districts, it's questionable whether 30 young people warrant decision-making, unless this was based on other factors. Things like this happen because the 30 young people were easy to reach. In one of the districts, a particular patch of area with high deprivation was completely missed in consultation. I'm not sure the YABs were tooled up enough to enable them to go out and do that involvement work.'*

### 6.3 Participation and decision-making

Despite concerns around some of the consultation approaches, there was a consensus that the young people involved in participating and decision-making were actively engaged with, and participated in, various aspects of decision-making. This has primarily been achieved through young people's role in the commissioning process.

Young people have enjoyed being part of the YAB, for example some felt it gave them a sense of community, while others said that having the ability to make decisions about how money should be spent, made them feel empowered. As mentioned in Chapter 4, some young people had received training to equip them for the commissioning process, which involved residential activity weekends and sessions at youth clubs. The example below shows some of the ways in which young people participated and contributed to decision-making.

A young person in one YAB explained how useful the commissioning process had been. During the residential activity, the bids were handed out to different groups of young people, who assessed them based on a set of pre-defined criteria, before presenting their decisions at a YAB meeting. One young person said:

*'We went through them for quite a while and decided whether we wanted to give them the full [funding] amount, or part of it. We fed back to each other to make sure we all agreed with the decisions.'*

All young people agreed that it was important for everybody involved in the YABs to be part of the decision-making process, if they wanted to be. They felt that the adult YAB members listened '*quite strongly*' to them during the commissioning process and they were asked for their views on each bid that was received. While many young people said that they felt

listened to by adult YAB members, others did not feel that they had said anything that needed to be listened to. It was felt that once services and activities were up and running, they would have a better idea about whether provision matched their needs and to what extent their views would then be listened to.

Some of the young people interviewed felt that they had truly participated in their YABs, by contributing to meetings and participating in the commissioning process. They said they were confident about speaking out if they disagreed with decisions taken by the rest of the YAB. However, others reported that if they had concerns, they only felt they could raise this at meetings 'a bit' and felt that the extent to which they could, was dependent on the issues raised. Some felt that their contributions had been more passive than participative, highlighted by the following comment from one young person.

*'We give our views [in meetings] on ideas that are proposed to us, we don't really put forward ideas so much.'*

**Young person**

This suggests that the YABs could better utilise the knowledge, advice and ideas of its young people representatives in the future. Young people themselves should try and feel confident to speak in meetings and realise that adults want to hear and value their views.

Young people agreed that there should always be a minimum of at least two young people at each YAB meeting, to ensure that young people were confident about speaking up. This is particularly important when discussing issues they disagreed with, to ensure they did not feel intimidated and were truly participating during meetings. Part of the role of youth and community workers is to support young people in sharing their views. While young people and adult interviewees felt that this was taking place, one strategic interviewee commented that a useful exercise for YABs should include reflections on what participation looks like, to ensure this was truly happening. Figure 6.1, based on Hart's ladder of participation, shows positive evidence of participation by young people across the YABs.

**Figure 6.1 Young people’s participation across YAB**

While there is no evidence of participation at this level yet, it is anticipated that YABs will move towards this rung of the ladder after services and activities have been established.

Groups of young people have made presentations on their commissioning decisions to other YAB members, as part of the decision-making process. Where there have been disagreements within YABs about which provider to award work - to, young people’s decisions have been given priority.

The commissioning process has been adult initiated but young people have received support to carry out commissioning work and have been involved in making decisions about tender applications.

