PROVIDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Local Authority Youth Services in the 1990s

Karen Maychell
Shalini Pathak
Vivienne Cato

nfer

PROVIDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Local Authority Youth Services in the 1990s

Karen Maychell
Shalini Pathak
Vivienne Cato

nfer

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from a research study of local authority youth service provision, which was conducted by NFER between April 1994 and June 1995.

1.1 Background to the research

Studies on the operation and effectiveness of the youth service are a much neglected area in educational research. The service is currently facing considerable pressure for fundamental reform, yet reliable information on provision, take-up and service management is not readily available at the national level. Data on various aspects of the service have been collected by individual local authorities, but there is at present no clear picture of the service as a whole that would serve as a basis for future planning and development.

The educational origins of the youth service lie within the 1944 Education Act, Sections 41b and 53(1) and (2), which placed a duty on LEAs to secure the provision of social, physical and recreational training and leisure activities for young people, co-operating as appropriate with relevant voluntary bodies. As amended by Section 120 of the 1988 Education Reform Act, this represents the current legal base for youth service provision by the LEAs. It is estimated that, at any given point, the youth service is working with some five million young people. Although they are under no obligation to do so, most LEAs do resource youth provision offering social education activities.

A study carried out in 1991/92 by the National Youth Agency showed that many local youth services had formulated policy statements and curriculum documents and had developed methods for collecting data on provision and take-up. Possible future structures and systems for service delivery were still matters for debate.

It was as yet unclear how far authorities would retain control of youth service delivery at the local level and how far they would negotiate service contracts with existing providers or with new organisations and

agencies outside local authority control. A number of authorities are, for example, already involved in service agreements with voluntary organisations. Similarly, the NYA study was unable to identify clear patterns of resource allocation or to establish the various types of provision attracting grant aid, formula funding to area or unit level, programme funding and project funding respectively. Other areas identified as requiring further consideration and development included: strategies for negotiating with young people on the process and outcomes of learning; methods for recording and reviewing progress (especially in informal settings, such as detached work); systems and structures for interagency working; planned opportunities for staff development and training; and strategies for involving young people in the evaluation of the service.

1.2 Research outline

The NFER research reported here had two main aims:

♦ to gather information from all local authorities on their youth service provision and management in order to inform future planning at the national and local level; and

♦ to identify and describe the types of social education provision that are most effective in achieving high rates of take-up.

The study was carried out in two phases: a questionnaire survey of all local authority youth services; and follow-up interviews in 14 local authorities, followed by in-depth case-study work in six of these authorities. The work of these two phases is described in more detail below.

Phase 1: questionnaire survey

A questionnaire was sent to all principal youth officers (PYOs), or their equivalent, in each of the 117 local authorities in England and Wales. In view of the pressures on local authority officers and the need to achieve a high response rate, the questionnaire was made as brief and easy to complete as possible. Topics addressed in the questionnaire included:

● the existence of local authority policy statements on the youth service and curriculum guidelines;

● priority age ranges and priority groups of young people;

- methods of undertaking analyses of local needs;

- the extent to which identified needs of young people had been met;

- whether information on take-up rates was collected;

- what types of provision were made, and the curriculum areas covered within these;

- monthly attendance figures for the different types of provision; and

- the types of initiatives perceived as being particularly successful in achieving positive outcomes for young people while attracting high rates of take-up.

Information on staffing, management structures and departmental locations of local authority youth services was not collected as this information is requested in the National Youth Agency's annual Management Information Survey.

After two written reminders, 84 completed questionnaires were returned giving a 74 per cent response.

Phase 2: follow-up interviews and case studies

The second stage of the research involved follow-up interviews in 14 local authorities with the PYO, or equivalent. The interview locations were spread across England and Wales and were selected to allow investigation of a wide range of youth service structures and organisation. Information was collected on the following:

- youth service organisation and issues relating to departmental location;

- number of youth workers, their roles and line management;

- number of volunteers;

- youth service funding;

- different types of provision;

- take-up rates and methods of collecting this information;

- issues relating to identifying needs, targeting groups of young people and balancing this with generic provision;

- service evaluation; and

- partnership with the voluntary sector and other agencies.

Through these interviews, individual initiatives in six local authorities were chosen as the foci of detailed case study. The purpose was to examine a variety of different types of provision, taking into account different approaches to organisation, location and delivery, as well as take-up rates, whether the initiative was targeted or open access and its context urban or rural. As well as seeking to represent different types of provision, there were two overriding criteria for selection: that the initiative was felt by youth officers and workers to have had positive outcomes for the young people involved; and that high rates of take-up were reported.

As part of each case study, interviews were held with all personnel involved in the initiative, including youth service managers, full and part-time youth workers, volunteers and some of the young people who participated in the provision. The principal objective of these case studies was to analyse young people's attitudes to the initiative, to illuminate successful and sustained engagement in youth service provision and to identify those features perceived by providers and participants as facilitating or inhibiting take-up.

CHAPTER TWO
THE MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY YOUTH SERVICES

Issues relating to the organisation, management and staffing of the youth service and their procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision are addressed in this chapter. The data are drawn from the questionnaire responses and from the interviews with principal youth officers.

2.1 Issues relating to youth service organisation

Departmental location

Most youth service provision was based in the Authority's Education Department. Within that, it may very well have been a free-standing service (with a separate budget): not necessarily to the satisfaction of the PYO. Some PYOs drew attention either to wishing to bring the youth service closer to Adult and Community Education, or to their recent achievements in so doing.

Some PYOs mentioned that their current location within Education was under threat from poaching, and indeed some youth services had been subsumed recently (in the last two to five years) within Community Services, Leisure Services, or Recreation and Cultural Services. One mentioned his strong preference for remaining within Education:

> *Whilst I am in post I am not prepared to sell my educational goals for the sake of being a bigger fish in a smaller pool. Youth work is about learning... Therefore why divorce ourselves from it?*

Yet others preferred the change:

> *When we were in Education we were very much a small fish in a large pool, whereas in Recreation and Cultural Services I think we have got far more of a higher profile... we are far freer.*

> *Although we have still got a very strong education basis to the work, the accountability is far, far greater than anything I have*

5

ever known... Whereas in Education you are the Cinderella – less than one per cent of the budget – in Leisure we are the biggest operator, we are very high profile.

It was intended that the youth service would work in co-operation with the other departments within those Services. In some cases this was working well, in others they stayed separate.

One PYO pointed out that, prior to re-organisation in 1993, the Service had operated a 'traditional service' as one central team working through youth centres. However, many youth services had now divided their area of responsibility into 'patches' or areas, the specific number of which tended to have changed over the years according to political pressures. Each was defined by, or at least subsequently developed, a distinct local character based on geographical terrain or demographics. Each might contain different combinations of community education centres, voluntary organisations (charities with paid staff) and the uniformed organisations (Scouts and Guides, with unpaid staff) which all were embraced by the youth service. Indeed, the voluntary organisations might receive substantial grant aid from them. In some cases the areas were overseen by an elected community education area council with representatives from the county council, district council, parish council and local affiliated groups.

Staffing in each varied, according to the decision of the patch co-ordinator, team leader or area officer who held a local budget and was responsible for managing all staff within that area. Teams – which in some cases were receiving increasingly large proportions of resources – then identified local needs. In addition, some youth services employed task-specific postholders such as a training officer, community development worker or curriculum development staff. One had a special projects officer with responsibility for GEST, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and support for the unemployed. One PYO suggested that it was necessary for even area officers to hold an additional specific, specialist theme-based role:

> *The way that we keep our sanity is that people have all got functions. So although they are responsible for an area, and for all the full and part-time staff in that area, they also have a functional responsibility [through which] you also actually get some face-to-face work with the young people.*

Staffing structures

Work roles of paid youth service staff

Youth workers were based either in open-access centres, on free-standing projects, or on outreach/detached work. On them lay the responsibility for the bulk of face-to-face work, especially since officers' roles were moving away from day-to-day management towards advisory and inspectorial work and public relations.

Youth workers were often backed up by curriculum support workers, specialising in such areas as training and development, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, young women, or ethnic minorities. In one case, additional input came from non-qualified but highly competent arts specialists who were adjudged to be 'absolutely outstanding' in their field.

One authority had introduced a system of bursars, another, a marketing and contracts specialist, to handle what had previously been youth workers' responsibilities for administration. One PYO explained that this had enabled them to increase the amount of time youth workers spent face-to-face with young people:

> *We increased the amount of time they spent in face-to-face work, so now a senior worker must spend a minimum of 60 percent of their time and a less senior worker 70 per cent of their time on face-to-face work.*

The bursars were responsible for marketing and finances, often taking a proactive role in leasing out youth service buildings to other users.

Some PYOs wished to draw attention to the extra, unpaid, time put in over and above contractual duties by youth workers. They felt that such commitment was insufficiently recognised.

Changes in staff numbers or roles

Many authorities had undergone fundamental changes within the last five years with the re-positioning of the youth service within a different department of the local authority. Cuts of 15 per cent in the budget were not uncommon. Consequently, projects had been closed wholesale and 'massive' cuts in staffing had occurred, for example from 40 to 15 full-time staff. Changes in government regulations regarding the employment

conditions of part-timers had resulted in sessions being axed. Not only youth workers had been affected: in some authorities, management structures had been halved. One authority had almost entirely lost its senior worker posts. Another had lost all its ancillary staff – 100 people – in a single year. Since this group had in the past been a recruiting base for future youth workers, the implications of this loss were considerable. Only one authority interviewed appeared not to have undergone any cuts in recent years: indeed, staffing had increased to support a number of newly-built community centres.

Following strategic as much as financial imperatives, cuts were being carried out to ensure that the new 'lean and fit' service would be seen as an attractive acquisition for any incoming unitary authority. Even where no budget crisis was officially in existence, an emphasis was being placed on 'good housekeeping'. The emphasis was now on a curriculum-style delivery and a withdrawal from areas of work in which there was competition with voluntary organisations.

Some of the PYOs interviewed were resigned to periodic change occurring. Titles and responsibilities had a tendency to shift or accumulate, especially due to budgets devolving to local areas. With the delegating of youth service responsibilities to other agencies, officers were coming to see themselves as purchasers rather than the traditional providers. Staffing cuts had resulted in most workers taking on dual responsibilities. One PYO cast this need for 'flexibility' in positive terms, himself employing a policy of moving people periodically between area teams.

Lines of management responsibility

Although one authority had taken steps to move towards a flatter structure based on re-organisation into areas, most were structured on a hierarchical system. Full- and part-time youth workers reported to team leaders, who reported to senior managers, who themselves were accountable to the head of youth services. The work of the youth service as a whole was in most cases overseen by some form of council or committee.

Where budgets had been devolved to 'patches', the first line of management within a patch was the warden or principal of the school where the area youth service office was based, who received a lump sum for their services. Lines of management between the local authority youth service and voluntary agencies to whom work had been devolved are discussed in section 2.4.

Perceived impact of local government re-organisation

For those non-metropolitan authorities for whom local government re-organisation was a possibility, change was seen almost universally in negative terms. Nearly all interviewees opted for the status quo as the most desirable outcome. The one PYO who did not see re-organisation as a threat anticipated little or no change as a result, beyond strategic planning with district councils, itself (for him, though not necessarily for others interviewed) a positive development.

Some form of merger was the change most commonly predicted, with an increased emphasis on community development. Many predicted a future link between Education and Leisure. Whilst a collaborative co-operation between these two might be welcomed – it was even described by one PYO as the 'dream ticket' – the anticipated reality was of Leisure 'taking over' the youth service. As a result, service standards would decline:

> *We feel that what we are offering is based within education. It is curriculum-led, it is priority-led, it is target-led... What Leisure and Recreation are providing is very different.*

> *A lot of what we currently value will be lost.*

PYOs feared being organised into patches with their budgets delegated to the district councils. Sub-divided, unitary authorities would be unable to afford specialist curriculum or residential staff due to economies of scale:

> *Small authorities can't afford to have our peripatetic dance teams, our peripatetic creative arts work, they can't afford to have the number of residential centres.*

Adult education was mentioned as a likely victim of re-organisation, since budget cuts would be directed at courses such as life-saving, swimming instruction, community sports leadership. Divided areas would not only be unable to support specialist staff financially but would be unable to attract specialist job applicants in future. Voluntary organisations, which would henceforth have to apply for grants to a number of authorities, were seen as being similarly adversely affected.

In addition to changes in levels of local authority funding, the impact of changes in legislation governing schools and colleges was also felt by some authorities to be having an effect. As one PYO explained:

9

We have been undergoing change for about the last two years. Really what we desperately need at the moment is a period of stability. It has been complicated by the fact that in addition to the budget cuts, the new legislation on colleges and local management of schools have all had an effect.

2.2 Collecting data on take-up of youth service provision

Of the 84 authorities that responded to the questionnaire survey, three-quarters (64) collected data on the numbers of young people participating in youth service provision. Seventeen authorities indicated they did not collect this type of data, while three authorities did not respond to the question.

The follow-up interviews in the 14 locations provided an insight into the main aspects of collecting data on youth service participation; data collection procedures; the type of information sought; why it is collected and how it is used; and issues relating to collecting such information. Findings from the interview data on each of these aspects are reported in the sub-sections below. However, before moving on to these, it is important to mention that in most authorities data collection on take-up had only begun in the last few years; indeed, some authorities had only just started collecting data a year earlier. While the interview locations cannot be assumed to be representative of the country as a whole, the fact that most of them had only started collecting data on take-up since about 1990/1 would seem to suggest that procedures are very much in their early stages.

Data collection procedures

Two main approaches to collection of information on take-up were identified: 'snapshots of provision'; and ongoing data collection. Two of the 14 authorities in which follow-up interviews took place used both approaches. Generally speaking, snapshots of provision seemed to have been longer in use than ongoing data collection on take-up.

Snapshots of provision

These usually involved asking every youth service outlet (e.g. youth club, advice centre, detached worker) in the authority to collect data on numbers of young people involved in a specified week or day (i.e. a twenty-four hours). These snapshots of take-up usually occurred once per year, though one authority carried them out twice a year, and another organised them on a termly basis, i.e. three times a year.

Ongoing data collection

This approach was found to be almost as common as snapshots of provision, although as already mentioned, the procedures were usually very recently introduced. The approaches varied slightly, but generally speaking this involved someone from each youth service outlet documenting nightly attendances on a local authority data collection form. Commonly this information had then to be sent off to the main youth service administration centre on a monthly or three-monthly basis. One authority only asked for collation of this data once per year, as part of the annual reporting procedure. In some authorities this practice was followed only for centre-based work, therefore little was known about contacts made through detached work.

The type of information sought

In most of the interview locations, authorities were found to collect data on *attendances*, as opposed to *numbers* of young people. As an example to illustrate the implications of this: one young person attending a youth club three times in one week would count for three attendances; equally, three young people each attending once per week would count for three attendances. Therefore, since many young people are likely to participate in more than one youth service activity per week, the number of attendances is likely to exceed the number of young people participating. As well as attendances, many authorities also required youth workers to record information on the age, gender, ethnic background and other characteristics of the young people participating. Some authorities also sought information on aspects such as: whether the contact was through group work, pairs, one-to-one contact and what issues were addressed through the contact.

How information on take-up was stored and used

Generally information collected was stored on paper, rather than on computer, although some authorities did have computerised systems and most said that it was their intention to introduce computerised systems once the monitoring procedures were established.

The main uses to which the collected data was put are outlined in the following sub-sections.

