# Every Child Matters:
Make a Positive Contribution

This paper is one of a series of 12 that presents the findings from NFER's analysis of Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) from a representative sample of 75 Local Authorities.[1] It sets out how 'Make a Positive Contribution' features in this sample of plans and includes illustrative examples. Areas covered are:

• Priorities

• Actions

• Key Groups

• Targets

• Lead Agencies.

Summary of findings

• **Priorities** for 'Make a Positive Contribution' include three main areas: engagement and decision making; reducing negative behaviour; and enterprise – with coverage of the latter priority area being much less frequent than the other two priority areas.

• Frequently cited **actions** include: the development of strategies, initiatives, services and policies, those focused on children and young people and actions for planning, monitoring and evaluating.

• Looked after children (LAC) are the most frequently mentioned **key group** as part of 'Make a Positive Contribution'. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD), young offenders and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are also commonly mentioned.

• **Targets** are predominantly non-numerical in nature, most frequent for reducing negative behaviour and engagement and decision making, and least frequent and specific for enterprise. Overall 15 different targets appear in 'Make a Positive Contribution', the most common relating to children and young people volunteering. LAC are the key group for which targets appear the most.

• Less than half of plans explicitly identify a **lead agent** responsible for actions and targets; chiefly Children's and Young People's Services, the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Service.
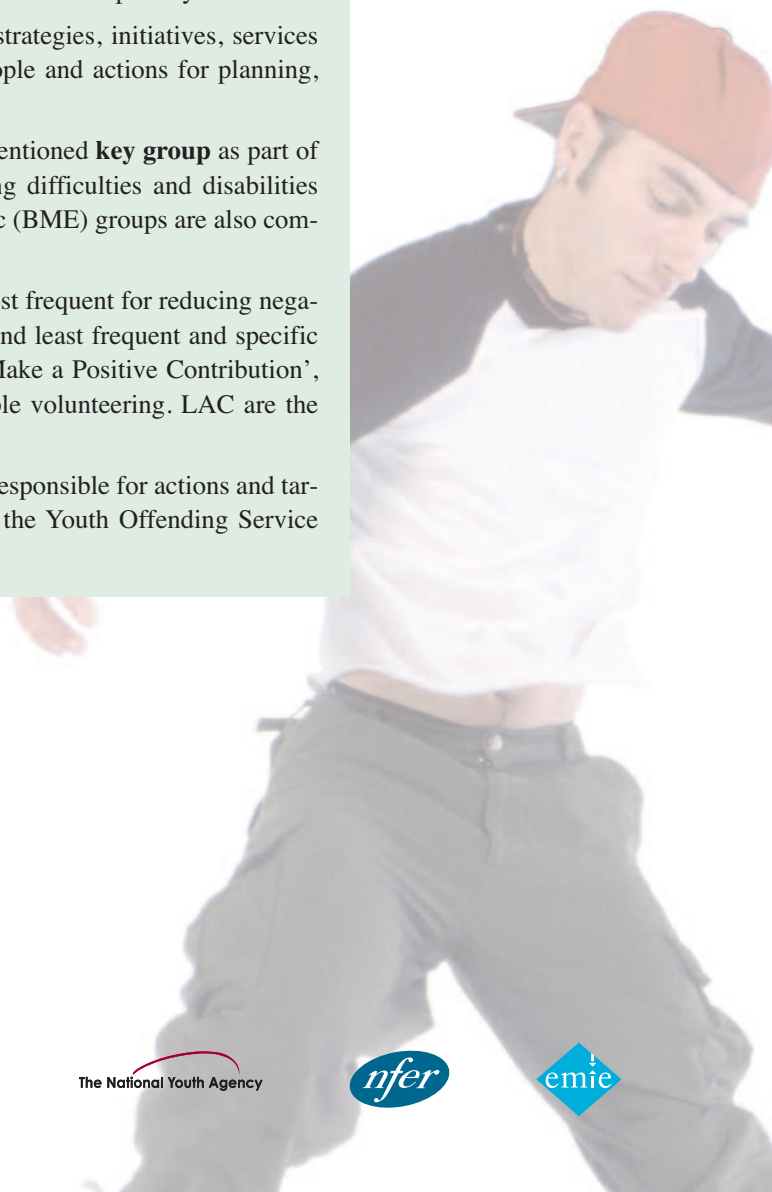
'Make a Positive Contribution' priorities in the CYPPs