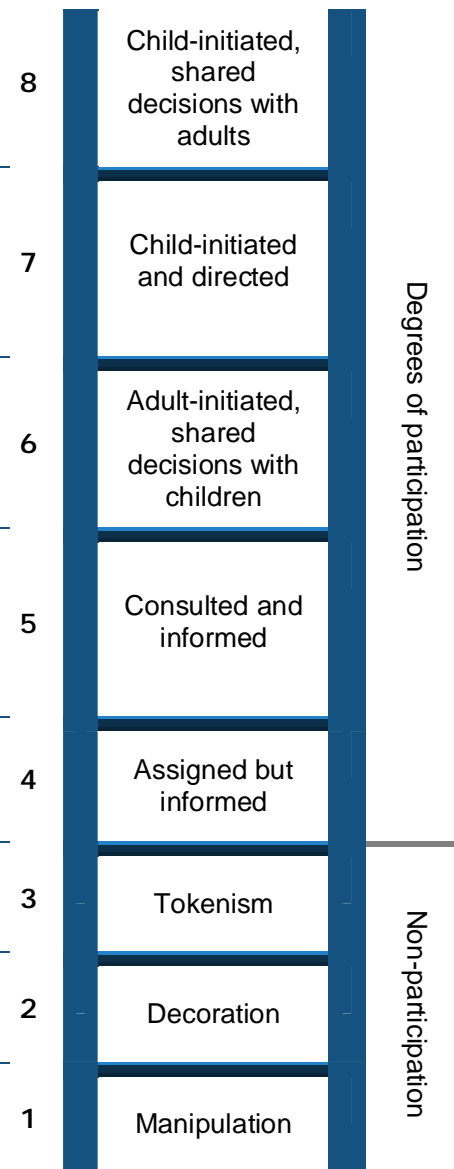
Large numbers of young people have been consulted as part of needs assessment work to define priority areas for commissioning. Their contributions have fed into commissioning decisions and they are informed of consultation outcomes.

Young people are invited to join the YABs and have been informed of its purpose. They also feel ownership of their role.

There was no evidence of tokenism.

There was no evidence of decoration.

There was no evidence of manipulation.



## 6.4 Co-production

Co-production tends to refer to service users actively contributing to services design often in collaboration with those who tend to be service deliverers. There was widespread agreement that YABs were making good progress towards developing co-production with young people and sharing ideas and knowledge. However, interviewees were unanimous in agreeing that robust co-production was not expected after a year. Youth and community workers had started valuable work towards facilitating co-production and the way forward was said to be through continued engagement and encouraging young people to fully participate. An interviewee in one YAB explained that they were currently working towards co-production through the development of intergenerational work between young people and older people by encouraging young people to get involved in volunteering.

## 7. Successes and Challenges

This chapter discusses interviewees' views on the key successes of Norfolk County Council's new approach to date and what they believe have been the main challenges experienced so far. We also discuss what interviewees perceive the key challenges to be in the future.

### 7.1 Key successes

This section focuses on interviewees' views on the key successes of the new approach to date and what they believe has helped facilitate these. The main two successes interviewees noted were the engagement of young people in the work of the YAB and multi-agency working.

#### Youth engagement

Nearly all interviewees felt that the greatest success of the YABs so far has been the extent to which they had been able to engage young people. In some instances interviewees explained that the success related directly to engaging young people as active members of the Board and them being involved in decision-making. However interviewees also referred to the extent to which they had listened to the views of young people in the wider community when undertaking their needs analysis. One interviewee commented *'it is probably one of the few groups that I have been to that there has been as much young people involvement as there has.'*

Where interviewees spoke about the involvement of young people on the YABs directly, they were particularly impressed with the young peoples' abilities to make responsible funding and commissioning decisions. One interviewee commented: *'What I have learnt is that I have met some very perceptive young people in that age range that are quite capable of making astute business decisions.'* Another interviewee explained that in the past District Council members may not have seen the value of gaining young people's views because they do not vote. However, the interviewees' involvement in the YAB had changed their view on this and they stated that they would now do consultation and engagement work with young people in the future.

Interviewees explained that the youth and community workers were central to the success of engaging young people. YAB members felt that the workers' enthusiasm and hard work were particularly important and this ensured young people remained engaged with the YAB. Furthermore, they had an active role in engaging the wider community of young people than those who were directly involved in the YAB.

## Multi-agency working

Some YAB members were particularly proud of the way in which the YABs had brought different partners around the table to discuss the needs of young people. Interviewees felt that the members of the YABs were more diverse than other young people's groups, particularly with the involvement of businesses, for example. Interviewees explained that this diversity in membership had helped them to share experience and practice (see Chapter 5 for examples of multi-agency working).

YAB members also felt that generally they were working together effectively. They felt that one of the successes was the amount they had achieved despite the large size and diversity within the groups. One interviewee noted that the business planning in particular had been a success, commenting '*for [YABs] to come together as a group that big and that diverse to develop a business plan is a real achievement*'. Although not explicitly stated, the level of commitment to the approach was apparent. Agencies demonstrated this through their willingness to share local data, information and genuinely work together to provide better services for young people.