Management information

Data on attendances were found to be used for a variety of purposes: first, as a management tool to monitor how particular clubs and centres were operating. One PYO explained that when they started collecting attendance data, they found considerable variations in staffing ratios in relation to take-up for different centres. As a result she asked them to justify their staffing levels in relation to work that they were doing:

> *I wanted to be able to say 'justify to me that your cost is this...' If it is intensive youth work, that may be justifiable, but if is just youth centres it isn't.*

In some of the authorities visited, attendance figures were used as part of the calculation of the unit cost of any youth service provision. However, officers were generally quite cautious about providing such figures. In one authority the officer said they were currently debating what elements to include in the equation to calculate unit costs. Depending on what was included, the unit cost of one of their centres was found to be approximately four pounds, twelve pounds or three hundred pounds! In another authority, there was concern that unit costs, if known, would be used as ammunition against certain types of provision which had a high unit cost in relation to other types of provision. The officer explained the situation:

> *I know it costs a lot more money to run a youth club up there* [in a remote village] *than it is to have one of our bigger centres on a school site. But what does that tell us? Yes, it's cheaper, but you have not got a big school site there, and it is a small population, and it is £2.60 to get to the nearest full-time centre... If you take that away, they are ten miles away from the next big centre.*

However, while all the officers interviewed felt that data collection on youth service provision and take-up was an important management tool, some were concerned about the amount of time officers were spending

administering it and youth workers on collecting it. Collecting the information was all very well, but in order to justify the costs involved, it had to be acted upon. One PYO explained that his authority did not have the resources to act on the data that they collected:

> *Personally I think there is too much statistics and data collection which is just a whole administrative industry which actually does not get used. If I look at the stuff which HMI are expecting us to produce... I could justify all of it as useful information, but the chances of actually acting logically on any of it are actually quite remote... For us to collect the data which HMI expect, I calculated, would cost us fifteen thousand pounds. We don't have the staff to administer it, we don't have the staff to collate it, we don't have the staff to use the advantages it makes.*

Monitoring take-up among priority groups

Another use for attendance data was monitoring take-up within specific client groups. Some officers explained that this was part of the implementation of their authority's policy of prioritising certain groups of young people. If prioritised groups were not represented in sufficiently high numbers, action could be focused to remedy this.

Accountability

Attendance data were also used as part of the communication/feedback process to councillors and education committees. Most PYOs who were interviewed seemed to recognise that this was an important part of being accountable to the public and those controlling funds. As one officer explained:

> *I would argue that every area council should have that information because they are funding their groups. So a lot of what we do here we try and link in to what we can persuade our staff is relevant, good information for them.*

Also, information of this kind was usually required by sponsors of externally funded projects. Most officers recognised the importance of communicating 'results', in terms of take-up to people outside the youth service, particularly those that had influence over youth service funding and future directions. As one officer explained:

> *It is useful when you want to be able to say to somebody 'Do you realise we have 14,000 enrolments... isn't it marvellous?' People like to hear that sort of thing, but it means nothing really.*

13

Often, it was the councillors that had initially requested information on take-up. In one authority, having seen the figures, the Education Committee had told the youth service that it must achieve a 35 per cent increase in attendances on the previous year. As a result, some youth workers in existing centres were being moved to new locations to build up attendances in areas where there was previously very little provision.

In several authorities, officers mentioned the reluctance of youth workers to collect attendance data, because they were suspicious of the reasons for it. However, officers seemed to feel that the youth service had to be accountable and that workers needed to be encouraged to understand this. In one authority the PYO said that staff training had helped to overcome the doubts expressed by workers:

> *Initially people are always a bit tentative* [about collecting data], *but now they are beginning to recognise, because we have done a lot of quality assurance work with the staff here, that generally the youth service – for its survival – has got to be accountable. So I get less resistance now and I think by the end of next year we will get people really co-operating because they can see the benefit... The councillors are the ones who asked for it initially... they said they could fight for* [the youth service] *better if they knew what they were fighting for.*

However, in another authority, the PYO was concerned that too much reliance could be placed on numbers as a means of judging success. She argued that comparing attendances between clubs was not, in itself, enough to make judgements about them because so many variables came into play, such as the facilities on offer, the size of the local population, the length of time the club had been running and so on.

Issues related to collecting attendances or numbers

One of the issues that came up in relation to collecting data on take-up was what actually counts as an 'attendance'/contact. Several officers said there had been quite a lot of discussion around this aspect, but they were still not entirely satisfied with what they had come up with. It was a case of doing the best to be sensible and provide some sort of definition that was measurable for workers. While 'traditional' youth club attendances were relatively easy to monitor, take-up was more difficult to define in

terms of detached work or advice and counselling work, or in a drop-in centre, as one PYO explained:

If you have got a clean-cut situation where X number of people are going through the doors of a youth club, paying a fee, that is very easy to keep numbers on and we do in [the authority]*; there is a nightly returns sheet...* [But] *one of the difficulties we have is that in many youth clubs people aren't paying a membership fee; in many places it is the sort of place where you might pop in for ten or fifteen minutes, see your friends or somebody* [working] *there and then go out again. Or you may stand outside the door and actually never go in, but you might be there all evening. The problem then is do you count those numbers in?*

It is the same with outreach or detached work. Do you count a very small conversation on the street with somebody, or do you [only] *count actual involved work over a period? We are trying to tackle that, we are trying to break that down so that we have a definition of what a contact is and a contract with young people, meaning ongoing work. ...But those things take time... so although we do have a numbers count, it doesn't have a great deal of meaning.*

In another authority the decision had been taken NOT to count casual conversations that detached workers had with young people on the streets. Passing the time of day with young people was not enough to count as a contact, even though the PYO said it was a valid part of the outreach worker's role. In order to 'count', in-depth discussion had to have taken place.

Some officers felt frustrated that despite the amount of additional time and effort being required of youth workers in asking them to collect figures, there was a real possibility that they were getting misleading figures. The problem was that there was so much scope for individual interpretation, as another PYO explained:

It is amazing how many people can misinterpret information and so the results are pretty meaningless. For example, some people decided that if they had a minibus trip out which only took 15 people, because you can't get more on a minibus, then they wouldn't count it as a session of youth work because they might have had 20 people at the youth club if they had run a youth club, and it would make their numbers look worse – silly things like that.

2.3 Strategies for monitoring youth service provision

Seeking the views of young people

Most – but not all – authorities appeared to have sought, either regularly or at some point within the last ten years, the views of the users of the youth service – the young people themselves. One PYO explained the reasons for this:

> *The whole of our focus is now much more...customer-oriented, or young people-oriented, so that we actually meet the needs of young people, not necessarily meeting the needs of professionals. It's alright to say we're going to work with young people, but if you don't actually listen to what they want, you're not going to work with them.*

The approach most commonly employed was a questionnaire, distributed on an area basis, and possibly focused specifically on client groups. Some PYOs voiced dissatisfaction with the low response rate inherent in such evaluation. Instead of a postal survey, therefore, or one handed out through schools, some youth services distributed questionnaires through their projects. Another had delivered its 'customer service questionnaire' via three trained administrators, who dealt with groups of about ten users at a time. The questions had been developed by young people and emerged from focus groups assembled at random from across the county. Some regular evaluations took the form of a 'snapshot' survey of all young people attending projects on one given day.

A PYO from another authority pointed out that putting their questionnaire in a magazine format, with pictures, had raised its appeal. Another felt that take-up of their questionnaire had increased through offering the chance to win £25 worth of record tokens. This same authority had followed up its survey with a youth conference and a youth forum. The forum, still in development at the time of interview, was intended to solicit young people's views on the service, a process that was proving challenging since the young people were unused to taking control and were unaware of the possibilities open to them.

Monitoring by youth officers

In some authorities the youth officer team was responsible for monitoring projects. Although the intention, in one, was that the team should visit twice-yearly to look at work, in practice their visits had been restricted to crisis-management. In order to remedy this, a system of 'review weeks' (four weeks annually during which field officers would make unannounced visits to projects) and a 'review panel' (to receive a twice-yearly report on the visits) had been set up. Projects would in turn receive notes of the visits from which, together with the panel, they would draw up future plans.

Evaluation surveys seem sometimes to have been carried out on an ad hoc, piecemeal basis: a collection of local surveys. Some PYOs pointed to a lack of formal structure for carrying them out. If policy was that each patch should work to its individual needs, then the form in which an evaluation was carried out varied according to the bent of the particular youth worker concerned.

Other forms of monitoring and evaluation

Other forms of evaluation mentioned included county-wide monitoring processes and district- or project-based business plans whose targets needed periodic evaluation. In one authority this was described as a NAOMIE analysis (Needs, Aims, Objectives, Methods, Implementation, Evaluation): a team-based evaluation that resulted in a two year action plan. Participants on residential courses completed evaluation forms, and staff working on projects would often carry out their own assessments. Although staff evaluations were needed in order to make a case for continued funding, service development conferences with youth workers were found to create resistance, since the workers felt that too much information was being sought, for uncertain ends.

Authorities occasionally paid for evaluation by external services such as MORI or HMI. One had employed a research officer for two years specifically to undertake a review of the service; another had had an informal visit from OFSTED.

In order to evaluate the long-term benefits of youth provision, and incidentally motivate current users, one authority was arranging reunions of ex-users at their still-running youth club. Existing users interviewed the 'graduates' about what they had enjoyed about the club and its subsequent effect on their lives. One reunion had involved leavers of 25 years before:

> [One] *was talking about how he was beaten by his father, how he was expelled from school, but the one stable thing in his life was to go to the youth club... how useful it was and how he's going to make sure his son goes... What we do know is that it had a significant effect on these people's lives.*

Quality assurance

Evaluation often overlapped, both literally and in the minds of interviewees, with quality standards or quality control. One authority had a quality insurance inspection scheme based on OFSTED's school inspection procedures. Carried out by a team of four, each review was led by a full-time member of the quality assurance central team. Its post-review internal report, listing main points but not recommendations, would be conveyed to each member of staff and to the head of the youth service. Subsequently its points would be incorporated into the project's business plan, which itself embodied objectives and performance indicators for monitoring. Plans for instituting a similar system were mentioned by other interviewees.

Many PYOs drew attention to future plans for auditing and evaluation intended to help projects both gauge needs and evaluate their own provision. For some, this would be the first time they had conducted such an evaluation.

Findings of evaluation process

All interviewees claimed that the evaluation process, in whatever form this had occurred, had produced a positive outcome and been well received. Particularly commented on by the young people was the

contact with the youth workers and the small group work, although the physical facilities were criticised. Surveys sometimes revealed, to the gratification of youth service managers, that a high proportion of young people had been the service's long-term users.

Although surveys tended to assert that all was well, this approbation was felt to be of limited use. Many PYOs pointed out a difference between needs and wants. Young people's demands were often unrealistic, and failed to match with what the service believed it was in existence to provide:

> *We have got this dilemma in the youth service: what we advertise and promote to young people isn't actually what we are about. In many ways I think we ought to be more upfront about what our real purpose is. It isn't just about having fun and keeping off the street and meeting your friends..*[but] *that is how it is promoted.*

Changes implemented as a result of evaluation

Survey recommendations had indeed highlighted areas of unmet need which had subsequently resulted in re-prioritising of targeting: for example, in favour of young women.

Some authorities followed an evaluation with team meetings for dissemination, and with training programmes. Each team would be required to decide which issues applied to them, and what their response could be.

Changes recognised as desirable as an outcome of evaluation did not, however, necessarily come to fruition. One authority had carried out a major survey about seven years previous to this inquiry. Lasting 18 months and employing a full-time officer and team of six, the questionnaire-based evaluation of young people's requests and views had covered about half of the service's provision. Although a five-year growth programme to raise standards in areas of low-quality provision was planned, owing to budget cuts only about a third of the envisaged funding materialised. Repeating such a review in the near future was ruled out on grounds of high costs in money and time.

2.4 Inter-agency working

Organisation of voluntary sector links

Nearly all interviewees prided themselves on the sheer numbers of voluntary groups with which they were involved, rising into the hundreds. Many authorities operated a youth advisory committee or council made up of representatives from a range of voluntary sector organisations (Scouts, Guides, churches, community groups, the police and so on). If not, the PYO him- or herself tended to take part in council and executive meetings of the local voluntary council.

Forms of support lent by the youth service to voluntary sector organisations included the following types.

● Financial support through either capital or revenue grants. Whilst in the past this protective role had been a priority, the need to make cuts was curtailing provision for such group with inevitable rebound effects on youth services.

● The allocation of some of its training budget to help voluntary groups with their training needs; for example, on The Children Act, or on child abuse.

● The secondment of its own staff to work with voluntary groups.

● Salary payment of staff working uniquely for a voluntary group (Scout leaders, the Young Farmers).

● Provision of equipment and materials.

● Advice, support, and joint-planning.

Only one PYO commented at interview that such financial support was resented by his youth workers who felt they could make better use of the money. Others approved of the precise targeting that allocating funds through voluntary groups facilitated.

Some authorities ran systems to formalise their links with voluntary organisations. In one, these could register with the youth service if they could prove they met its criteria. Access to tutors, training, transport, committee representation, and the possibility of grants and staff support followed as a consequence. In turn, the organisations were monitored by the authority regarding activities and take-up in the same way as was the

maintained youth service. One even carried out an in-depth inspection of six randomly-selected voluntary organisations each year to assess its service and inform future grant-making decisions. In others, service level agreements were implemented, or groups receiving major financial support (£5,000 or more) would be required to draw up a business plan and be treated in commercial terms.

In one case, almost all the youth clubs in the authority's area were actually owned by voluntary organisations. The youth service just seconded some of its staff to work in them, but required that the club implement the authority's youth service mission statement. A PYO in another authority also testified to the benefits of voluntary organisations managing the youth service's work for them:

> *We have made a policy decision that almost everywhere we can we will set up voluntary organisations to run projects, as opposed to the county council running them.* [One] *applies for money to us; we give it money, and whilst we still pay their staff, we make it quite clear that all we have is the pay role. So that the voluntary organisation, as far as we are concerned, is actually the employer.*

Whilst links with voluntary groups had at the outset created suspicion and fear, by now the marriage was welcomed:

> *If the partnership is going to be effective it needs to be much more equably based... What is the point of us going into competition? So we work in partnership.*

But partnerships were not without their weak points. Funding youth work through voluntary groups could mean money being inappropriately allocated to groups outside the youth service's remit (the pre-teens, for example). Some PYOs wanted their youth workers to take a more active role in drawing voluntary groups into the ambit of the youth service by, for example, making an input to their meetings.

Links with schools and colleges

Schools frequently housed youth centres run by the youth service, although this in itself did not guarantee good liaison between the two. They also were able to use the youth service's outdoor education centres. Detached youth workers took on a variety of roles in their work in schools: they delivered PSE; ran lunchtime sessions; were present at

school closing times to prevent street conflict; and worked with education welfare officers on child protection and truancy. Teams of youth workers would be invited in to school from time to time to carry out specific work. As one PYO commented:

I think it is good that we are seen as part of the overall education provision. I am very much of the view that we are located in the correct department [Education]*... If you look at the core of the work it is education. Full stop.*

There was a tendency for schools in the more affluent areas to regard the youth service as catering for 'problem kids' only and were resistant to youth workers coming in. By contrast, the need to seek joint funding had brought clusters of local heads into co-operation with the youth service.