The CYPPs vary considerably in their interpretation of 'Make a Positive Contribution', setting out an array of different priorities, actions and targets. Less than one-fifth of the 75 plans analysed map their priorities, actions and/or targets for this outcome directly on to the five ECM aims. It is more common for plans to adapt the ECM aims or devise their own. Across the CYPPs, priorities can be grouped into three main areas, with a number of sub-priorities within each:

Figure 1 Coverage of 'Make a Positive Contribution' priority areas
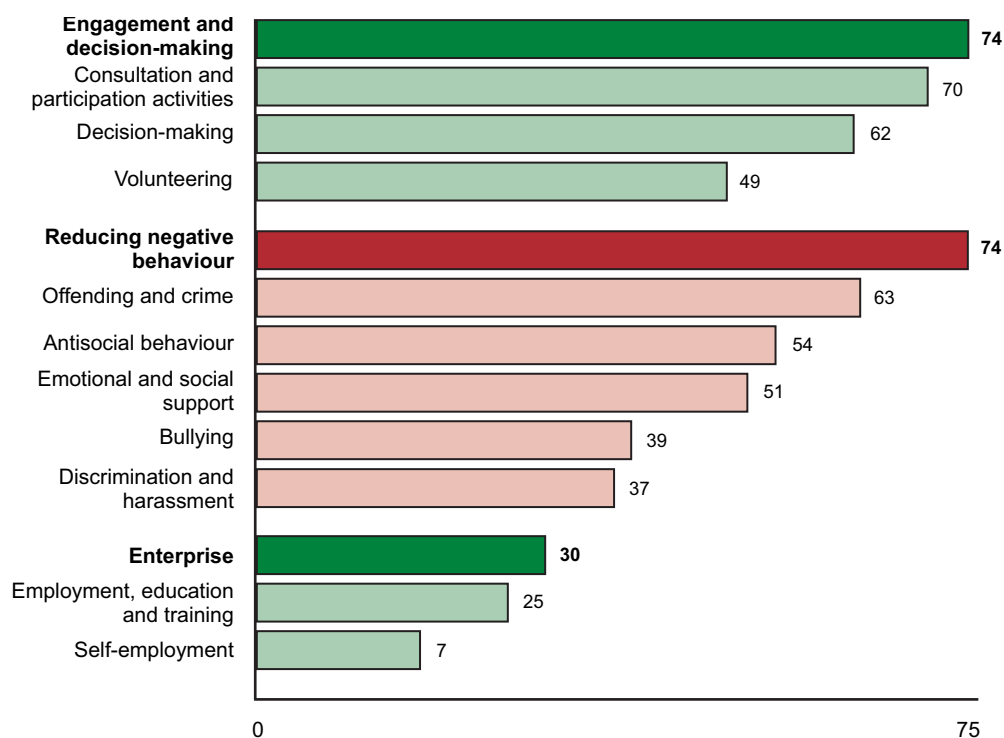
As shown in Figure 1:

- within **engagement and decision-making**, issues related to consultation and participation activities are most commonly cited, whereas much fewer references are made to volunteering

- within **reducing negative behaviour**, issues related to offending and crime and anti-social behaviour are most frequently cited across CYPPs, whereas references to bullying and discrimination and harassment are covered in less than half of plans analysed

- **enterprise** receives less coverage in the plans than the other two priorities. As such, the coverage of sub-priority areas is also less thorough, with just a third of plans making mention of employment, education and training and only seven plans referring to self-employment.

Actions

The 75 plans analysed specify a variety of actions in relation to the 'Make a Positive Contribution' arena. These actions include those that are focused upon strategies, policies, services and initiatives, those concerning information provision, and dissemination and activities focused upon consultation, participation and decision making. The ten actions most commonly cited in 'Make a Positive Contribution' are presented in Table 1, with examples.

Table 1   Ten most commonly cited actions in 'Make a Positive Contribution'