## 7.2 Key challenges

Within this section we explore the perceived key barriers and challenges that interviewees have experienced during the YABs' first year of operation. We discuss the developmental challenges experienced by interviewees in the set up and early stages of the YABs. We then report the ongoing challenges interviewees are experiencing currently and that they envisage experiencing in the future.

### Developmental challenges

As with any new approach, YAB members experienced a number of challenges in the early stages of development. Overall it appears that the main developmental challenge that YAB members experienced related to a lack of understanding or clarity around the role and remit of the YAB.

Some YAB members stated that they initially found it difficult to understand the remit of the YAB and what their roles and responsibilities were. This may have been a result of the new approach being designed as a locally-led initiative which meant that, from the outset, Norfolk County Council wanted to avoid directing the YABs to any great extent or stipulating how they should be working. It may therefore be the case that this uncertainty was a by-product of introducing a new and unfamiliar system. As such, the County Council should be aware of this potential for uncertainty, as this may extend to the wider community and other statutory bodies working with YABs in the coming years. Norfolk County Council provided information to YABs (such as local needs assessment data and Terms of Reference) and offered support through the Youth Policy and Practice Adviser. While some of the written materials were produced as the YABs were developing, it seems that some of this information has not filtered through to new members. There may be a role for YAB chairs and youth and

community workers to ensure that they regularly revisit the aims and purpose of the approach and share the Terms of Reference when new members join YAB meetings.

Interviewees also explained that the wide range of organisations represented on the YAB meant that individual members initially had very different expectations of what they felt the YAB was meant to deliver or achieve. These different expectations meant that it was sometimes difficult to create synergy across all members at the outset. However, in the long-term this diversity has been seen as one of the successes of the boards (see section 4.1). In certain cases, a strong lead from the Chair early on has helped to address these differences. The result of these early challenges has been that some YAB members felt that they had a much slower start than they had hoped. However, interviewees acknowledged that these challenges in the early stages were to be expected due to the approach being innovative and new. They also felt that most of these challenges had been worked through and overcome.

*'We've had a helter-skelter year, but we're much better positioned. A lot of the challenges we've faced were resolved.'*

### 7.3 Ongoing and future challenges

While progress has been made, some YAB members continued to feel that one of the ongoing challenges has been **engaging partners** in the meetings and getting different agencies around the table. YAB members felt that some agencies were more difficult to engage with than others. While a lot of these engagement issues were developmental and have been overcome, interviewees felt that schools and health partners were not engaging as much as other agencies. In a few instances, business members have also not engaged as consistently as other agencies. One business member explained that in one case, this had been due to the timing of meetings rather than a lack of interest in the YAB. However, the interviewee also felt that in order to get businesses to engage to a greater extent with the process, YABs needed to have a much sharper and more clearly defined focus.

Both strategic partners and YAB members were concerned about **engaging communities**. This related to helping communities to understand the role of the YAB and manage their expectations. While some District and Parish Councillors are engaged in the YAB, community engagement across the areas appears to need development. A small number of interviewees were concerned that the wider community may expect the YABs to deliver what the original Youth Service delivered prior to budget cuts and these expectations needed to be managed from the outset. There was also a perception that communities were not necessarily aware of the work of the YABs.

Interviewees mentioned **funding** as an ongoing challenge in a number of different contexts. These were:

- equality of funding
- value for money
- practicalities of funding arrangements
- uncertainty over future funding



Some interviewees felt there were **different funding needs in different areas**, for example between rural and urban areas. Interviewees from both urban and rurally-based YABs explained that activities and services were more expensive to provide in rural locations due to the lower numbers of young people in localities, higher travel costs and a lack of easily accessible facilities. Interviewees raised this issue in relation to both commissioning services within a YAB area (having both urban and rural areas in a YAB) and in the context of whether funding from the LA should be divided equally between the YABs. Others felt the specific needs of an area should be assessed before funding is allocated. One young person explained: *'I think it might be an idea to look at the extent of the needs in each area and then allocate [funding] that way, rather than making it equal each way.'* This view was shared by adult members as well.

Given the current situation, in which most YABs have not yet started to source funding themselves or feed into established local services, some interviewees questioned whether the approach currently offered the best **value for money**. Interviewees questioned whether the amount of money currently available for funding local activities and services through the County Council justified the large amount of resources spent on the YABs overall, including taking account of people's time. Others felt value for money was something that the Council should monitor as the approach develops to ensure that not only is it fit for purpose but it is also an efficient way to meet young people's and communities' needs. Once YABs are more established and are starting to feed into the local capacity in communities and taking on more strategic working, it may be the case that YAB representatives will be less focused on the funding received through the County Council.