Youth services did not generally make distinctions between LEA and grant-maintained (GM) schools, since their objective was to work with young people wherever they were found (including independent schools). Only one authority had a policy of not doing anything with GM schools that involved county finance. Otherwise, working with GM schools, for example to reduce truancy, was in the school's interest since it served to enhance the school's reputation and move it further up the league tables. Where schools were in charge of their own budgets, the youth service had been forced into participating in competitive tendering for such services as drugs education. Bids were sometimes rejected at the outset by schools which thought they could do it better themselves. Only in a few areas – race equality education was one mentioned – had schools recognised the unique contribution made by the youth service. If the youth service made no charge, schools saw themselves as getting something for nothing, but this did not necessarily concern the PYO:

They see it as us helping them, we actually see it as good social youth work. It's also a captive audience, where you can get your message across... If you haven't got young people, you can't work with them.

Although some youth clubs were located on college sites, fewer links appeared to be in place with colleges. This was partly due to the incorporation of colleges which had made their own provision. Some authorities placed part-time workers in colleges, and these organised advice sessions and other activities at lunchtimes. Some Section 11

funded work was taking place. One authority had links with the local TEC, including plans to develop work on records of achievement in the youth service.

Links with local government departments

Despite an occasional local history of inter-agency mistrust or at least non-involvement, links with local government departments were strong and varied. Some youth services were keen to get as much funding as possible from external agencies and other departments.

Liaison occurred at a local level through the team leaders and workers, and at a strategic level through senior managers. Departments with which links were cited included health, social services, the police and the probation service: indeed, all those with an interest in the welfare of young people. Depending on the issue – juvenile justice, for example, or child care protection – particular agencies would be recommended for collaboration. Youth crime prevention programmes were mentioned by several PYOs. In some cases introduced in tandem with commercial interests, to provide financing and business expertise, they had proved the launch pad for a range of productive outcomes (curriculum support, youth conferences, holiday work with the police). This more commercial approach was felt to gain the youth service an image of professionalism, which in turn had resulted in the awarding of contracts. One youth service, for example, had been commissioned to run all the health education department's sexual health programmes.

Partnership with local government departments was not without its problems, however. For one youth service located in community education, the PYO explained:

> There is a big issue in there about inter-agency work which is we've all come with different experiences, different philosophies, and increasingly some of us have gone down the enabling role and some have gone more into the control role... There is a happy medium to be had between the two extremes. Social services or probation is very much about control – to actually switch from that control role to the enabling role is ridiculous. For us to suddenly revert into a control role is also difficult.

2.5 Summary of main points

- ◆ Most youth services were based in the Education department, although many were in the process of reorganisation.

- ◆ In a change from previously centralised forms of organisation, most divided their responsibilities into areas led by teams.

- ◆ Youth workers were responsible for the bulk of face-to-face work, and their administrative responsibilities were in some cases being reduced through the input of marketing specialists.

- ◆ Despite this, many youth workers were putting in extra, unpaid, hours.

- ◆ Most authorities had needed to make substantial staff cuts in recent years.

- ◆ Youth services were moving from a provider to a purchaser role.

- ◆ Most still operated a hierarchical management structure.

- ◆ Local government reorganisation was viewed negatively as heralding a loss of quality and of a focus on education.

- ◆ Most authorities had recently started collecting on-going data on youth service take-up (attendances, not numbers of young people).

- ◆ Attendance figures were difficult to define outside a traditional youth club context and could be misleading.

- ◆ Data were used as a management tool to monitor clubs and centres, assess take-up among priority groups, and furnish accountability to the public.

- ◆ Most services had sought the views of their young people, usually by questionnaire.

- Evaluation, in all its forms, had produced positive feedback.

- Consequences of evaluation included reprioritising of target groups.

- All youth services worked closely with the voluntary sector, many in effect purchasing their services to fulfil some of their own commitments.

- The extent of links with schools and colleges varied between local authorities.

- Collaboration with local government departments in joint areas of concern was commonplace. The relationship was becoming increasingly professionalised and even commercialised.

<div align="center">

CHAPTER THREE
THE IMPACT OF CHANGES IN YOUTH SERVICE FUNDING

</div>

This chapter reports on the impact of changes in levels of youth service funding. It covers the following aspects: staffing; premises and resources; targeted provision; income generation and the increase in external funding; and the increasing need to 'market' the youth service. The chapter is based on interview data from 14 local authorities where follow-up interviews took place.

3.1 Changes in levels of youth service funding

The interviews with youth officers in local authorities provided the opportunity to explore some of the issues related to youth service funding. The interview locations were not selected to be representative of the country as a whole, but to provide a range of different situations, locations, structures and approaches to youth service delivery. In relation to funding, however, most of the locations visited reported annual fluctuations within a context of generally declining youth service budgets. The position described by one PYO typifies the types of comments that were made in such authorities:

> *Six years have taken a lot out of the service in terms of morale...*
> *Ten years ago, when HMI visited* [the local authority], *it was seen*
> *as one of the forerunners of youth services in Great Britain. It was*
> *seen very much as the cutting edge, pioneering new ways of*
> *working. In the last six years that has obviously been toned down,*
> *in my opinion, by quite a lot of budget crises and lowering of*
> *morale and lack of adequate resources to do what we wanted to do.*
> *It is a question* [now] *of trying to stabilise that situation and get*
> *ourselves back onto that track; starting to get to grips with issues*
> *of the '90s.*

However, there were some exceptions to this among the authorities visited, for example, in one authority there had been no budget reduction in recent years. This was attributed to the move from being based in the

Education Department to the Youth and Community Department, which meant that some of the community funding was being used to support some youth service provision. In other authorities, while budget cuts were reported, the officers seemed to be more optimistic about the future because of their success in securing external funding to shore up declining local authority funding for youth service provision (this issue is addressed later in this section).

The decline in local authority funding for youth service provision was generally attributed to reduced local authority funding, which was linked to the Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs). However, within limited local authority funding, the youth service was often reported to have been hit harder than other local authority services because youth service provision did not have a statutory basis. Youth officers in several authorities commented that they were the poor relation in competition with major statutory services such as education and social services. An important factor affecting this in some local authorities was the need to maintain levels of funding for schools in order to discourage them from seeking grant maintained (GM) status. As one youth officer explained: 'As a discretionary service within the Education Department we are always ... under pressure when issues such as class size come up.'

For some authorities, another factor in their levels of funding was the legislative changes governing schools and colleges. This resulted not only in loss of 'free' premises for use for youth work, but also loss of revenue for lettings and hence a smaller budget from which to make savings. As one PYO explained:

> *It gets progressively difficult each year. The amount of money that we are asked to save each year by the Government to gather the 'capping money' is increasing and the number of places we can take the money from is decreasing because schools have now gone LMS and colleges are no longer part of the local education authority. So the places that you can actually make savings from are fewer and fewer.*

In a different authority, following year on year reductions for the past four years, the council was reported to have recognised that taking money from the youth service budget meant they needed to put more into other departments such as social services, and so it was decided that the youth service would no longer be used as a buffer to absorb education cuts.

However, there was a widely held view, emerging from most of the locations visited, that the youth service, without a statutory basis, was destined to remain a marginalised, 'Cinderella service' in relation to local authority funding. The views expressed by one youth officer were typical:

> *I think you become immune to doing the best you can with the resources you've got... you just try to make the best use of them that you can. I have become a realist and my realism is that I do not see, within the foreseeable future, local authorities giving more money for youth work than they do at the moment.*

3.2 Impact of funding changes on youth service provision

The impact of these changes in levels of funding varied from authority to authority, with different strategies adopted to manage budget reductions and maximise resources. The remainder of this chapter focuses on some of the most common themes emerging from the discussions about levels of funding.

Staffing

One of the most common responses to reduced funding was to reduce youth service staffing. In some authorities this was across the board, with officer posts and full-time worker posts as well as part-time hours being reduced. In others, particular posts were targeted as part of an overall re-organisation strategy. Not surprisingly, officers felt that these cuts had a detrimental effect on the service being provided. In some authorities projects and youth clubs had closed down as a result of staffing cuts, in others the number of clubs and centres remained, but officers reported that the cost effectiveness of this was questionable because they were opening fewer nights per week and/or for less hours. The comments of one PYO described a common problem in relation to reduced staffing and levels of provision:

> *We are forever being cut... we now have to open two hours per night, whereas it used to be three, and we have had to cut the number of nights we are open. No youth club now is open more than three nights per week, and many are down to two... We have got to the stage now where we have got a lot of youth clubs for the*

size of our metropolitan borough, so a lot of our assets are tied up in buildings... I think now though that we have spread the jam so thin that the next thing is we are going to have to close some down.

In another location youth service officers felt that the number of buildings being maintained was in fact part of the problem in relation to staffing. There was reported to be political pressure to maintain the number of youth service premises, even though these were no longer cost effective:

We end up having one worker in one building in communities where, if we were designing from scratch, we would not put a building anyway.

As well as reduced levels of service arising from staffing cuts, in several authorities officers highlighted the problems that reductions in staffing were causing for remaining staff. As well as additional workloads, in some locations workers were being expected to fulfil different roles. In one authority, for example, loss of a 'middle management' tier of officers had resulted in senior youth workers spending much more of their time on management responsibilities and less time on face-to-face work with young people. In another authority the PYO said a priority for the future was to fund administrative posts so that youth workers could do youth work. The PYOs in each of these authorities felt that they were not using youth workers' skills to the best effect under current circumstances. As one of them said: 'we are wasting what we employed them for in the first place'.

In another authority, where the officer team had gone from four to two and the number of full-time youth workers cut from 34 to 14, staff at all levels were being expected to take on wider roles than previously, as the PYO explained:

A lot of [workers are] having to be very flexible now; there is really nobody now that has just one job... That's one of the real problems at the moment – as well as keeping the freshness and newness of staff, you have got to give them the skills. Some people will never have the skills; they are just not suited to a particular area of work... that is not to say they are not good youth workers. Some of them are quite at home [working] on the streets, others are less so and some of them will never be... the skills that we are asking from people now are so much wider than they ever used to be. I am not sure that is recognised, either in the salary scales or political terms.

In another authority all the ancillary support staff posts were cut as a result of one year's budget reductions:

We used to have ancillary staff who would do the admin. side of running the youth clubs, they would run the coffee bar, take money etcetera. But with one level of cuts we had to get rid of them all... about one hundred. The awful part was that... it was also a recruiting base for many of our youth workers. They would start that way, tentatively coming out when the family was a little bit older, gradually getting more confidence, attending our women's groups and then going on from there... a really good recruiting base for women either back into education or work.

However, in one authority where budget cuts had also been experienced, the policy was to employ bursars in each of the main youth centres. These post holders were responsible for finance, buildings and marketing and it was part of their job to try to attract money through lettings and sponsorship for the centre. The PYO said that there had been a conscious decision to put money aside for these posts; a policy of speculating to accumulate.

Another detrimental aspect of reduced staffing, particularly where full-time youth worker posts were lost, was reported to be the loss of role models/on-the-job training for part-time and junior youth workers. In one authority the senior worker post, described as being similar to that of education advisers for schools, had disappeared. In another authority, where full-time worker posts were halved, the PYO was concerned that the education and training budget should be maintained at the same level to ensure that part-time workers were receiving the support that they needed in the absence of full-time worker support. However in another authority the PYO reported that the training budget had also had to be reduced which, in conjunction with the loss of full-time worker posts, meant they did not support their youth workers in the way that they used to. In yet another authority the PYO summed up the concerns expressed by many:

A lot of youth services are like ours - you have the 'professional staff' who no longer actually do the [youth] work and if they don't do the work, where are the really good role models for the part-time staff that you rely on...? It worries me that we can't show part-time staff in maintained centres good role models of how you do good youth work.

Premises and resources

No overall pattern emerged in relation to funding and premises and resources. A common view among PYOs seemed to be that premises and facilities, though cause for concern, were of much lower priority than staffing levels. However, the condition of premises was reported nevertheless as a cause for concern, both in relation to health and safety, and in the context of attracting young people to youth service provision. Several officers made references to buildings that were old and run down, suffering from damp or dry-rot and poorly equipped. There was a general feeling in these authorities that young people deserved better places in which to meet; that broken chairs and crumbling buildings was a poor reflection of the esteem in which young people were held by society. However, limited funding meant that they could not act on this view. In one authority, where voluntary sector premises were used for local authority youth clubs, the PYO articulated common concerns about being able to do anything to improve standards of resources:

A lot of voluntary organisations haven't got the money to get places up to scratch... I would really love to have more money to help them, because that is really what they want from us - to get these places out of the sixties and seventies and into the nineties. They are perfectly capable of doing it; they just haven't got the money to do it, and that is one of our big problems at the moment.

However, some local authorities where interviews took place had policies regarding standards of buildings and equipment. In one such authority there was a five-year rolling programme of buildings maintenance and improvement. The PYO felt that as well as health and safety considerations, good standards of facilities were important in encouraging participation. He felt that some authorities did not put enough emphasis on this aspect of their provision:

We try to make our buildings attractive... we have got some pretty good quality buildings. If I go to a centre and see a torn chair I take it outside for them. We spent three-quarters of a million pounds this year on buildings... I go round other local authorities and I cringe at the standards. I think I would be tempted not to have the [premises]... I would go out and cohabit with somebody else. But there again, some of my colleagues would say it is better to have something than nothing, and I suppose at the end of the day I would agree with them.

Targeted youth service provision

Perhaps one of the most important findings to emerge in relation to reduced levels of funding was that several local authorities no longer felt able to provide a truly generic service, that is, for all their young people. In response to increasingly limited resources several officers said that they had found it necessary to draw up plans to target specific groups within the youth population. These target groups varied from one authority to another (see Chapter Four), but generally they were described as focusing on those young people most 'disadvantaged'. (This was the term most commonly used by youth officers.) In one authority a 'resourcing model' had been drawn up, whereby specific groups such as unemployed young people and young people from ethnic minorities were given a weighting in terms of numbers which was used as a planning tool in allocating budget resources to specific projects. In another authority, the PYO explained that although their budget had not fallen in recent years, the needs within specific groups of the youth population had increased, which had resulted in more targeted work and less generic work:

> *The demands that have been made on the service by young people and the community are increasing rather than decreasing. So, for example, we have got a lot more homeless young people than we had in the past who are coming to us for help and assistance. We're involved in health education programmes around drug misuse, prostitution, alcohol abuse and youth crime. ... The only way we can meet those is to reduce perhaps the more traditional type of youth worker... we've got a lot more workers out on the streets now than we used to have; not as many centre-based.*

Income generation and external funding

In all of the interview locations there were reported increases in levels of external funding in recent years. Most officers described this as a direct consequence of declining local authority funding for youth work. There seemed to be a generally accepted view that the future of local authority youth service provision would rely increasingly on officers successfully bidding for external funding or joining forces with other local authority departments to target groups of young people in which there was a shared interest. As one youth officer explained: 'joint project working or inter-agency work. Those are the two main paths, I think, where our future lies.'

In a similar vein, another PYO commented:

We are very proactive, very buoyant even though we have been cut, because each year we have been cut, our budget has stayed [level] because we have brought money in... The reason we have gone down that road of chasing outside money is, first of all, that the bigger you are the stronger you will become, so therefore you can chase other money. Also the money that is available is directly relevant to what we are about.

However, this need to secure external funding was felt by some youth officers to have important implications for the type of service that local authority youth services provided in the future, because usually external funding was given on the basis that it would target specific groups of young people. Some PYOs expressed concern that they were increasingly having to focus on a minority of young people, possibly at the expense of the majority, for example:

I am beginning to get a bit concerned... that we are tending to work with 'disadvantaged' young people rather more than perhaps the 'advantaged', for want of a better description... now I don't want to get trapped in that. ...We can work with disadvantaged young people, but we won't be an education service then. We need the work with other young people to counterbalance [targeted provision] and to give the platform on which we work... There is a danger at the moment that we could find ourselves working too much with the disadvantaged and not enough work with the others.