Action	Example
Develop and/or implement strategies, initiatives or services	*'Launch 'production school' to promote enterprise with 14–19 re-engagement students.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Active role of children and young people in reviewing, evaluating and developing services and policies	*'Young people's participation and representation on every Neighbourhood Action Group as part of the* [Name of LA] *Police's delivery of neighbouring policing.'* (Unitary LA)
Maintaining, extending and /or improving support to children and young people	*'Explore how language support can be given to young people where English is not the first language, or where literacy skills are weak.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Increase collaborative and cross-agency working between professionals	*'Improve partnership working, including the business community, enhanced intelligence and clear targeting and ensure greater integration/multi-disciplinary working to support and maintain LAC programmes.'* (County LA)
Awareness raising and promotion of issues and/or strategies and initiatives	*'Raise awareness and help promote the role of Area Youth Forums and Youth Council.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Develop or extend volunteering opportunities and/or activities for children and young people	*'Youth service to expand use of the Millennium Volunteer scheme through working with key partners.'* (Unitary LA)
Establish baseline and/or monitoring and evaluation	*'Use data collected to provide community profiles of bullying behaviour and measure effectiveness of individual anti-bullying strategies in schools as well as the* [Name of LA] *Anti-Bullying Strategy.'* (County LA)
Expand or encourage access to opportunities	*'Increase the amount of education opportunities for those at risk and young people not receiving full time schooling.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Continue, extend and/or develop the work of the Youth service	*'Develop an integrated youth support service to bring Connexions and the Youth Service in* [Name of LA] *and become a pathfinder authority for the DfES Targeted Youth Support (TYS) initiative.'* (Unitary LA)
Planning, reviewing, mapping and/or auditing	*'Undertake an audit of existing non-statutory provision for 13–19 year olds, including out-of-school activities.'* (Unitary LA)

The two least commonly referenced actions are:

- **the development of Youth Cabinets**, e.g. 'Develop the Youth Cabinet to become the focal point for young people's involvement in decision making*'* (Unitary LA)
- **education and/or training for parents, carers and families**, e.g. 'Developing parenting programmes as an entitlement in all Children's Centres' (Metropolitan LA).

Other actions cited include:

For professionals

- Maintaining/extending/improving support to professionals.

'Build the capacity of service area/agencies to fulfil their responsibility to consult and involve children and young people'. (Metropolitan LA)

- Education and/or training for professionals.

'Clear guidance and training for all staff.' (Metropolitan LA)

For children and young people

- Education/training/skill development for children and young people

'Focused work with young people in target areas … to raise young people's awareness and skills in relation to cultural diversity and tolerance.' (Unitary LA)

- Supporting life transitions.

'Involving children and young people in the best way to help them to make the transitions into adulthood and develop services to support this.' (Unitary LA)

For parents, carers and families

- Maintaining/extending/improving support to families/parents and carers (in general).

'Developing advice and support and training for parents on child development and promoting positive behaviour.' (Unitary LA)

- Maintaining/extending/improving support to families, parents and carers (of offenders or those at risk of offending).

'Support parents and carers whose children are known to the YOT, participating in Youth Inclusion Support Panels or subject to an ABC.' (County LA)

For schools

- Maintaining/extending/improving support to schools.

'Provide guidance and support to schools regarding strategies to promote positive behaviour.' (County LA)

- Education/curriculum developments

'Develop more flexible curriculum options for pupils in yrs 10 and 11 as disengagement from school can lead to truancy, exclusion and involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.' (County LA)

Consultation, participation and decision-making

- Active role of children and young people in review, evaluation and development of services/policies.

'Ensure a more consistent approach to involving children, young people in planning and monitoring services.' (London borough)

- Have had/will have an active role of parents, carers and families in review, evaluation and development of services/policies.

'Further strengthening of the Speak Easy Programme and other routes to increase the participation of parents and carers in the design, delivery and evaluation of services for their children.' (Unitary LA)

Information provision and dissemination

- Information signposting and/or information provision.

> *'We will make sure that clear information is available about constructive activities for children and young people to take part in.'* (Metropolitan LA)

- Dissemination of information and good practice.

> *'Disseminate the practice of the most effective school councils to extend best practice.'* (Unitary LA)

Level of detail of actions

The level of detail of actions presented varies across the CYPPs. For example, some plans detail actions that are **low-level statements**, characterised by a basic outline of proposed intentions such as, 'further development of enterprise coordinators' (Metropolitan LA) or 'the establishment of a consultation group for young people' (Unitary LA).

In comparison, some plans provide **high-level action statements**, which often provide information related to what they are proposing, explicit operational details, an attached timescale and a lead agency responsible for the action, for example: 'ensuring that young people are offered an entitlement to five days enterprise activity by 2007. This will include activities such as setting up and running a real business, linked to existing activities like work experience and business mentoring (led by Local authority and schools)' (County LA).

Amongst the actions cited, some appear mainly, or even almost uniquely, within a priority area. For example:

- **for engagement and decision making** – the development, implementation and/or planning of the Hear By Right Standard: 'Working to a common minimum standard based on Hear By Right in a coordinated way.' (Unitary LA)

- **for reducing negative behaviour** – increasing the collaborative and cross-agency working between professionals: 'Develop a multi-agency team for children with social and communication disorders.' (Metropolitan LA)

- **for enterprise** – maintaining, extending and improving support for children and young people: 'Provide enhanced IAG for young people during all their secondary education and help them achieve their realistic aspirations and dreams.' (Metropolitan LA).