Some interviewees highlighted the challenges they had encountered in regards to the **practicalities of funding**. For example, a small number of interviewees explained that because YABs are not legal entities this presented a barrier when bidding for additional funding. Another interviewee explained that they had come across challenges when trying to transfer money to the District Council due to the YAB not being a legal entity, and therefore there were concerns over who has responsibility for, and owns the assets. Another interviewee explained that within their YAB, they would like to take more responsibility for the administration of the funding, rather than this sitting with the District Council. However, they are not able to do this as the YAB is not a legal entity.

Looking to the future, interviewees were concerned about where funding would come from, particularly in light of the current economic situation. One interviewee felt this could impact on what they are able to fund, commenting *'I think we are going to have some very good projects come forward and we are not going to be able to fund them all'*. This uncertainty of the future did not just relate to funding but also the risk to the whole approach. Interviewees explained that currently their YAB work had not been written into their agencies' work plans or service delivery. This was seen as particularly important to help sustain the model (as discussed in Chapter 8). Interviewees felt this was a risk to the future: *'we've only got to go through another round of redundancies and restructuring and you'll find there's a significant risk there in providing that support.'*

Other challenges, mentioned by a small number of individual interviewees included:

- **Time pressures.** This was an issue for YAB members, including the young people, particularly given the voluntary nature of YAB involvement and the amount of time they felt they needed to give the approach.
- **Co-production with young people.** Some interviewees raised concerns about the extent to which young people are fully able to take on the role of decision-making. Indeed, some young people did not feel they were qualified to make decisions, while others were worried about whether they truly represented all cohorts of young people in Norfolk. Adult YAB members were concerned about whether young people can truly be decision-makers where public money is involved and mused as to whether if more money was being spent, County Council would allow young people to drive forward decision making. Some YABs have overcome this challenge by training young people in exactly these issues. Norfolk County Council may need to clarify the extent to which young people should be leading the decision making.
- **Accountability.** Some interviewees felt there was a need for greater accountability as they were unclear as to who had ultimate responsibility for the commissioning of support and activities.
- **Changing relationships with the LA.** Interviewees felt that the role of the LA in the YABs may change and therefore the YABs' relationship with the LA will have to change in light of this. One interviewee explained that YABs may become more autonomous and get to a point where they no longer need central support from the LA but that the YABs are able to support themselves. As such the new approach needs to be flexible in order to be able to adapt to these changes, and the LA needs to be prepared to take less of a leading role in the future.

## 8. What are the plans for the future?

This chapter discusses the YABs plans for the future and interviewees views on the sustainability of the model.

### 8.1 Next steps for the YABs

Interviewees talked about their short-term future plans for the YABs. Generally, these related to two areas. Firstly, interviewees talked about enhancing current practice. Secondly, interviewees wanted to develop the culture and embed the approach further.

Interviewees from across the seven YABs talked about the need to further **enhance young people's engagement**. They were keen to build on the foundations by making the YAB more accessible to a larger number and a wider cross-section of young people. They were also keen to give young people greater responsibility and for them to take more of a lead role. One youth and community provider interviewee talked about developing social media to support this task. As discussed in Chapter 3, to support young people's engagement in service provision and activities, some interviewees suggested the need for a central online searchable map to highlight where activities were being held.

Others talked about all YAB representatives taking a **greater responsibility** for meeting young people's need. Some wanted to focus on engaging specific sectors in the future, particularly local businesses and education. One interviewee said that, this year, YABs had taken too long to get moving and that the needs assessment and commissioning processes need to speed up in the future. However, it was accepted by most that the first year had been a learning curve and that processes would be carried out more effectively in the second year of commissioning.

Interviewees felt that across the County young people and communities needed to start **seeing the benefits** of the YABs. They were worried that local communities would start to question what has replaced the youth service and were keen to promote YABs' work. YABs' plans for monitoring and evaluation activity, it was hoped, would support this task to some extent.

A small number of interviewees expressed a desire for **networking and learning** between YABs to be developed. Indeed, the focus group held in December 2012 appeared to be the first time some YAB representatives had met colleagues serving on other YABs.