However, in other authorities officers felt that a more entrepreneurial approach was a positive step towards improving provision for young people. In one such authority the PYO explained this position:

[The authority] can't be seen to be providing everything. It would be nice if we could, but would [workers] appreciate it? ... We have made it quite clear that we wanted to go out into the market and raise funding. That market includes the internal market as well; doing work for other departments. So now we get money from a variety of sources, including industry. This year alone that is worth about eight hundred thousand pounds. That is [apart from] any government grants.

In another authority with a similar approach to external funding, the PYO described officers' new role as that of brokers in youth service provision:

It's about us putting packages together all over the place... We'll resource them or we will manage them. It is us acting as the

intermediary in a lot of these cases... Our view is that if somebody says to us: 'we have got some money - we'd like to try this out', we see where we can take advantage of this. We view everything as 'how can we turn this to the advantage of the delivery to the young people?'

For example, the authority was about to launch an information strategy for 14 - 19 year olds that involved funding from several county council departments, but was to be run by the youth service.

An important aspect related to external funding was the amount of time youth officers had to spend on fundraising, giving them less time for other aspects of their work. Some youth officers appeared to enjoy the challenge that this new facet of their job gave them, while others saw it as an unwelcome but inevitable part of youth officers' emerging role. As one of the latter explained: 'we just accept that as a fact of life now; myself and my deputies do spend a lot of time and money on it, but you just have to do it'.

Another issue related to external funding was its short-term nature. Usually money was allocated for specific projects for a limited period of time; commonly two or three years. Finding ways of maintaining funding for successful initiatives once external funding was coming to an end was reported to be the biggest problem for youth officers. As one of them explained:

We seem to be very good at the moment in picking up funding from other bodies, which tends to be for short-term contracts. That is not easy and it is not good for staff and it is very complex, administratively.

However, some PYOs felt that this was only a problem because the responsibility of seeking external funding remained at senior officer level. They felt it was important to introduce a culture of fund-seeking at every level of the service; that workers also had responsibility to find funding for their work. One PYO said:

We have created a culture where our staff are expected to income generate; they are expected to apply for money.

Another PYO explained that area teams could only rely on local authority funding for about half of their work:

> *I think we have become better and better at targeting the money we have got more specifically, and bringing in money from other sources. In a lot of our patches, the money that the patch gets from Community Education is only fifty per cent and the rest they get from FEFC, the European Social Fund, grants from grant-making trusts. We've become very entrepreneurial.*

The need to market the youth service

Marketing the youth service was something which some of the more entrepreneurial youth officers felt had been significant in their success in attracting external funding, particularly from business. These officers felt that the youth service was often poorly understood by those outside it, and that part of their role was to raise the awareness of potential sponsors to the range of provision that existed and the way it related to the interests of other agencies and organisations. One local authority had created a new post of marketing manager. This person was responsible for looking after external contracts, seeking new sources of funding, running a training agency which provided training for other local authority personnel (which involved fees), training youth service staff about how to manage publicity and handle the press and 'selling' a new upmarket image of the service with a new youth service logo and glossy publications. The PYO commented: 'one of the reasons we have been so successful is because we have got that post...'.

In another authority with a similar policy towards marketing the service, the PYO described how the ethos of the service was geared entirely towards a marketing culture:

> *I insisted that my senior staff joined things like Chamber of Commerce and Town Centre Initiative Groups, because we are a business... to provide things for people you need resourcing, and to do that you need to tell people what you need and how you need it. I speak quite regularly to Chambers of Commerce, I speak to industrial groups... I don't believe in tacky presentations, so if we are doing presentations or slides we do it properly, and in the corner of every slide there is our logo. Our logo is everywhere...*

3.3 Summary of main points

◆ The impact of changes in levels of funding varied between authorities.

◆ Most authorities reported annual fluctuations within an overall context of declining youth service budgets.

◆ A common response to reduced local authority funding was to cut youth service staffing levels, which was seen as detrimental to the service that could be offered and to the remaining staff who had additional workloads and were required to fulfil a range of new roles.

◆ Opportunities for on-the-job training of youth workers had decreased along with the possibility of learning from role models.

◆ The condition of premises was another cause for concern.

◆ Reduced funding necessitated the targeting of particular disadvantaged groups of young people rather than a service offered to all.

◆ The service was becoming increasingly reliant on external sources of funding which tended to be short term and to focus on provision for particular groups.

◆ A need was identified for the service to gear itself towards a marketing culture.

CHAPTER FOUR
YOUNG PEOPLE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION

This chapter focuses on the young people provided for by local authority youth services. It begins by giving details of prioritised age groups and target populations. It describes how many authorities have carried out analyses of young people's needs, the needs that have been identified from these studies, and the extent to which these needs are being addressed through current provision. The next section looks at the range of provision made by local authorities, the curriculum areas addressed, and the attendance levels reported within each type of provision. The chapter ends with a summary of the main points.

4.1 Priority groups within the youth population

Of the 84 authorities responding to the questionnaire survey, 78 indicated that they had prioritised certain groups of young people within the overall youth population (Table 4.1). Fifty-one of these had identified priority age groups and other priority groups of young people. Twenty-three authorities had prioritised by age-group only, while four authorities had prioritised other groups of young people only (i.e. on the basis of criteria other than age). Six authorities did not prioritise at all.

Targeting priority groups was frequently perceived by the PYOs as the inevitable consequence of restricted funding. However, most agreed that it had provided the impetus for opening channels of communication with previously neglected groups of young people.

Table 4.1 Authorities that indicated priority age-groups and/or priority groups of young people within the youth population

Local authority has:	N
Priority age-group(s) AND priority groups of young people	51
Priority age-group(s) ONLY	23
Priority groups of young people ONLY	4
No priority groups	6
No response	0
TOTAL	84

Data throughout this chapter are based on questionnaire responses from 84 local authority principal youth officers (or equivalent) and interviews with 14 of these.

Priority by age

Seventy-four of the 84 responding authorities indicated that, within the overall age-range for whom they make provision, they had identified a priority age-group (Table 4.1). More than half of these (45) prioritised young people who were between 13/14 and 19/20/21 years old. The full pattern of responses is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Youth Service Provision – Priority age ranges identified
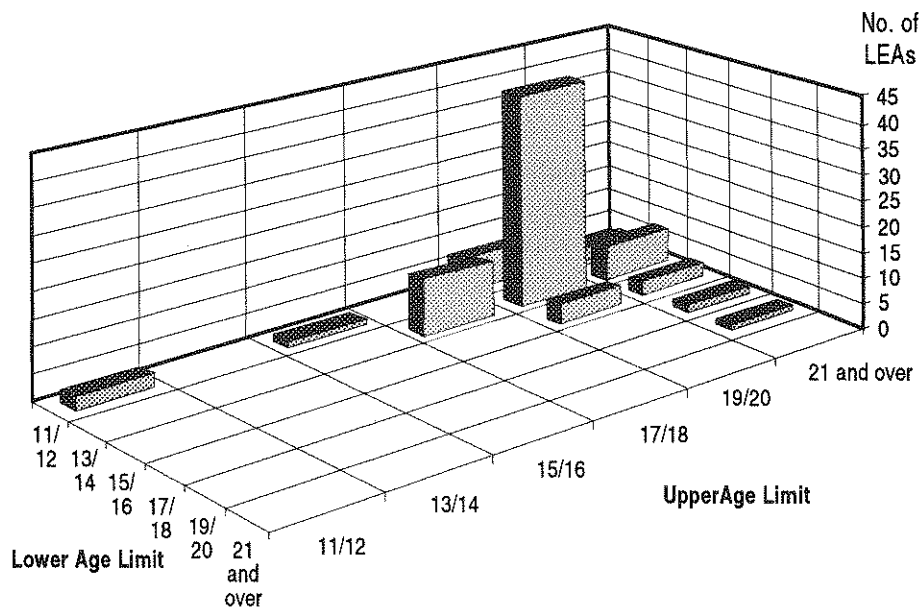
Whilst the youth service covered the full 11-25 age range, attention was commonly focused on 14-19 year olds as those most likely to need and use the facilities on offer. Despite this, some authorities were focusing on the extremities of the age-range. One authority was 'under a lot of pressure' to organise junior clubs because 'they bring in a lot of money in the canteen and on the door'.

At the other end of the age-range, the youth service was combined with the Community Education Department and tended to work more with adults – the 'under-achievers at school' and those who had left full-time education. The 20-25 age range was also targeted in areas of high unemployment: in which case it was important to provide a differentiated curriculum, 'so that they're not doing the same with an eleven- year-old as they would do with a nineteen-year-old'.

Priority by other criteria

Almost two-thirds of the responding local authorities (55) had identified priority groups of young people on the basis of criteria other than age. Fifteen indicated just one priority group, six indicated two priority groups, nine indicated three priority groups and 15 indicated four priority groups.

The two most common priority groups were young people from ethnic minorities and young women/girls (28 authorities), followed by young disabled people (25 authorities). Ranked next were young people 'at risk' of committing crime or drug misuse (20 authorities), and the economically or socially 'disadvantaged' (16 authorities). The full range of priority groups identified by local authorities is shown in Figure 4.2.

All targeted groups were socially disadvantaged and traditionally reluctant to participate in youth service activities. Since the youth service could not afford universal coverage, it seemed that working with the disadvantaged was the most ethical solution, especially when this complemented the authority's equal opportunities policy.

The nature of the target groups depended to some extent on the immediate environment and the perceived relationship between the youth service and the local authority. Inner city youth services tended to focus on ethnic minorities and young people at risk. In one authority, for example, the

skills and commitment of key individuals had provided the momentum for sustained and successful involvement with young women – including young prostitutes – from both these groups.

Figure 4.2 Priority groups (not age-related) identified by local authorities
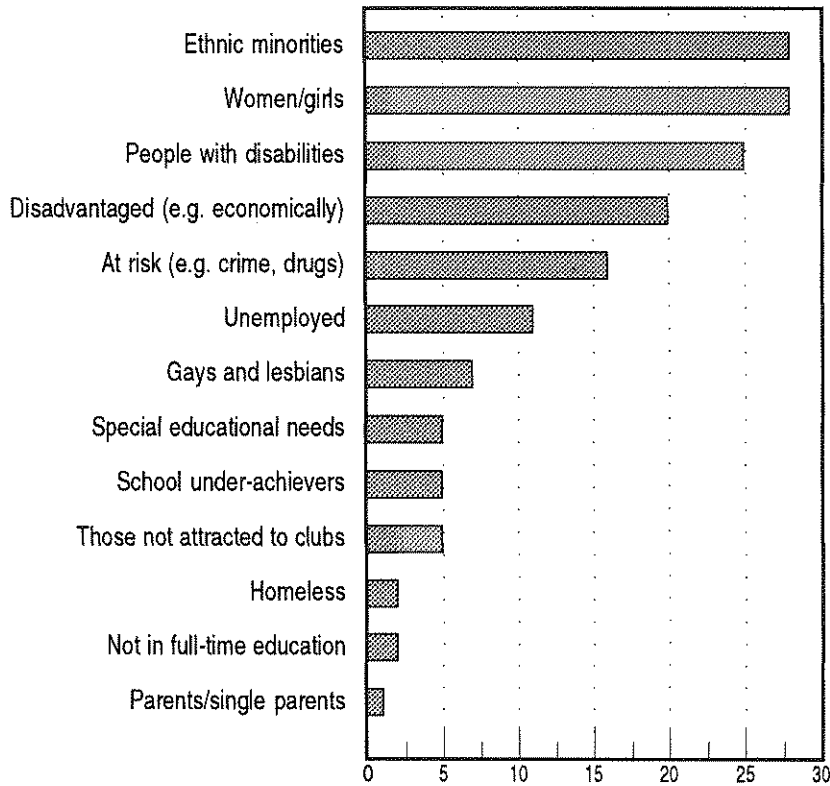
Based on information provided by 55 authorities.

Target groups in urban and rural areas

It was especially in inner cities where target groups were often defined by their vulnerability to discrimination. In addition to the work with prostitutes mentioned above, numerous authorities were attempting to redress the balance of opportunities for ethnic minorities. Two authorities specifically targeted young gays and lesbians, and others, used such terms as the 'disadvantaged', 'the discriminated against' and 'those at risk'.

Although the rural authorities corresponded in many respects to the metropolitan youth services in their choice of target groups, a few differences arose from the more thinly populated nature of the area. One authority had recently prioritised the young people in travelling communities. Another mainly rural youth service had developed a policy to provide 'geographical spread of opportunity' so that young people all over the county had access to similar resources and facilities. By mobilising the skills and commitment of members of the voluntary organisations, they had found they could make this an achievable goal.

In rural authorities transport was a major concern, especially where young people with disabilities were being targeted. As one PYO observed:

> *The added pressures in rural youth work are isolation and time – huge amounts of time spent travelling. To pick up the minibus you might have an hour's drive ... and an hour's drive back on top of your working day.*

4.2 Analyses of young people's needs

The questionnaire survey asked local authorities if they had carried out any analysis of young people's needs. Approximately three-quarters (65) of those responding to the survey said that they had undertaken a needs analysis, though 16 of these said that the exercise was incomplete at the time of returning the questionnaire. Eighteen authorities said that they had not carried out a needs analysis, and one authority did not respond to the question.

How needs analyses were conducted

Those authorities that had completed needs analyses were asked how this had been conducted. Figure 4.3 indicates that the three most common approaches were a questionnaire survey of young people's views, interviews or discussions with young people, and seeking the views of youth workers.

Figure 4.3 How local authority needs analyses were conducted
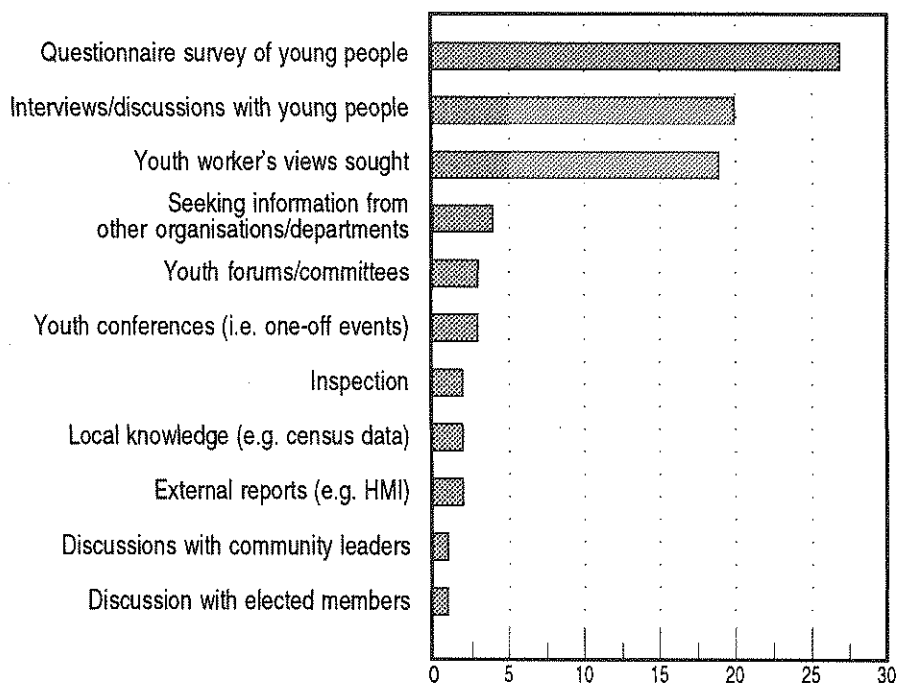
Based on information provided by 49 authorities.