Key groups

The CYPPs analysed make reference to 33 different key groups of children and young people when presenting priorities, actions and targets for 'Make a Positive Contribution'. The two most commonly mentioned key groups are LAC (cited in over half the plans) and CLDD, who were cited in just under half the plans.

The other key groups most frequently and specifically mentioned in relation to 'Make a Positive Contribution' include black and ethnic minority groups (BME), young offenders, teenage parents and Traveller/mobile communities. Examples of actions for the most commonly cited key groups in relation to 'Make a Positive Contribution' are provided in Table 2.

Table 2   Most commonly cited key groups in relation to 'Make a Positive Contribution'

Key group	Example of actions cited
Looked after children (LAC)	*'Develop restorative justice activities to tackle anti-social behaviour and to reduce the use of prosecutions against Looked After Children.'* (County LA)
Children with learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD)	*'Extended day-care and respite care being available to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families.'* (County LA)
Young offenders/those at risk of offending	*'We will improve the assessment of risk and needs of young people who have offended and improve access to specialist and mainstream services once these have been identified.'* (County LA)
Black and minority ethnic groups (BME)	*'Increase participation opportunities for…groups such as those…from BME backgrounds… to ensure their voices are heard and lead to improved services and outcomes.'* (Unitary LA)
Vulnerable groups/children and those in need	*'Increase the number of children who participate in decision making, particularly vulnerable…groups.'* (County LA)
Teenage parents/those at risk of teenage pregnancy	*'Teenage mothers do not always return to education and training and they face more challenges with parenting. Key priority: incorporate best practice guidance for teenage parents and local findings of Sure Start Plus pilot within each Children's Centre programme.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Substance misusers (e.g. drugs, alcohol)	*'We will bring together specialist workers for children and young people who are involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour, particularly those who…are involved in substance abuse, into local teams to provide more integrated support for these young people and their families.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Hard to reach groups	*'We will provide a structure to co-ordinate opportunities for volunteering and will encourage those in hard to reach groups to take part.'* (Metropolitan LA)
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	*'Engage children and young people with SEN Statements…in reviews by applying the county involvement policy more widely through service teams.'* (County LA)
Traveller/mobile communities	*'Offering specific help for children and young people affected by equality issues, such as children and young people…Gypsy and Traveller families…'* (Unitary LA)

A number of key groups are referenced in only a limited number of plans, typically just one or two. An interesting example is the action targeted at boys, referenced in one CYPP, whereby it is specified that the local authority needs to 'reduce the incidence of permanent and fixed-term exclusions from school for children and young people, particularly boys' (Metropolitan LA).

Other key groups mentioned include: children and young people whose first language is not English, the very young, key stage 3 pupils and those who are terminally ill or recently bereaved.

Targets

Where mentioned across the CYPPs, the analysis shows that targets for measuring progress in 'Make a Positive Contribution' are:

- predominantly **non-numerical** in nature, as characterised by statements referring to 'increases' or 'decreases' but without any quantification given or baselines and projected figures set down. For example, 'the percentage of young people surveyed who feel they can influence

decisions in their area' (Metropolitan LA) and 'increase the numbers of young people involved in volunteering…' (Metropolitan LA).

- most frequent for **reducing negative behaviour** and **engagement and decision making**

- **least frequent and least specific for enterprise**, both within the 'Make a Positive Contribution' outcome and overall across all the ECM outcomes. Specifically, just one quarter of the 75 plans specify a target for this priority area, with examples including, 'percentage increase over baseline (05.06) of young people attending interviews who want to be self-employed or run their own business' (Metropolitan LA) and 'numbers returning to education, training or employment' (Metropolitan LA).

Where CYPPs specify **quantified targets**, including statements with a percentage or figure attached and those that set a baseline, they do so chiefly in relation to reducing negative behaviour. Examples of these types of targets include: 'reduce the number of anti-social behaviour orders issued to children and young people. 2004/05 baseline – 19 ASBO's were imposed on young people under 18 years. Targets are: 2006/07 – 17; 2007/08 – 15; 2008/09 – 13' (Metropolitan LA) and 'reduce the percentage of Looked After Children cautioned or convicted. Current performance (2005) is 12.8%. Future target (2009) is 10.0%' (Metropolitan LA).