Strategic interviewees and a small number of YAB members talked about the need to **seek additional funding** to support the £45,000 the County Council had committed to each YAB per year. Strategic interviewees perceived the central funding to be a 'kick-start' to commissioning activities and services. Some YAB members seemed to take a slightly different view and felt that central funding needed to be increased to sustain the model. Some YABs have done little work to date on securing matched funding but some were aware that they needed to focus on this in the near future.

## 8.2 Perceptions on sustainability

We asked interviewees for their views on the sustainability of the model. While many had questions and concerns about the future, these tended to centre around three key themes: the structure and ethos; engagement and ownership and funding.

### Structure of the approach

Some interviewees indicated that they thought the model was or would be sustainable in the future. While there were specific areas that YABs and strategic interviewees wanted to develop, there was a feeling that the fluid and developmental nature of the model supported sustainability. Others were concerned, however, that there is a tension between the fast moving, pragmatic approach and trying to meet one of the other aims of the approach which is to make it a new 'sustainable' way of working. While it is very early days and the new approach is still settling and embedding – the early signs appear positive for the future.

### Engagement and ownership

Whilst acknowledging that relationships take time to develop, interviewees talked about the need for better community, multi-agency and young people engagement for the approach to be sustainable. They also wanted YABs and agency representatives to take more ownership of the YABs. They felt that the regular meetings provide a forum for more people from a wider range of agencies to get involved in youth provision than was previously the case. However, they wanted commitment from some key sectors (such as schools and businesses) to get involved. There was hope that businesses might get engaged as part of their corporate social responsibility commitments. Within one area, the YAB members felt that more could be done to engage with the Health and Well-being Board.

The engagement of young people was also mentioned when talking about sustainability of the model. As discussed throughout the report, while youth engagement has been very positive, there is a commitment to engage more young people in the future and to ensure that different cohorts of young people are represented. Thinking about the longer term future, YAB members talked about needing to engage younger teenagers and raising the awareness of the YABs. This was to help ensure YABs have youth representatives willing to contribute in the future after the current young people representatives have moved on. Some interviewees perceived the youth and community worker role as being crucial to sustaining the engagement of young people.

### Funding

When talking about the future, funding inevitably emerged as an issue for interviewees. YAB members talked about the need for future funding but did not always talk about where this would come from. Many were concerned about the lack of certainty around future central funding provision. They felt that it made it difficult to plan for the future and to think about longer-term commissioning decisions. Others were conscious that YABs needed to start to develop other funding streams to support service provision. Strategic interviewees were particularly keen for multi-agency representatives to support youth provision in local areas.

They hoped that the County budget provided a skeletal service that would help attract resource from other agencies to support sustainability. As discussed in Chapter 7; a number of challenges surround this issue of funding. Others talked about YABs possibly jointly commissioning provision in the future, and perhaps pooling budgets where there are shared needs.

### 8.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation activity within and across the YABs seems to be developing. It is still early days, with Norfolk County Council making it clear that they do not expect to see young people's outcomes changing yet. Having said that, YAB members, youth and community providers and the County Council have been mindful that monitoring and evaluation procedures need to be in place early on to demonstrate impact later. As one YAB member said:

*'There is a lot of pressure riding on it to make a good outcome ...certainly the projects do have monitoring and evaluation in place because unless we do that we're not going to be able to demonstrate that it has been successful.'*

Monitoring and evaluation activity has been both formal and informal.

#### Formal monitoring

The County Council is working with the Young Foundation to develop a calculator of cashable savings based on outcomes for young people. The intention is for this to be used at the 'micro' and 'macro' level and that it will be used by YABs in the future to help them measure change.

Where YABs have commissioned tenders or have Service Level Agreements with local service providers, formal monitoring is in place as would be standard in these situations. Outputs and outcomes are specified at the outset and are regularly assessed.

#### Informal monitoring

While some YABs have formal monitoring and evaluation procedures in place; some plan to develop this in the future and others are carrying out more informal quality assurance checks of activities and services, often involving young people. One interviewee hoped evidence of provision and impact would promote multi-agency working and engagement. Others YABs report that they review their meeting minutes as a form of monitoring and publish these on the district council website.

Young people YAB representatives within at least three of the YABs are undertaking monitoring and evaluation activity to assess provision and quality and to enhance the YAB engagement in activities.