Twenty-three authorities mentioned that they had carried out more than one needs analysis; this could also apply to other authorities that did not mention it.

Which needs were identified?

Table 4.2 identifies the two most common needs as the provision of advice, information or counselling, and of a place in which young people could meet each other.

Had identified needs been addressed?

Authorities were asked if they had been able to address the needs that had been identified through their needs analyses. Overall, of the 119 responses indicating an identified need, almost two-thirds of these (76) had been addressed. Of the 17 authorities that had identified a need for advice/information/counselling, ten had responded to this need. Of the 12 authorities that said that young people needed a place to meet each other, six had managed to provide a facility for this purpose. With regard to other common identified needs, most authorities were found to have responded. Table 4.2 shows the full responses made regarding responses to identified needs.

Table 4.2   Young people's needs identified by local authority analyses

	Needs identified	Needs still not met
	N	N
Type of provision		
A place to meet (e.g. cafe, drop-in centre)	12	6
Broader range of activities	9	2
More or improved facilities	6	3
Extended club opening hours/days	5	2
Peer led youth work	5	2
Outreach/detached provision	5	0
Improved transport (e.g. for rural areas)	2	1
Mobile provision	2	2
More age-targeted provision needed	2	0
Curriculum: issues/activities		
Advice/information/counselling	17	7
Equal opportunity issues	8	1
Health, drugs, lifestyle	7	0
Citizenship/community involvement	5	0
Entertainment activities	3	1
Basic skills training	1	1
Duke of Edinburgh Award	1	1
Arts activities	1	0
Environmental issues	1	0
Crime prevention	1	1
Work with specific client groups		
Ethnic minorities	9	3
Those at risk/disaffected	5	2
Unemployed	5	2
Young women	3	3
School children	2	0
Homeless	2	1
People with disabilities	1	1
Gays and lesbians	1	1
Total number of responses	119	43

Based on information provided by 48 authorities that had completed needs analyses.
(One authority completed a needs analysis but did not respond to this question.)

43

When completing the questions on young people's needs, some authorities took the opportunity to make related points, such as the limitations imposed by inadequate funding, the need to improve their marketing of facilities on offer, and needs of young people which were beyond their remit, such as housing and employment.

Interviews with the 14 PYOs probed in more detail the theme of how identified needs were addressed. They raised issues of the role of youth workers in identifying needs; resistance to targeting; the balance of quality versus numbers, and leisure versus education.

The role of youth workers in identifying needs

Some authorities left the identification of needs to area youth service teams themselves. Consequently priorities varied from one locality to another, sometimes resulting in inconsistencies across the borough. One authority's remedy to this problem required the leader of each team to draw up an annual plan relating the team's objectives to the available budget. This realistic approach was perceived to be very effective in focusing responses to specific needs. However, as the PYO for a large inner city youth service observed, his staff 'tend to get pushed back from getting that planning process under way because of the next crisis coming round the corner'.

Individual area teams sometimes identified their local target groups on the basis of their own or outside research. Local choices had to be seen to adhere to those of the youth service as a whole. For political reasons, however, external research might not tally with the real local needs:

> *There was a lot of political pressure to increase services to Asian young people. In practice, that is not necessarily what the Asian young people themselves want.*

Where youth workers had not been involved in identifying target groups, the effectiveness of initiatives was impeded. In one case, a policy of working with the Black community had been made without consulting any of the youth workers and was conspicuously unsuccessful.

The input of youth workers in targeting specific groups involved considerable outreach activity in order to reach young people with limited opportunities and low self-esteem lacking the confidence to make

the first move. Youth workers approached them on the street; they spent time in places frequented by young people; they took 'mobiles' onto housing estates. Such outreach increased the number of young people in rural areas making use of services; it was also perceived to be highly successful in a more urban authority where the police had even linked it to a fall in crime.

Resistance to targeting

Whilst targeting had both extended access and improved quality, some PYOs nevertheless expressed a 'philosophical commitment to open provision'. Targeting moved the emphasis from 'warm social meeting places' to trying to 'redress the balance' through detached, outreach work. Thus, resource needs were changing. Funds might be committed to the maintenance of buildings in inappropriate locations, whereas what was needed were cheaper mobile facilities to reach the target groups. Combining both, in one mixed urban-rural authority, meant first going out to the more isolated communities and then developing a centre where young people could come to them. In this case, the cultural traditions of certain ethnic minorities required clearly demarcated opportunities for social contact. Hindu and Muslim youth clubs had been set up, with separate meetings for young women and men. Both had been developed using leadership from the local communities.

However, the establishment of separate activities or meeting places for different priority groups, especially the 'disadvantaged', was perceived by a significant number of PYOs as a cause for concern. Integration – of, for example, young offenders – was seen as beneficial for everyone. Although separation was probably unavoidable in the short-term in order to appeal to groups lacking in confidence, many PYOs were determined to maintain an open door so that different groups of young people could learn from one another's company, as one PYO explained:

> *We can work with disadvantaged young people but we won't be an education service then. We need the work with other young people to counterbalance it.*

Quality versus numbers; education versus leisure. Balancing these two sets of competing demands emerged as pre-eminent in PYO's perceptions of their responsibility towards young people.

The balance of quality versus numbers

Targeting specific groups was seen to boost quality but depress quantity. Attendances from priority groups had risen in response to the special activities intended for them, but nonetheless were smaller than those attracted to 'mainstream' clubs.

Staffing cuts were seen by some PYOs as putting more emphasis on quality than quantity, because with priority groups it is easier to demonstrate that special needs were being met:

> *There is a danger of doing things which are more easily measurable. A youth worker under pressure ... if they can, they are going to work to the need that enables them to justify their work more easily. The danger is that sometimes you could be doing things for the wrong reason.*

The balance of leisure versus education

All interviewees rated highly the need to offer young people, especially in areas of acute housing problems, somewhere warm to meet off the street where they could sit and talk to one another. However, most PYOs felt it was their responsibility also to offer educational challenges by extending opportunities in areas such as health education and racial discrimination:

> *There's got to be a balance ... we always emphasise the fun element that it's about young people having a choice about what they do, but there has to be that underlying expectation that we're doing something just that little bit more targeted – [otherwise] they might as well go down to their local sports centre.*

Such integrated health and social education was seen by some as essential for young people of every class or background, despite its implications for the funding of staff training. Others were preoccupied with the educational needs of young people at risk:

> *The key issue for me is self-esteem ... it increases their life chances ... they won't get into trouble with the law.*

Such self-esteem might be developed through sports activities or the performing arts: acting, dance, radio or video work.

A tool for personal development and education mentioned by several PYOs was the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Its flexibility meant it could be tailored to the needs of the disabled or to different cultural minorities. It could also be used as an opportunity to gain qualifications

46

for young people who had achieved very little academically at school. For young people at risk it was a useful vehicle for challenging their attitudes.

4.3 Policy statements and curriculum guidelines

Within the policy and curriculum documents of most authorities surveyed there was a considerable overlap concerning principles, aims and objectives. However, **policy** has been defined as 'a broad statement which establishes the principles which underpin the delivery of the service' and **curriculum** as 'the process used, (dealing) with specific aspects of youth work programme and content'.

Policy statements

Most local authorities responding to the survey (78 out of 84) indicated that they had a written policy statement on the aims of their youth service. The broad aim was:

> To support the development of young people into responsible adults equipped with confidence and skills to make a full contribution within the community.

Authorities were all committed to the provision of education that led to an understanding of economic, personal, social, and spiritual issues. Opportunities were provided for young people to gain knowledge and skills, and to enable young people to develop as individuals and as members of society. This rather serious characterisation of an idealistic youth service seemed to be influenced by social services values: fun and enjoyment appeared far down the list of priorities, if mentioned at all. The concept of 'challenge' was rather more evident.

Many authorities either quoted or paraphrased the Statement of Purpose agreed at the Second Ministerial Conference on the Youth Services (7/8 November 1990):

> The purpose of youth work is: to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people to fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and members of groups and communities, and to support young people during the transition to adulthood.

47

Objectives were to inform, share, develop and represent; via themes that included creativity, equality and justice, health, political education, relationships, sexuality, spirituality and self-development. Guiding principles of practice characteristically centred around a range of aims including the following:

Empowerment

The overarching objective of the youth service was to empower young people by providing them with support to enable them to make a healthy and balanced transition to adulthood and to realise their potential.

Learning outcomes linked to empowerment included skills, knowledge, responsibility, obligation, understanding, personal autonomy, citizenship, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-determination, choice and control.

Equal opportunities

Equal access to all activities was integral to all policies. Many authorities further highlighted the need for positive action to counter discrimination and even to 'celebrate difference'. In practice this often meant targeting services on special needs groups (ethnic minorities, learning or physically disabled, disadvantaged, at risk, gay/lesbian) for whom some authorities had prepared separate policy statements:

> Social education must be available to all young people, with due respect for their racial and cultural background, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and to those with disabilities.

Participation

It was generally felt that the young people should be fully involved in the decision-making process:

> Participation – through a voluntary relationship with the young people in which young people are partners in the learning process and decision-making structures which affect their lives, the lives of others and the community of which they are a part.

Partnership

All authorities were committed to working collaboratively with voluntary organisations, other statutory and private sector agencies, local communities, parents and the young people themselves.

In furtherance of these themes, policy statements stressed the importance of planning, monitoring and evaluation. They outlined strategies for so doing, including the provision of detailed quality standards or the use of performance indicators:

> The success or effectiveness of youth work should not simply be measured by the numbers of young people worked with, but by the benefits or outcomes they receive.

Commitment to staff support was widely pledged, extending in some cases to separate staff development policies covering responsibilities, training and levels of competence.

Curriculum guidelines

Of the 84 authorities responding to the questionnaire survey, almost two-thirds (54) indicated that they had produced written curriculum guidelines for their youth service provision. As mentioned above, these overlapped considerably with their policy statements. Curricula were aimed at developing skills, knowledge, attitudes and values and as with policy statements covered equal opportunities, participation, empowerment and targeting. The following statement of purpose comes from a curriculum document:

> ...to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people and adults using the service and to enable them to have access to experience and the support which will assist their life transitions, armed with the knowledge, understanding and empowerment to develop their own lives and to respect the rights of others in the community...

Curriculum was also defined more conventionally in others as 'an organised learning process' and 'a planned set of learning experiences'. Such learning experiences were listed as including outdoor activities, sport, community work, visits and exchanges, recreation, the arts, life skills and education and development: in areas such as health promotion, environmental issues and anti-discrimination work.

Through key concepts of responsiveness, flexibility and participation, curriculum documents stressed the need to be reactive to the needs of the local youth population. This included being able to target by location (urban/rural), age or special need group, as described elsewhere in this

49

chapter. For some such groups, a specific document had been created:

> ...to provide opportunities for gay and lesbian young people to play as active a part as possible within the service, and cultivate an atmosphere in which they are involved and respected...

Curriculum documents, demonstrating a range of coverage and specificity of prescription, were reflected in the comments of several PYOs. They felt that in recent years, despite financial setbacks, curriculum development had led to better standards of youth work provision. One such interviewee said:

> *The reality is that if we had the same level of staffing now, the youth service would be better in '94 than it was in '92 because you've got the curriculum and other initiatives that are sharpening the focus.*

4.4 Types of provision and curriculum areas

The questionnaire survey sought information on what curriculum areas/ activities were provided in the authority within different types of provision (e.g. youth club, detached work). Full responses are shown in Table 4.3.

The main curriculum areas being addressed within the different types of provision were as follows:

● *Youth clubs* were found to provide the highest range of curriculum areas/activities listed: *every* curriculum area/activity was reported by at least two-thirds of local authorities in the survey as being addressed through their youth club provision.

● *Detached work*, while covering a wide range of aspects in many authorities, was most commonly reported to cover *health, crisis intervention, information/advice* and *outdoor pursuits.*

● *Work in schools and FE colleges* was most often reported to focus on *health* and *outdoor pursuits.*

● *Uniformed organisations* were most commonly reported to feature *outdoor pursuits.*

● *Targeted work* was most often associated with *health.*

● *Counselling and/or information services,* most commonly focused on *information/advice, crisis intervention* and *health.*

● *Residential/exchange visits* were most commonly reported to provide *outdoor pursuits.*

Table 4.3 Curriculum areas/activities addressed through different types of youth provision

	Youth clubs	Outreach/ detached	School/FE involvement	Uniformed organisations	Targeted groups	Counselling/ information sevices	Residential/ exchange visits
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Arts	83	47	50	45	51	11	54
Health	83	75	61	48	57	65	50
Education/training	78	36	38	38	44	41	44
Outdoor pursuits	83	61	56	64	45	13	70
Sports	78	41	40	53	43	6	40
Environment	67	37	30	47	12	18	37
Political/citizenship	63	43	28	31	34	28	31
Cultural	62	39	24	15	51	20	40
Information/advice	66	65	38	23	41	68	13
Crisis intervention	71	74	37	14	33	65	29
Total responding	*84*	*79*	*72*	*67*	*72*	*78*	*78*
No response	*0*	*5*	*12*	*17*	*12*	*6*	*6*
Total	84	84	84	84	84	84	84

The shaded boxes indicate where more than two-thirds of authorities (N=56) made this response.

51

4.5 Take-up of youth service provision

Questionnaire respondents were asked to estimate the total number of attendances by young people for each type of provision in their local authority in a typical month. The types of provision suggested were those listed in Table 4.3. Unfortunately, the number of responses to this question was very low, and the only types of provision with sufficient responses to analyse were youth clubs/centres and outreach/detached work. For each authority providing these data, the estimated attendance figures were compared with the overall number of local 10 – 19 year-olds (GB. OPCS, 1993)[1]. From this, the estimated number of attendances per thousand 10-19 year olds was obtained.

Attendances for youth club provision

Data regarding youth club provision in 54 local authorities shows that the median number of attendances was about 200 per 1000 10-19 year olds. However, there was considerable variation between authorities, ranging from about 110 attendances per 1000 in one authority to 365 attendances per 1000 in another.

Attendances for outreach/detached provision

Thirty nine authorities provided estimated attendance figures for outreach/ detached provision. Overall, the median number of attendances was about 15 per 1000 10-19 year olds. Once again, there was substantial variation between the authorities that provided data, ranging from one attendance per 1000 young people to about 195 per 1000.

What types of initiative have high-take up and positive learning outcomes?

PYOs were asked which of the recent initiatives in their authority had been particularly effective in attracting and retaining young people's interest and in promoting positive learning.

Although there was broad agreement on the characteristics common to an effective project, its precise nature was seen to vary according to the needs of local young people. As well as 'a bit of fun' and 'the chance to talk about themselves', one PYO summarised the essential components

---

[1] GREAT BRITAIN. OFFICE OF POPULATION CENSUSES AND SURVEYS (1993). *1991 Census of Population*. London: HMSO

of success as follows:

> *First of all it depends on the relationships with the youth worker ...*
> *The other thing is they need to know what they are getting out of it,*
> *if possible, and I think ... they need to have some element of control.*

Small can be good

Take-up was seen as a relative term. Judging by numbers alone can be inadequate. As one PYO noted,

> *Your take-up rate needs to really reflect the type of work that you*
> *do; for example you expect the take-up rate to be high if you are*
> *doing a disco, but not if you're doing small group work.*

Indeed, there was agreement that quality provision and popularity could be contradictary terms. Take-up rate could be high if provision was only applicable to a limited number from the outset. Shy or diffident young people who would be overwhelmed by a youth centre, those at high risk or those with special interest group needs were especially seen to require intensive small group work.