Overall, 15 different targets appear within 'Make a Positive Contribution':

- The most common target covered under Make a Positive Contribution, featuring in over two-fifths of the plans, relates to the **participation of children and young people in decision-making**, e.g. the 'percentage of children involved in electing school/college council members, and in mock general elections' (London borough) and the 'average attendance and participation by children and young people in the X City Youth Parliament' (Unitary LA). Targets relating to children and young people volunteering are also common (featuring in just under two-fifths of the plans), e.g. 'increase the percentage of volunteers aged 14–25 from non-BME communities volunteering for 45 hours per year' (London borough).

- Targets relating to **rates of re-offending** feature in a third of plans, e.g. 'achieve a reduction in re-offending rates for 10–17 year olds by 'x' per cent in 2006–2007 compared with 2002–2003' (County LA); as do targets relating to first-time entrants into the youth justice system. A small number of these targets also appear within Stay Safe.

- Targets relating to **bullying and discrimination** appearing within 'Make a Positive Contribution' include 'All racist incidents in schools monitored and followed up' (London borough) and 'decrease reported incidents of Hate Crime by young people' (Unitary LA). Targets referring to both these aspects, however, feature more frequently within Stay Safe.

- A fifth of the plans have specific targets for **final warnings, reprimands and convictions of LAC**, e.g. 'Fewer LAC receive a Final Warning from the police, reducing the present rate of 13.1% to 9% by 2008' (Unitary LA). The next most commonly cited key group with targets within Make a Positive Contribution are CLDD (chiefly around access to opportunities for these young people and in some cases also their parents, their involvement in planning and evaluating the delivery of services, and their views being taken into account). Other targets for key groups include, for LAC, increasing the number who volunteer in the community or who are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (Unitary LA). Targets specifically for BME within Make a Positive Contribution refer to volunteering and proportions in the criminal justice system.

Lead agencies

Overall, less than half the CYPPs explicitly identify a lead agent responsible for specified actions and, although this identification is common across all three 'Make a Positive Contribution' areas, it is most frequent in relation to engagement and decision making, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Priority areas where lead agent responsibilities are specified
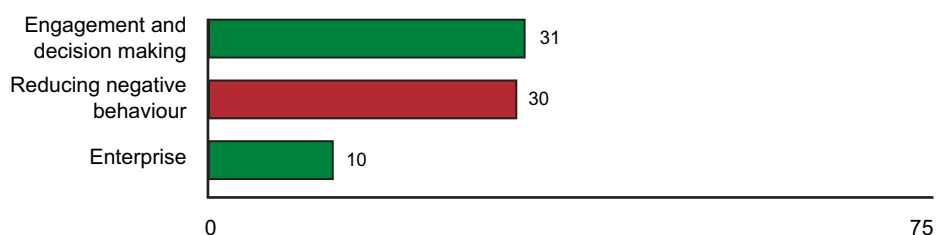
The plans specify a range of lead agencies in relation to 'Make a Positive Contribution'. The lead agencies most commonly mentioned in relation to 'Make a Positive Contribution' overall are shown in order of frequency below:

- Children and Young People's Service/Children's Trust

- Youth Offending Service

- Youth Service

- Connexions

- Education

- Community Safety Partnership/Safer Partnership

- Police

- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

- Social Services

- Voluntary agencies.

Specific lead agencies are referenced in relation to each priority area: the Youth Offending Service in relation to reducing negative behaviour; the Youth Service for engagement and decision making and Connexions in relation to enterprise.

Other lead agencies include Health, Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Housing, Transport and sports/arts organisations.

Notes

1 When interpreting these findings from analysis of 75 plans, it is necessary to bear in mind that LAs had freedom to draft their CYPPs in order to meet their needs and circumstances best. Therefore, there would be no imperative for every plan to include all the pieces of information and detail discussed in the findings in this paper.

The full series of papers are available from www.nfer.ac.uk/emie:

1   Introduction and overview
2   The plans: a comparative review of content
3   Commissioning and Resourcing in Children and Young People's Plans
4   Performance Management and Partnership Arrangements in Children and Young People's Plans
5   Consultation with Children and Young People and Needs Analysis in Children and Young People's Plans
6   Targets within the Children and Young People's Plans
7   Every Child Matters: Be Healthy
8   Every Child Matters: Stay Safe
9   Every Child Matters: Enjoy and Achieve
10   Every Child Matters: Make a Positive Contribution
11   Every Child Matters: Achieve Economic Wellbeing
12   Youth Work Themes in Children and Young People's Plans