- Some young people have attended formal training while others will become 'Young Commissioners' and will be accredited for their work.
- Other young people who are involved in local activities will help by writing reports on outcomes achieved.
- Some young people are becoming 'mystery shoppers'.

## 9. Advice to others

This section presents interviewees' views on what advice they would give to other LAs thinking about embarking on a similar model to the one Norfolk County Council has adopted.

Overall, the response was positive with some interviewees saying that it is a great concept and they would recommend it to others. Only one person said LAs should keep the Youth Service.

Most interviewees made sensible and practical suggestions for others to consider. These included:

- **take time to develop and establish the new way of working; be clear about the intended outcomes**

Interviewees felt that when a new model is being developed that time should be invested at this early stage to ensure it is fit for purpose. They felt that, from the outset, the Council needs to be clear about what it is hoping to achieve and what its intended outcomes are, this helps provide clarity for local planning decisions and reduces ambiguity. Local training sessions were suggested as a way to share these messages. Taking this one step further, others said the Council needs to show that the model is making things happen; communities need to see how the money is being spent.

- **engage young people, the community; multi-agency representatives and local politicians**

Engagement of young people, the community, multi-agency representatives and councillors was seen as a must. Interviewees expressed the need for these key stakeholders to be signed up from the outset and involved in decision making. It is particularly important to engage young people and hear their views so money is not spent commissioning services and activities they will not use or cannot access. Furthermore, there was a feeling that the right people have got to be involved. The YABs, for example, need people who can push the agenda forward. The engagement of local politicians was also seen as essential, with one strategic interviewee explaining: '*political engagement is really critical, to build support for the approach and ensure that councillors are tied into the YABs. If the decision making isn't taking account of that then it's at risk... [we have] worked closely with members*'.

- **resource and invest in the model**

Not only does the model need funding to support it to achieve its desired aims, but a small number of YAB members suggested that the YABs require a coordinator at the local level. They saw the role of the coordinator as driving forward the approach locally but also in effectively engaging young people and multi-agencies.

- **learn from the approach taken in Norfolk**

A small number of YAB members and strategic interviewees suggested other LAs could learn from the approach being taken in Norfolk. One interviewee said '*Come and talk to us and see us in action. See it in place. Don't just speak to the council - speak to other organisations, speak to the young people.*'

# 10. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall Norfolk County Council and the seven YABs seem to be making good progress towards putting the foundations in place to help ensure that local services and activities are meeting the needs of young people. Most interviewees agreed that it is a great concept and they would recommend it to others. Establishing this new way of working has been a learning curve for both the County Council, the YABs, partner agencies and young people but collectively they are developing the model and building the base for future commissioning and sustainable service provision.

Norfolk County Council developed six criteria to assess the success of the approach so far. Below we summarise how the new approach is performing against each of the success criteria.

## **Criteria 1: Arrangements to develop and maintain strong and positive interagency relationships are in place**

Multi-agency engagement has been high. While there is some work to be done to engage some key sectors (such as education, health and businesses) early signs are that co-commissioning is starting to take place.

## **Criteria 2 and 3: There is accurate assessment of local needs and effective arrangements to identify and agree local priorities for meeting those needs**

Commissioned activities and services have been based on thorough needs assessments and procurement processes. YABs have made considerable effort to ensure only new services and activities that meet an identified local need are being commissioned. Some YABs are already demonstrating how they are influencing partner agencies in localities to better meet the needs of young people through current provision.

## **Criteria 4: There are robust and inclusive youth engagement processes that are enabling effective co-production**

Young people are actively engaged and contribute successfully to the work of the YABs. Partners very much welcome young people's commitment, insight and contribution. It can be concluded that YABs have been successful in ensuring that young people are at the heart of the process.

## **Criteria 5: There is an appropriate balance between local authority and YAB decision making and direction**

There was discrepancy amongst YAB interviewees as to whether they felt they had too little, too much or the right amount of decision-making responsibilities alongside the County Council. This is to be expected given the nature of devolving decision-making powers to localities, each of which have a unique context and constitution. YABs and the County Council should continue to work together to establish a jointly agreeable position as YABs evolve in the future.

### **Criteria 6: Local commissioning includes a systematic approach to monitoring the quality of services and activities**

It is still early days and it would be difficult to demonstrate positive outcomes at this stage. YABs are developing monitoring and evaluation activity, including examples of formal monitoring, with outputs and outcomes specified from the outset. In some instances, young people have been trained to undertake a monitoring and evaluation role.