Examples given of such projects included:

- Young people at risk of being excluded, who were withdrawn from school two days a week to attend activities 'with a strong educational bias' at a youth centre. When they returned to school their behaviour had noticeably improved.

- A club for about 15 young teenage mothers which had been 'enormously successful'.

- A foreign exchange visit to China for a small number of low achievers. They had taken control of the project and become 'enormously well-motivated' regarding their future options as a result.

- Collaboration between two teams of young people from rival estates to make a video about their everyday life. The video had won an award.

- An annual Christmas ball to combat the isolation experienced by young people home for holidays from boarding school; a small and comparatively affluent minority.

- A project in one inner city authority with young gays and lesbians, the first of its kind in the country. Originally registered in 1976 and

run by the young people themselves, the youth service had since become involved and the group now offered professional support to gays and lesbians.

The value of this type of intensive youth work could not be under-estimated:

> *The quality of work that has taken place in some of those places is marvellous. Because you work with smaller groups they can dictate the curriculum much more, which is what we should be doing ...*

> *In terms of the outcomes, the benefits ... the frightening thing is the ones who never get there ... when you see what can actually happen for them when they do get there.*

Although this evidence suggests that success need not mean high numbers, most PYOs recognised the importance of balancing detached and small group work with the more traditional youth centre provision for large numbers of young people. The relaxed and unstructured atmosphere of social activities in a youth centre was frequently perceived as an important first step in making contact with young people. As one PYO explained: 'they come to social things first ... that's where you've got the contact – the general evenings or the discos'.

Traditional youth centres also organised educational activities on a larger scale:

- One inner city youth club had organised mock job interviews with the Midland Bank. Through an educational but also social process, the young people gained valuable experience in filling in application forms, presenting themselves in an interview situation, and in reflecting on the process afterwards.

- Another inner city authority ran extremely popular youth centres (200-300 users a week) providing sports, photography and musical activities alongside specialised detached projects for young gays and lesbians.

Another PYO, however, identified an inherent drawback of 'open access' youth clubs:

> *They attract a clientele, and by their very nature they then become exclusive and exclude others ... and that is a big problem.*

54

The following section looks at the success in terms of popularity or learning outcomes for four types of provision: flexible provision; mobile youth service provision; residential activities; and arts activities.

Flexible provision

The successful provision of alternative, much smaller youth centres underlines the importance of keeping every aspect of the service under constant review in order to be responsive to changing needs. Several PYOs drew attention to the way innovations had been made in direct response to young people's reactions to what had previously been standard practice. Examples given of responding flexibly to demand included the following:

- Traditional holiday programmes run at the youth clubs in one authority were being poorly attended. They were discontinued and the money invested in the hire of a residential centre for five weeks every summer. This open access and very popular scheme had now been running for four years.

- The development of 'crash pads' or 'night safes' for the young homeless: basic overnight accommodation in buildings with a youth worker or counsellors available to offer support.

- High street advice centres, or 'information shops', funded by a combination of agencies, staffed by one or two full-time workers and open most days.

- Mobile advice centres to work alongside those more permanently located.

Mobile youth service provision

Similarly appealing to individuals who tend to avoid the traditional youth centres, mobile facilities were said to reach in particular young people in rural areas, those who congregate on city housing estates and the disabled. They 'go out and meet young people where it's at'. A mobile bus could both provide facilities for social mixing and develop a programme according to the young people's interests (see case study in Chapter 5). In one authority members of the youth service and a group of young people had been invited to Poland to advise on establishing a mobile project. HMI had praised the way the buses had been integrated into the youth club service so that the outreach work was not regarded as an end in itself.

Residential activities

PYOs seemed unanimous in their high estimation of residential visits, both for offering a range of experiences to disadvantaged young people and for effectively bringing about change through focused and uninterrupted activities. A typical comment was:

> *If you take a young person away from his home environment and offer him a whole series of exciting opportunities, whether activities, or in the arts, living together is a learning opportunity in itself; teamwork, standards ... you are with them all the time, you get to understand the kids, to know them, to feel what they feel and you give advice on the hoof.*

Two examples of successful residential projects were:

● Activity weekends for young women, run for the past four years. The most recent had involved 120 women from various communities, estates, ethnic groups, and even countries, some with special needs, who would not normally come into contact with one another. Events included outdoor activities, arts and crafts, drama and music.

● More tightly focused residential projects for groups of eight to ten young people perceived to be at risk of committing crimes. Their needs having been identified by both the detached and the residential workers, they would be taken for an intensive four days' work at a residential centre. Outdoor activities were mixed with group work discussions and exercises on self-image. A series of follow-up sessions reinforced the themes of the visit once they returned home. Statistical evidence showed that contact between these particular young people and the police had decreased since their participation in the project.

Arts activities

Not merely a medium for encouraging focused and positive self-expression, arts activities were useful in attracting young people to youth clubs, whether this was radio, theatre or photography work:

● A touring theatre company visited a youth centre twice a year and spent a week putting on a production on a topic related to young people's interests. The youth workers would meet the company beforehand to review the issues to be raised in the discussions after the performance. In some cases this relied on the relationship of trust regular members had built up with the youth workers:

*Because ... they are doing something of a creative nature they tend
to begin with their feelings, so things that are happening to them tend
to come out and they get brought to my attention.*

● A youth theatre that had started to develop outreach work was so
popular with young people that it was considering the development
of smaller companies to accommodate them.

● A photographic project on the topic of their estate was developed by
a detached worker with six or seven young people. Some very high
quality work had been carried out with a group from an estate
'normally seen as being one of the most depressed estates where
young people are up to no good'.

What do successful youth service initiatives have in common?

Whether regarding a traditional youth centre offering a range of facilities
in a relaxed atmosphere, or a detached initiative designed to meet specific
needs, common characteristics promoting popularity and educational
effectiveness emerged. These are discussed in the following sub-
sections.

The skills and commitment of the individual youth worker

Far more important than the physical conditions of the premises, the
personal qualities of the youth worker were generally agreed to be the
most important single component of successful youth work. Several
PYOs supplied examples of projects where a very positive response,
sometimes in the wake of previous failure, could be attributed directly to
the personal qualities of the youth worker concerned:

*If we're really honest about it, the clubs that have got good take-
ups are because they have good well-motivated staff who actually
know something about making relationships with young people
and know something about working with other staff.*

*The youth worker himself or herself built such relationships on
effective youth service teamwork and networking. The motivation
of youth workers needed to be sustained – by network meetings and
magazines – in order for them to be able to inspire the motivation
of young people.*

*His staff are extremely well supported and as a result the quality
of the work is very high indeed ... they can relate what they are
doing to youth work curricula.*

57

Indeed, involving the young people themselves in the day-to-day management of the club could have a very positive effect on the staff who work there.

In some areas it seemed that, however dedicated and appropriately trained the individual workers, they were seriously restricted in their efforts by the effects of staffing cuts. More imaginative curricula demanded the time and expertise of committed individuals, and the absence of full-time staff was undercutting the potential benefit of such improvements.

Young people need to feel they are in control

The importance of this factor was most acute in specific projects with smaller groups. In one authority, for example, a group of young poets had been able to publish two books through their own efforts, the youth workers acting only as facilitators. Similarly, two local bands had negotiated with a local council towards arranging a visit to the first western pop festival in the city's twin town in the Far East. The young people had done a lot of the planning and fund-raising themselves. As a result the twin town requested a youth worker to be seconded in order to help them develop their own youth service.

The opportunity to gain qualifications and the enhancement of self-esteem

Many young people are very keen to take part in activities which result in a recognisable qualification. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, described above, was regarded as particularly valuable in this respect because of its flexibility and the scope it offered to young people who were under-achievers at school. The charisma of the youth worker in charge was held responsible for the successful updating of its previously unpopular middle-class image. Consequently it had been made to appeal, for example, to the Asian community, the inmates of a young offenders' institute and groups of young people at risk.

Some local authorities had established their own training schemes to supplement or compensate for provision in local schools or colleges. One authority liaised with the county technology college to provide training opportunities for young people excluded from existing programmes through lack of the necessary NVQs. The youth service now had its own training unit and was currently catering for a total of nine hundred young people throughout the county. Another area was developing peer education in drugs and alcohol and counselling skills. As the PYO noted:

58

The kids will tell you straight that they would rather listen to someone their own age than an adult, because they feel they are being lectured, however nice that person is.

This authority was also exploring with a local college the possibility of accrediting young people's achievements in youth service activities.

The same youth service provided a senior members' training programmes, available from the age of sixteen as part of the 'progressional curriculum'. Involving structured discussions and a practical project, it usually trained about 20 young people at any one time. The scheme had been very popular, since being a senior member of a youth club involved more responsibility for choosing and organising activities.

The use of volunteers

Many youth services were stretched to find the staff required to fulfil the many different roles involved in running open access youth clubs and also providing a wide range of detached projects. Since youth workers' training does not extend beyond basic listening skills, the majority of youth services relied on the agencies, including voluntary organisations, to provide advice and counselling. The Health Authority had recently paid for the training of 40 voluntary counsellors for one youth service that had previously tackled drugs and health education on its own. Quality, however, usually meant expense, so liaison with other agencies was essential in order to muster the necessary resources. Consequently, volunteers were regarded as a valuable potential resource:

We can't develop [good quality provision] *by paid staff, it is just too expensive, but you can by volunteers.*

Marketing strategies and the support of the local community

Several officers commented on the importance of support from the local community for the effectiveness of a particular project or youth centre, and for this to happen the youth service had to publicise its wares. One PYO with a very business-minded approach was deliberately 'marketing' the growing number of drop-in centres in his authority as 'The Shops'. His strategy appeared to have been very successful because the existing 'Shops' were extremely popular and two more were being negotiated as a result. In another county the information shops themselves were being used to promote specific aspects of the youth and community service, not least by producing a youth information handbook every year written by young people.

A number of youth services were able to publicise their services through their work in schools. Another had been able to persuade local bus services to display information on a number of their vehicles. Detached workers constantly making contact on the streets, and large social events such as discos at youth centres, often attracted young people who might then be drawn to become regular members.

Quality of facilities

Although the personal qualities of the worker take precedence over the state of a building in determining the popularity of a youth centre, poor facilities may have considerable impact on those whose self-esteem is very low. Their sense of worthlessness may well be reinforced by disintegrating furniture which conveys the impression that they do not deserve better. Moreover, any building offering services for young people risks its credibility if its appearance suggests that nobody cares about the clients.

4.6. Summary of main points

♦ Most authorities prioritised groups of young people for resources, by age and by other criteria.

♦ Fourteen to nineteen year olds, ethnic minorities and girls were the most frequently prioritised groups.

♦ Three-quarters of authorities (65) had conducted analyses of young people's needs. Most commonly identified needs were for advice services and a meeting place.

♦ Targeting had improved access and quality, but PYOs remained committed to open access provision.

♦ Policy statements and curriculum guidelines, compiled by most authorities, showed substantial overlap. Both stressed empowerment, equal opportunities, participation and partnership.

♦ Of all forms of provision, youth clubs supplied the widest range of curriculum areas and activities.

♦ Attendance per 1000 10-19 year olds was substantially higher for youth clubs than for detached provision. However, PYOs indicated that numbers alone were an inadequate measure of success. Flexible, mobile, residential and arts-based provision were all given as examples of successes on a small scale.

♦ All successful initiatives had in common the skills of the youth worker; young people feeling in control; the opportunity to gain qualifications or higher self-esteem; the use of volunteers; and the support of the local community.

61

CHAPTER FIVE
YOUTH WORK INITIATIVES
IN SIX LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This chapter describes six case-study initiatives that were reported to have high take-up rates and were felt by their respective PYOs to be providing high quality youth work. The initiatives were chosen to reflect a variety of types of provision, taking into account different approaches to organisation, location and delivery, the number of young people using the provision, whether the initiative was targeted or open access and its urban or rural context. In each project, in-depth interviews were held with the youth workers and with participating young people.

The six initiatives were:

- A rural mobile bus project

- A youth houses initiative

- An Asian women's group

- A voluntary sector community project

- A youth shops initiative

- A successful 'traditional' youth club

Each case study report gives, firstly, baseline information about the project's circumstances (in box). It then deals with take-up, curriculum, the youth worker's role, funding issues, the unmet needs of the group, and any other issues relevant to that initiative.

5.1   A rural mobile bus project

This local authority-funded initiative served seven rural villages where there was no other existing youth service provision. A converted double decker bus toured six of the villages fortnightly and one village weekly, as well as picking up young people from neighbouring villages, to offer a range of activities and facilities. The project was staffed by two part-

time youth workers each session from a team of four workers, and by an auxiliary worker who drove the bus and helped in setting up activities and clearing up at the end of a session.

Aim of the initiative

To provide a generic youth club service for young people living in isolated rural areas of the county. The provision was open access within the villages visited and was intended as a complement to the rest of the county's rural youth service provision. The workers saw social education very much as the focus of their work.

Activities on offer

The bus had been converted to provide several areas where a range of activities could take place, including use of a computer, video equipment, musical instruments and a kitchen. The senior youth worker responsible for the project described it as follows:

> *Downstairs there is the coffee-bar/lounge area. In that area there will be information and probably something like a game – maybe a board game where the cooking is usually, because the cooking* [doesn't take place] *all the time... and/or a TV or video game or the video itself. Upstairs is more open plan: at the front end is the arcade game; in the middle there would probably be arts and crafts on a table; and at the back there would be musically- or computer-oriented* [activities]. *Drama work, movement work can be done so that there is always something which lifts it just that bit above the ordinary.*

Additionally in Summer, the field or car park in which the bus was parked was used to play outdoor games and to house facilities such as a bouncy castle. The workers also organised outings to local sports centres and outdoor activity centres in consultation with the young people.

Times

Sessions started at 6.00 pm when the mobile started travelling to its destination, usually picking up young people from other villages on the way. The youth club as such opened from 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm and its location was in the villages themselves, for example, in a pub car park, a playing field or an open stretch of land.

The young people

With a capacity of 25 due to health and safety regulations, an average of about 15 young people attended every night. Most were aged between 13 and 16, although interviewees included an 11 year old and a 20 year old. About twice as many girls used the provision as boys: attributed by the youth workers to village demographics. The young people paid 50 pence per session.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

The mobile youth bus attracted more young people than the established rural village local authority youth clubs, in villages that were previously not thought to merit a paid club. Although the average attendance of 15 young people was low compared to urban youth clubs, this take-up was considered high for the area. Despite the bus's popularity, the workers reported seasonal variations in take-up: more young people used the bus in the summer than in the winter, as the following example given by one of the workers shows:

> *In* [Village X], *where we were getting over fifty people regularly was in the summer; the majority were active on a field.... But it's self limiting* [because] *it is in the pub car park in winter.... So in the winter our average nightly attendance comes down to twenty or so, going in the bus out of the cold.*

Factors contributing to the initiative's popularity were explored in follow-up interviews with youth workers and young users from one village. The youth workers' viewpoint differed in emphasis from that of the young people.

The youth workers attributed the bus's attractiveness to its 'youthful' image and to the range of activities available on board. The bus really 'sold itself', being distinctive, different and well known. The workers believed young people had a sense of ownership of the bus, being aware that it was solely for their use.