There is a strong commitment from the County Council and local YABs to continue to develop the model; to secure additional resource to help them offer a wider range of services and to meet the needs of a wider range of young people. The activity to date shows that good progress is being made and plans are in place to measure the difference it is making.

After a year in development, YABs have experienced a range of challenges common to the establishment of new networks or partnerships, these are not insurmountable. Indeed, many of which have been overcome or are recognised as areas for development in the future. Developmental challenges are to be expected when a new way of working is introduced.

Below we offer some recommendations for the different audiences involved in Norfolk County Council's new approach to securing services and activities for its young people. Most of these recommendations are practical suggestions.

#### **Recommendations for the County Council**

- YABs should be encouraged to revisit strategic documents on a regular basis to remind members of their purpose and aims. This will also help to induct new members.
- YABs would benefit from having access to strategic documents and updates via an online portal.
- Turnover of YAB representatives is inevitable to some extent. This requires all YABs to have a clear induction process for those who are new to the role. In particular, new incumbents should be given relevant information about working arrangements and group objectives in order to facilitate their full engagement.
- More clarity is needed about the target groups and types of young people that YAB activity should be supporting. This related, in particular, to age groups, background characteristics of young people and whether the harder to reach groups should be targeted.
- Further clarity about the role of the youth and community providers and their responsibilities should be shared with all YAB Chairs to prevent misunderstanding. Chairs can then share this information with their YAB members.
- While we recognise that Norfolk County Council already consult YABs on how they would like to see local data reported and at what level, YAB representatives requested more of this. They may also benefit from guidance or examples of different ways on how to pool the data from their own agencies.
- There is evidence that in some organisations, colleagues are able to deputise for YAB members in their absence from any meetings (considered a likely scenario given the inevitable workload of individuals with strategic and/or senior roles). Managing this to ensure consistency of message and approach could be a role for



the YAB chair but also a responsibility of representatives themselves. Indeed, the minutes of some early YAB meetings reflect the need to agree some clarity on how new Board members are recruited, how substitutes are agreed and how replacements are identified.

- Norfolk County Council might like to consider bringing YABs together and collectively consider developing one approach to marketing and awareness raising. A central information point, such as a website, could be developed for YABs to update with their own information. Interviewees suggested this could be County Council branded because young people do not necessarily recognise locality or district boundaries. An interactive map of existing local youth provision could also be added. A website could also provide networking opportunities and enable YABs to share good practice (see below). This would also support information sharing where young people travel across boundaries to access services.
- As Norfolk County Council is developing a monitoring and evaluation framework currently, they might like to consider including a value for money element to the framework linked to impact. This would help the County Council be confident about the sustainability of the model in the future.

### Recommendations for YAB members

- Individual YABs may wish to consider devising a set of operational rules which ensure all members receive key updates if they are unable to attend a meeting. In addition; YAB agency representatives should be obligated to provide a deputy in case of their absence from meetings.
- YABs should look for networking opportunities (possibly meetings or online forums) so they can share practice and common issues. These could be focused around key themes (such as needs analysis or youth engagement). If the County Council decides to support the development of a website, a networking function could be integrated.
- YAB members should consider holding some meetings virtually, through online software such as Skype or GoTo Meeting. This will prevent colleagues having to travel for all meetings and may encourage greater participation from multi-agency representatives and young people.
- YAB members should be encouraged to regularly report YAB developments to their home agency to raise awareness and share learning.
- While young people engagement is good, YABs could better utilise the knowledge, advice and ideas of its young people representatives while considering the time and commitment implications. Young people are keen to develop the model and this enthusiasm should be made use of.
- Young people representatives should be encouraged by the adults working with them to share their views. Adults value young people's contribution and would welcome young people putting forward ideas of their own as well as commenting on ideas from others. Young people should feel confident about expressing their views and ideas in meetings.
- During meetings, YAB Chairs should ensure that all members are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities. This is particularly important as we understand that attendance at each meeting can differ. One way of addressing this, for example, is for YAB Chairs to ensure everyone introduces themselves and the agency they represent. The use of jargon in meetings should also be prohibited. This will help facilitate multi-agency working and young people engagement.