However, the young people's priorities were slightly different. Whilst they were pleased with the activities on offer, in particular special activity weekends and trips to the ice rink, and liked the idea of having a double decker bus as a youth club, the main reason given for coming to the project was to socialise and to meet people – **not** the activities. The following comment was typical:

> *It's the only time we all meet up. We all go to different schools* [where] *everyone is in four or five different groups, different age groups. Its not like that on the bus.*

The lack of alternative leisure outlets – there were no cafes or cinemas nearby – was also an important factor in the mobile's popularity. Young people said there was very little else for them to do locally:

> *It's so boring in this village... we've got two bus stops and two pubs.*

Village Scout and Guide groups did not appeal to the young people interviewed who preferred the bus and had been attending for a number of years.

The youth work curriculum

The youth workers worked hard to ensure that activities had a strong social educational base, although they acknowledged that the young people were probably unaware of this aspect. Issue-based work was usually introduced through fun activities such as cooking and circus skills rather than by using a more formal approach. As one of the youth workers explained:

> Getting them to actually do something, hands on, and then pulling out the social education aspects is the way we do it; not standing there lecturing.

The preparation of food, for example, was a good base from which to move to issues such as sexism and racism. Even crisps could lead to anti-racist work, being compared with Indian poppadoms, Chinese prawn crackers and South American tacos. A programme of activities was followed cyclically for all the villages, although the timetable was treated flexibly according to perceived needs.

The mobile youth club was seen by the workers as playing an important role in providing information, counselling and discussions on health education, careers, or welfare rights for young people who had otherwise limited access to such services.

The role of the youth worker

The youth workers themselves were an important factor in the bus's popularity. They were seen as approachable and trustworthy, as friends rather than teachers. All the young people felt they could approach them with any problems, feeling that the workers were on their wavelength and did not patronise them.

The senior youth worker believed that inadequate leadership was one of the reasons why the traditional village youth clubs appealed to fewer young people than the mobile. Good leaders engaged the young people in a variety of fun activities which would keep them interested in using the project. He felt strongly that it was up to the workers actively to search for young people and engage them in the life of the youth club, rather than sitting back and waiting for them to turn up:

The numbers in a club are always to do with leadership, because good leaders in any village can draw kids from neighbouring villages. Just as an example, [at a youth club] *we adopted – for three years, the average nightly attendance went just below 16....* [We put] *two good leaders in there and the average nightly attendance shot up to 40 in three weeks!* [Before that] *I went there one night and there was nobody there at all, just two leaders sitting there.* [I said] *'Well what are you doing about it? There are loads of* [young people] *out there.'*

In his view, youth workers were responsible for keeping the curriculum attractive to young people:

If the leaders don't put on a decent programme, update the equipment and fetch in area resources... you get 'we've nothing to do' – that's a big excuse – 'we're not paying to come in unless there's something worth paying for to get'...if they want a video camera...[the workers] *have got to borrow it. They have got to get in their car and they have to go and get it from somewhere. If they can't be bothered to do that, then no young people can be bothered to come through the door.*

Funding

While at the time of this survey the initiative was entirely funded from the local authority's youth service budget, it was hoped that in future 20 per cent of funding would come from external sources, perhaps from the Rural Development Commission or arts funding bodies. Applying for external grants took considerable time, however; time that the senior worker responsible felt was not well used:

It isn't my job but it has been given to me; I've never had to look for funding until now. In three consecutive meetings I was given an application form for grants. As a local authority trained [youth] *worker it is a waste of time, a terrible waste of time. You get a three hundred pounds grant but a hundred and fifty pounds worth of time to get it.*

Unmet needs of young people

Although the bus provided the sole youth service available to these young people, it was available only weekly in one of the larger villages and fortnightly elsewhere.

This was arguably insufficient to meet the young people's needs. Although centre-based provision would have provided greater regularity, its cost was high and potential numbers were previously not thought to justify it.

Marketing the project

The workers emphasised the value of raising awareness of the project, rather than just sitting back and waiting for the young people to come and find them. The senior youth worker had promoted the very first mobile bus by approaching a small group of fifth-and sixth-formers in the local secondary school. Fifty-six young people came to a meeting with him to discuss what they wanted and the project had been hugely popular. In subsequent projects, the youth worker used outreach work to introduce young people to the mobile:

> *Once I realised that, I did it everywhere... I used to go in the car – there are always three kids in a bus stop no matter where you go, no matter how small the village. I would talk to them in the bus stop – I would ask 'Are there a dozen* [young people]*?'*

The novelty and easily recognised nature of the bus was also felt to have been an important marketing factor:

> *You don't get a much bigger billboard, in a rural village, than a double decker bus.*

Part of the marketing strategy for the bus was to charge an admission fee at a level that reflected the quality of provision on offer. The senior worker felt that low subscription charges of ten or 15 pence contributed to the feeling that a youth club had nothing of interest to offer:

> *I say, 'Are you worth less than a Mars bar? Because a Mars bar is now 25 pence.'*

He questioned the mentality of gearing subscriptions to whatever the poorest could afford, as most of the young people, once in the youth club, spent a significant amount on sweets. Attitude, not wealth, therefore seemed to be the issue.

Local people's reactions to the bus

The mobile bus had created mixed reactions. While parents were happy for their children to use it, resistance to extending the provision had come from other villages. This appeared to be related to a popular misconception of youth work and its association with undesirable young people. In one village the main difficulty had been in getting access to a site:

> *We are waiting to get access to the village, it has taken us six months to get into the village with the bus:* [they say] *"we don't want it here, we don't want it there"....* *It has got to be at the school. The school governors don't want it* [but] *it's the only place we can go. They have let us in on a two-week trial basis. The other*

67

adults want it: the Parish Council wants it, the District Council wants it, the Police want it... but it's a case of "not in my backyard." The school had a thousand pounds worth of vandalism done earlier this year, and they think that we will attract the people who do the vandalism...They are petrified we are going to want the school for the youth club.

Local people were generally reluctant to get involved in voluntary work on the bus. One of the youth workers explained:

....the adults don't come near unless you get them over a barrel. I think they think they are going to get implicated, drawn in; they are scared of being given a job.... Where you have to have some parental involvement, say for lifts, we can usually get a couple of cars, but you won't get them on the bus.

The senior worker compared this situation to that of five years ago, when a group of 40 committed volunteers was working in the eight village youth clubs in the area. After they had left it had been impossible to recruit any more. The youth worker explained the impact this had had on local youth service provision:

People said to me, why should they volunteer? Aren't they good enough to get paid? We were in then... the enterprise culture. There are two elements to it: one is good and one is bad... the good one is that payment should be paid for what they do, because payment is recognition of the quality of the work. The bad one is that this society and the earth cannot exist without somebody doing something for nothing... In 1990 we decided we would no longer waste our energy trying to recruit volunteers; we would serve as best we can eight villages that used to have volunteer-run youth clubs. That is the basis of these eight villages [that have the mobile].

5.2 A youth houses initiative

This project consisted of two converted 'youth houses', one a maisonette and another previously an office, that had been running since Spring 1993. Both had two or three rooms for use by the young people plus an office for the five paid workers and one volunteer worker. The houses were an alternative to the traditional youth centre. Although similar in their objectives and approach, they are referred to in this chapter as House A and House B.

Aim of the project
The aim of the project was to provide youth service provision for young people on the two housing estates on which the houses were sited. Although the majority of the young people participating were seen as at risk, both houses provided open access provision. Both saw social education as an integral element of the youth work.

Activities on offer
In both houses, each night of the week was set aside for a different group of young people to ensure maximum availability. Both houses had one night of the week that was exclusively for young women. One of the houses had set aside another night of the week solely for young men, staffed by male workers. However, certain young people used the house on more than one night. Each group tended to have its own focus, such as putting together a magazine or doing work on health issues. For example, one worker described the work she was doing with her Monday night young women's group:

> *We have put together a programme of women's health... we have got a group of young women who have discussed issues from pregnancy, stress, assertiveness skills, self-esteem, HIV and drugs. A few weeks ago we had a session on aromatherapy and they loved it...they want to do it again, so we are doing it again this week.... it is always done in negotiation, no-one gets to do anything they don't want to do.*

Unlike the local youth centres, neither of the houses had pool tables or arcade games, although they did have computers, printers and typewriters. The projects offered a very relaxed, 'home away from home' atmosphere. In both projects, the workers had organised trips to the local authority's outdoor activity centre in Wales offering activities such as abseiling, canoeing, caving and rafting, plus shorter outings for arts exhibitions, theatre shows and a poetry workshop. Some groups had been on a drugs awareness residential and others were involved in a youth exchange to Ireland.

Workers did detached and outreach work, bringing young people back to the houses either on one night of the week or more informally. Both houses had full-time workers available during the day to discuss personal difficulties and one provided a formal drop-in session on weekday lunch times which was very popular.

Outside agencies, for example the Brook Advisory Clinic, also used the houses as a place to meet young people.

Times
Both houses were open four days a week from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm. One of the houses held drop-in lunch-time sessions from 12.40 to 1.10 pm on weekdays. Neither project was open at weekends. The sessions were free of charge and outings were subsidised.

> *The young people*
> Most users were aged between 13 and 16. Although the houses were very popular, numbers using them at any one time were relatively small. House A could only cater for 10-12 young people at any one time due to fire regulations, and whilst House B had no such safety limitations, limited space meant the house felt full with about 12 present.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

Despite the low numbers of young people the houses were able to accommodate at any one time, the houses were extremely popular among young people from the two estates, the majority of whom would not normally go to a youth club. One youth worker interviewed attributed this to the fact that these youth houses were different to traditional youth clubs:

> *There has always been the idea that the youth clubs, whilst they are good for some young people, there is always going to be a core of young people who will not get anything from a youth club and there needs to be another type of provision....*

The youth worker went on to explain that despite their lack of traditionally popular facilities, the youth houses were still more popular than the local youth club:

> *There is no television in here, no pool tables, none of the traditional stuff – we have got a stereo but that is not on most of the time; when we are doing group work it is off. And yet we attract more young people* [than the youth club]. *I think in terms of numbers locally, we probably work with many more young people on the estate than the youth club does and yet their running costs are probably astronomical compared to ours.*

However, workers in both houses had challenged the young people's perceptions of the local youth clubs, and had successfully persuaded some of the young people to try them.

In general, youth workers and young people were in agreement over reasons for the houses' popularity. They were warm and welcoming and gave young people a place to meet within a relaxed and safe atmosphere:

> *I think it is just somewhere where they can go and feel OK, make a cup of tea, have a talk, meet new people and have an interesting*

*talk about something. That seems to be the key to our success story
so far.*

Many young people also talked with enthusiasm about the discussions,
role-plays and issue-based work they had taken part in, feeling that they
had been far more enjoyable and informative than equivalent sessions at
school. They often commented, 'We learn more here than we do at
school'. Drugs and sex education were particularly valued as drugs
education was only touched on briefly in years 7 and 11, and school
lessons on sex education were not as useful as the sessions led by the
youth workers.

Residential visits, especially at the authority's outdoor activity centre,
were also very popular among the young people, giving them the
opportunity to take part in a wide range of new and exciting activities.
Some of the young women interviewed had been on a 'wilderness' trip
and found this a very valuable experience, commenting on how it had
taught them to plan and prepare and to rely on each other.

Only a few of the young people interviewed still went to other youth
clubs; most seemed to prefer the youth house. Activities at the other
youth clubs focused on sports, and while many of the young people
clearly liked to play pool, darts and football, they felt that there was
nothing else to do there. The youth club was also disliked for often being
very noisy with big groups of people and sometimes fights breaking out.
By contrast, the youth houses ran very small groups in a comfortable
atmosphere.

The youth work curriculum

Both houses focused strongly on issue-based work, delivered through a
combination of fun activities. Workers also used opportunities such as
exhibitions, shows or activity weekends to raise awareness of issues. For
example, to promote understanding of other cultures, House B's workers
had chosen a Chinese banquet for their annual Christmas restaurant
outing with the young people. One youth worker explained the importance
of combining fun activities with issue-based work:

> *I think there has to be a balance and the balance has to involve a
> lot of fun. I think some people think you can't do all issue-based
> work and have fun, that's just not true. You can have fun doing all
> sorts of things. There is a lot of drama skills within the team and
> we use drama exercises a lot of the time as fun ways of bringing the
> different issues which works really well.*

71

The small size of the youth houses meant that much of the work necessarily had a specific focus:

I suppose its the size of the place.... and you're limited to what you can do, so its really got to be projects with some kind of focus. If there isn't a focus, things don't seem to really get off the ground.... Its never like a youth club because its so small, so when a young person walks in here, there's an expectation to actually do something. That's been negotiated by the staff and the young people since it's opened.

Both youth houses frequently changed the project to meet the different and specific needs:

At the moment, for example, I have got a women's health group on a Monday night. That will run until Christmas. After Christmas it will change to a men's health group. Also after Christmas we are going to be looking at setting up a young women's baby-sitting course, which is something that they have identified and the Duke of Edinburgh Award [students] are going to start using the base more often.

Space constraints also meant careful planning of social activities:

Because of the close staff contact with the young people, and most of the young people actually wanting to do something, its very difficult to have just a social evening here unless its planned. i.e. like a barbecue with a karaoke or a video night when we all sit down and have some popcorn and watch a couple of videos. So, it's that type of social, rather than everybody mingling, it's a social where the staff are very much involved as well as young people.

The role of the youth worker

Once again, the youth workers were essential to the youth houses' popularity. Indeed, one of the reasons given by the young people for not liking a particular youth club was that they had no rapport with the worker, who they felt was disinterested in them. Yet the workers in the youth houses were very well liked and trusted with problems, as these comments from young people illustrate:

You've got respect for them 'cos teachers, all they seem to do is boss you around. The workers don't tell you, they ask you first.

They don't treat us like kids, they treat us like an adult, like you would want to be treated, and when something has happened, they let us explain what's wrong first before they jump to conclusions.

They have the time of day for you....they're dead sound. They're willing to help and listen to your problems.

Funding

Funding for both houses was from the government's Urban Aid programme although staffing was paid for by the local authority youth service. Workers were concerned that a lack of resources meant their inability to be able to extend the youth houses project to more young people.

Unmet needs of young people

Despite the high level of attendance at the youth houses, and the on-going street work, workers felt they were not meeting the needs of all the young people on the estate. It was difficult to offer a more comprehensive service by running more than one project at the same time in such small houses. Certain groups on the estate showed reluctance towards being involved, especially young men aged 17 to 22. They saw the youth service as very much for the younger age groups. Workers in House A had tried to set up daytime sessions for the young unemployed. Despite leafleting, street work amongst those collecting their benefits, an advertisement in the community newspaper and word of mouth, there had been very little interest. Workers hoped to try such a daytime project again when some of the young people who currently used the house would be leaving school and possibly becoming unemployed.

Popularity with women

Both youth houses were very popular among women. House A was used by three times as many young women as young men. In House B, the proportion of young women to men was about the same. The senior youth worker in House A felt that their success had been due to the type of activities they offered, and the welcoming atmosphere of the youth house:

I feel that the high numbers of young women coming in are a) to do with the skills of the staff on both sexes. I feel that our skills are on the 'soft' side.. by which I mean discussions and counselling. Young women feel comfortable here. We're getting droves and droves of them in. I actually see that as being extremely positive because I think the place is extremely non-threatening to young women whereas perhaps some traditional youth clubs are quite male oriented and when perhaps a young woman walks into that kind of environment she may feel a bit threatened that there isn't

73

something for her... Here is more like a house and it's warm and cosy with chairs and I think a young woman can easily identify with that and I feel that for those reasons we're getting a lot of young women coming in possibly because they want to talk on a one-to-one basis with members of staff and because there are quite a lot of women members of staff.

The young women interviewed concurred with the worker's view. However, they were quite happy and indeed preferred to include boys in the sessions.