## References

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Education Committee (2011). *Services for Young People. Third Report of Session 2010–12. Volume I.* (HC744-1). London: The Stationery Office. [online]. Available: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/744/744i.pdf> [7 February 2013].

HM Government (2011). *Positive for Youth: A new approach for cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19.* London: DfE. [online] Available: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/positive%20for%20youth.pdf> [7 February 2013].

# Appendix A: Youth Advisory Boards' Terms of Reference



## Youth Advisory Boards

### Terms of Reference

#### Key Purpose:

- To maintain a strategic overview of local youth provision across the district area based on the needs of young people aged 11-25.
- To commission services and sustainable activities that help community cohesion, intergenerational understanding and build local community capacity to meet young people's needs, especially for those who are more vulnerable.

#### Intended Outcomes:

Securing positive outcomes for young people and local communities depends upon a wide range of factors, a number of which will be beyond purely the remit of Youth Advisory Boards. Whilst the specific priorities within each district area will need to reflect young people's needs and be set locally, it is expected that Youth Advisory Boards will help to ensure that:

- Communities are able to respond positively to their young people and which recognise the positive contribution that the vast majority of young people make to the community, and young people are able to feel positive about the communities in which they live and feel that their positive contributions are being recognised and valued by others.
- A good capacity exists within each community to respond to and meet the needs of more vulnerable young people including providing a range of positive activities and opportunities that help young people to remain engaged and have aspirations for themselves and their communities through developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to make a successful transition to adulthood.
- Delivery of provision, reflecting local needs and priorities, is contributing towards improved outcomes for young people. These include:
  - Increased access to and participation in leisure time activities
  - Increased attainment at KS 4 (GCSE), level 2 and 3 qualifications at age 19
  - Reduced numbers of young people aged 16-18 who are NEET

- Improved health (including obesity, drug and alcohol use, mental health)
- Reduced teenage conception rates
- Reduced first time entries to the youth justice system & levels of re-offending
- Delivery of provision, reflecting local needs and priorities, is contributing towards improved outcomes for communities. These include:
  - Increased levels of community engagement by young people from all sectors of the community
  - Improved community cohesion including intergenerational understanding
  - Reduced levels of anti social behaviour

**Key Tasks:**

1. To assess local needs, map existing provision and identify local priorities as part of an annual commissioning plan, taking account of national and local policy requirements.
2. To consider the needs of particular sections of the community, with reference to protected groups as defined within equalities legislation.
3. To support young people led decision making in relation to the Youth Advisory Board's commissioning budget reflecting the priorities within the Youth Advisory Board's plan.
4. To support local partnership approaches and agreements to enable joint working, pool resources and secure additional funding and support for meeting young people's needs.
5. To monitor and review outcomes secured for young people and impact upon local communities of activities commissioned by the Youth Advisory Board.
6. To direct how the professional youth and community work support contracted by NCC is deployed locally.
7. To collaborate with other Youth Advisory Boards and work in partnership with Children's Services commissioners and other organisations supporting local communities meet young people's needs.

## Youth Advisory Board Membership

Young people\*,  
NCC Elected Member,  
District Council (Officer or Elected Member – to be determined by Council),  
Town and Parish Council representative,  
School representative,  
College representative,  
Health,  
Police,  
Children's Services,  
Business Sector/Employer representative,  
Voluntary & Community Sector representative (via VCS forum).

\* Actual arrangements for how young people engage in strategic discussion and planning by the Youth Advisory Board will vary to reflect and build upon existing local youth engagement structures. Young people's engagement will be supported by the youth and community worker and may include their attendance at Youth Advisory Board meetings.

### **Officers in attendance:**

Youth & Community Worker employed by the organisation contracted by NCC  
Children's Services commissioning support team (as required)

### **Reporting mechanisms:**

The specific local reporting mechanisms for each Youth Advisory Board will be determined locally as part of each Board's links with wider strategic partnership arrangements operating in the district area.

Overall there will be accountability to Norfolk's Health & Well Being Board and a reporting line, via the Children's Services Head of 11-19 Strategy & Commissioning, to the Children's Joint Commissioning Group.

**Providing independent  
evidence to improve  
education and learning.**

© 2013 National Foundation for Educational Research



**National Foundation for  
Educational Research**  
The Mere, Upton Park,  
Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ

T: 01753 574123  
F: 01753 691632  
E: [enquiries@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@nfer.ac.uk)