Importance of ownership

One of the reasons the young people interviewed continued to go to the youth houses was that they felt a strong sense of ownership and belonging. Such a sense derived from the small numbers of young people involved and the fact that they know all knew and trusted each other. Youth workers had also taken action to further this sense of belonging. In House A each group had drawn up its own set of groundrules for the night, governing smoking and general behaviour and attitudes. Often, this included a pledge of confidentiality and the equal rights to contribute of all members of the group. Both sets of workers consulted the young people about desired activities and those in House A occasionally asked the young people to fill in an evaluation form. One youth worker explained the importance of this consultation:

I think you can get perhaps too complacent if you don't keep getting young people's opinions the whole of the time about what you're actually doing. It's got to be led by them.

It's too popular...

In some ways, the youth houses were victims of their own success. As they grew in popularity, so more young people wanted to use the houses:

Because we have become that popular here, we have started attracting young people who want to just pop in and see the youth workers for a cup of tea and a chat – because obviously, if you go out on the street and build relationships with people, they want somewhere where they can contact you. At first it was OK, but as we've become more popular we have had problems with the neighbours either side, and health and safety, in terms of us exceeding the limits.

Having acquired an additional small building which would be free of charge, being already rented by another youth club, House B's workers planned to open this as a coffee bar for young people who simply needed somewhere warm to go and talk, as one youth worker explained:

> ..... *we have also identified the need for somewhere else where we can meet young people, which is where this new coffee bar comes in. Really it is just like a shed next to a leisure centre and young people have said 'we'll give you a hand, just paint it up, put some tables and chairs in and a kettle, a notice board and we just want to use it to drop in and have a cup of tea.'*

It was intended that in the future that, with some training, the young people would run the coffee bar themselves.

The young people themselves were not keen that word about the youth houses should spread. Some were opposed to the youth workers marketing the houses in schools because they did not want 'undesirable' new people to start using the house and cause trouble. Whilst regulars would quite like to have facilities such as a pool table, or more video games, they were worried that if they would attract other people who would spoil the atmosphere they had built up. The young people were afraid the project would attract the same people who caused trouble in the local youth clubs and on the streets, from whom the youth houses currently offered protection.

5.3   An Asian young women's group

At the time of the study, this targeted project had been running for three years. Held in a local youth and community sports/activities centre, a very central location, it provided the opportunity for young Muslim women to engage in a variety of activities to which they might not usually have access. The centre belonged to the youth and community service which also paid for the part-time worker.

75

Aim of the project

The project was intended to give Muslim young women somewhere to go with which their parents would be comfortable and where they could take part in sports activities and discussions which would increase their confidence.

Activities on offer

Initially the group had met on a Thursday night when the young women took part in craft activities such as jewellery-making led by specialist staff that were already taking place in the centre. Since the meetings had moved to Sunday afternoons, provision had become mainly sports oriented, centring around table-tennis, aerobics, swimming and badminton. Extra funding had recently been found to pay for a gym instructor, without whom the gym could not be used. Informal discussions also took place. Some of the young women were working towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Recently the group had organised a youth exchange to Pakistan for three weeks. The group had raised £2,500 for the trip through car boot sales, a fashion show, food stalls and henna hand painting. In Pakistan, the young women visited schools and villages, talked to their Pakistani peers and gave presentations. Thirteen young women from Pakistan were due to stay with the British families the following year, following a week in a residential activity centre for all 26 girls.

Times

Meetings took place for two hours on Sunday afternoons at a local sports centre opened solely for this group. This guaranteed the parents' support for the project.

The young women

At the peak of the project, before the decision to go to Pakistan, there had been 24 participants. However, once the focus of the group's activities moved to fund-raising, those not going on the visit to Pakistan lost interest and stopped attending the group, bringing membership down to the 13 who were going on the trip.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

Although at the peak of the project there were only 24 young women participating, it was reported that this represented all of the Muslim young women in the area, as the youth worker knew all the Muslim families in the locality and was informed by the local Racial Equality Council of any new families arriving. She would then make contact with the new family and persuade them, if they had daughters, to let them come to the centre on a Sunday afternoon.

A number of young women who used to be involved in the group had left to go to university, however they still took part in the group's activities when they visited home on the weekends.

The follow-up interviews when some of the young women participating in the group explored their reasons for coming to the sessions. The main reason given mentioned was to socialise with other young women in the group, as this frequent comment illustrates: 'Everyone's friends here. We see each other here and do things together.'

The nature of the activities were also important and the young women liked the fact that they had all the sports facilities to hand. One explained that for religious reasons they would not be allowed to go swimming or do other of the group's activities on their own. It enabled them to get out of the house and meet other people as their parents knew they would be safe at the centre – a problem brothers did not have as they were allowed to play football and socialise with their friends outside home.

The youth work curriculum

Those members of the group who had been on the visit to Pakistan said they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves and had learnt more about the culture and country than when they had been to Pakistan with their families. A few said it made them appreciate what they had in England and how different life was in the two countries:

> *I definitely got more of an insight into life there. It was like a different world. England seemed a universe away.*

Those interviewed explained how they had increased their confidence through having to talk to people they didn't know and give presentations. One young woman felt the group had grown much closer through the experience:

> [We were] *learning to rely on each other, stand up for each other, lean on each other and work as a team.*

The role of the youth worker

According to the youth service's PYO, attempts to work with the Muslim community in the past had met with a poor response. This time, despite little progress with the Sikh community (due largely to the individual workers involved), the Muslim young women's initiative had been very successful. The person appointed had credibility within the local Muslim community, was well known and highly respected and, crucially, was neither very young nor over-Westernised. This trust had been an important factor in persuading parents to allow their daughters to come to the project.

The young women, too felt the worker was very approachable. Indeed, being friendly with their parents she often visited their homes on a social basis, leading the young women to call her 'Auntie'. However, the young women said they would not feel comfortable in confiding their problems: not necessarily due to a fear of her telling their parents, but rather because they had a lot of respect for her and saw her as a family friend.

Funding

Funding for this initiative was minimal: the youth service could only afford to pay the worker for four hours' work, and she was not paid for the extra six hours of outreach work she did each week. However, as the PYO explained, despite the small financial input, the value of the youth work was enormous:

> *They are what I would call true youth work in that they are actually self-directing, and they empower themselves, which is really good.... So for a relatively small financial input we get an amazing return.*

Although use of the centre was free because it belonged to the youth service, opening it on Sundays especially for the group was expensive, not least because of the higher pay required by the caretaker. On Sundays,

too, the gymnasium was unavailable for weight training because the budget would not cover the compulsory instructor. However, funds released from another initiative were to go towards funding a replacement for the Sikh worker and a gym instructor.

Getting started

Although the project was targeted at Muslim *girls*, the worker had initially encouraged all Asian women to come to the meetings, in order to reassure parents of their daughters' safety, and to involve them in decisions about activities. The worker had visited or telephoned the home of each Muslim family in the area, and obtained further names and addresses from the local Racial Equality Council who supported her work. A Sikh worker had separately approached Sikh women to invite them to the group.

During the ten-week initial phase on Thursday evenings it was mainly the mothers who attended, although some did bring their daughters. Seeking their views on the type of provision they wanted for their daughters, the meetings sought to introduce the mothers to the possibility of out-of-school activities, reassure them that the centre was safe and that the worker could be trusted. It emerged that the older women wanted a social outlet and help with English, while the younger women wanted to socialise with one another and take part in craft and physical activities. Eventually, the mothers agreed that their daughters could come alone and so the group separated into two. The mothers' involvement in the initial stages of the group was thought to have been vital in gaining parental permission for the young women to attend the group's meetings.

Maintaining interest

At the time of the study, the number of participants was very low. This was partly because the Pakistan trip had lost the interest of those not going. Some of the young women from the trip had now gone to university, further reducing attendance. Consequently, the youth worker and the youth and community development officer were planning to contact the families in their homes to remind them that the group was still meeting, and to develop a new programme of activities in consultation with the young women.

5.4 A voluntary sector community project

The principal focus of the present research was on local authority services. This case study was included because of the high level of support it received from the local authority.

An independent voluntary organisation registered as a charity, the project was organised, managed and run by local people based on a core team of three youth workers and a heavy reliance on local volunteers. The project's main site was a converted chapel, consisting of a large hall and smaller rooms where groups could meet and art work could take place. In addition, there was an auditorium with balcony seating in which was sited the enormously popular inflatable airbed and, with soft flooring, this provided a 'wild' free activity area which could as easily be transformed into a theatre or concert hall.

Aims of the initiative

The project aimed to provide various forms of youth service provision to young people, within a community location and with the involvement of local people.

Activities on offer

Ranging from a parents and toddlers group for young parents to dance and theatre workshops, provision included junior, youth and young adult clubs. The junior youth club targeted 10-13 year olds and had been set up in response to a direct need. Its 'graduates' tended to join the youth club aimed at 13-17 year olds. The inflatable airbed was an extremely popular activity with both groups. A coffee bar, table-tennis and pool were always available, alongside group work in art and issue-based games. The older age group had also been involved in drama and photography workshops and a motor project. From time to time, workers organised special activities such as discos, and occasionally there were outings.

The project also included a drop-in club for young unemployed people aged between 16 and 25 which had been running for 10 to 12 years. This was housed in another building in the town and provided advice and information, as well as a coffee bar and pool table. The unemployment group met three times a week: two afternoons of drop-in sessions and an activity afternoon of swimming, weight-lifting and football at a sports centre in a neighbouring town. The unemployment group was staffed by one full-time paid youth worker and a group of volunteers, themselves unemployed young men. A recent offshoot of the unemployment group

---

was a weekly Jobsearch group, part of an initiative known as Community Access to Technology (CAT). Using vacancies information from the employment service and computers to write letters and CVs, young people of about 18-25 years worked as a self-help group to seek employment. As the PYO explained:

> They are delivering basic skills to young people in youth centres using lap-top computers. Now, a lot of people would say you can't deliver basic skills – improving people's reading and writing – through youth clubs because young people just wouldn't want to know. But the key that they have found is, first of all the worker, she is brilliant, and also, she had got these lap-tops.

The CAT project is discussed in more detail below.

The young people

The junior club and youth club were very popular: the junior club attracted on average about 80 young people, while the youth club had 300 members with approximately 85 young people attending each session. There were 40 young people registered with the unemployed young people's group, with attendance at the drop-in sessions ranging from six to fifteen, depending on what government schemes and casual labour was available at the time.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

The project was well liked by young people in the surrounding areas, with average attendances of 70-80 young people per night that rose during the winter when there were fewer alternative possibilities for young people.

Once again, the most common reason given by the young people for coming to the youth club was so that they could be with their friends. Besides the inflatable airbed, on which young people spent a sizeable proportion of their time, they mainly used the youth club sessions to talk to their friends and get to know other people. Also important were the sports activities: table-tennis and the pool table were always available alongside other, rotating, sports such as football or rugby. The workers made the young people feel welcome, and also allowed them to bring their own music.

81

The special one-off activities were also very much appreciated. These included an 'Awakathon' for Children in Need, mentioned by nearly all interviewees. The young people were sponsored to stay awake all night in the centre and spent the time playing games, watching videos and bouncing on the airbed. It was to be repeated the following year when it was envisaged that the young people and volunteers would spent this time repairing the airbed. Also mentioned was a summer playscheme for junior school and handicapped children, in which some of the young people from the youth club were involved, followed by an end-of summer trip organised by the youth workers for participants.

The drama group was also popular. The young people enjoyed putting on plays, some of which they had written themselves, for their friends. The workers used the revenue from the ticket sales to organise something special, based on suggestions from the young people. Most recently they had been to Liverpool to go shopping, see a show and stay overnight in a youth hostel.

Undoubtedly, part of the reason young people came to the youth club was because there was very little else for them to do in the town. There was no cinema, sports centre or equivalent meeting place to the youth club. In fact, several of the young people walked a considerable distance, often on their own, to come to the youth centre. Irregular bus services and lack of spending money meant that leisure outlets in nearby towns were not a realistic alternative. On non-youth club days, interviewees congregated in particular areas of town or went to the snooker club to drink or smoke. However, many of them, particularly the boys, took part in rugby, football and boxing training at a boys' club about four miles away or at another youth club in the summer.

The youth work curriculum
In addition to sports and leisure activities, more social educational activities were available. Drama and crafts workshops were enjoyed very much. In particular, a group of young women talked about how taking part in the drama group had increased their confidence and social ease. The summer playscheme provided many of the young people involved with a first time opportunity to relate to disabled people, overcoming their prejudices and giving them responsibilities.

The young people using the youth club were often involved in planning and organising future activities: indeed, as with a disco, the activity's existence was conditional on their involvement. The drama group members had chosen the plays they would perform, and where to go for their end of project outing with the workers. The play scheme helpers chose the destination for their end of summer trip.

A more long term, and perhaps more visible social education programme was the CAT project, which took place among the Jobsearch group described earlier in this section. At a very simplistic level, the workers were helping young people prepare CVs and apply for jobs using computers. However, they were also teaching them basic skills in literacy and encouraging participation by young people who would not normally get involved with computers. The workers found that the computers played a key role in attracting young people to the Jobsearch group. They were encouraged by the technology to think about their employment history and develop an inventory of their skills, in a way that they would not have been willing to do on paper. They could overcome any problems with spelling or bad handwriting.

For many of the young people, producing a type-written document was a major achievement, and a great boost for their self esteem. As one worker explained:

> *They are also a group that the education system has failed in that they weren't achievers in school....but by the time they have done their registration forms, filled in a CV and looked at what they have done, it is such a step up for them. And because it is typed and looks really professional, they probably wouldn't have thought they were capable of that....so you are offering them more than just finding a job, you are offering them a place where they can build confidence, and because they feel confident with us and they know us, we can do that bit more with them.*

The role of the youth worker

Once again, interviews with the young people revealed that the personality of the youth workers and how they treated the young people was a very important factor in the youth club's popularity. These young people saw the youth workers as friends whom they could approach with their problems. The age of the workers was not an issue – both younger and

older workers were popular – but rather their attitude. As one young man explained, 'They don't treat you as if you're a child'. Workers spent time talking and listening to the young people on an equal level, rather than telling them what to do or criticising them. One of the workers having brought in his own computer from home for the young people to play games on was well remembered and appreciated.

Funding

Although a voluntary community project, funded externally, the project had close links with the local authority. In addition to annual grant-aid for staffing, the authority provided training for the project's paid youth workers who also attended the local authority's staff conference. With the backing of the local authority, and of a local borough council, the project had been able to secure Urban Aid. For example, the CAT project was funded through Urban Aid and had been re-funded for the next two years with tapered funding. Funding for this initiative was also made available through the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (now known as the Basic Skills Agency) with additional grants from the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

Unmet needs of young people

In general, the young people were happy with the range of facilities and activities on offer. However, they argued that the youth club needed to offer more relevant provision to those who had 'grown out' of activities in the youth club. These young people wanted video games, health sessions, and a wider variety of food. They wanted to be able to smoke in the club and for it to be open until later at night. As night-clubs and other youth clubs were too far to walk, they wanted more discos. Additionally, young people wanted provision at the weekends, particularly on Sundays.

Acceptance in the community

The project had a very strong community focus and a high level of local involvement through volunteer support. This directly equated with local acceptance and approval of the youth provision offered. As one worker commented:

> Youth clubs get a very bad reputation... but we are a community centre, we work with pre-school play groups, we run playschemes in the summer for every child between five and 12 [years]. Around

600 come to that provision – and parents come with them and sit outside so it is visible, and everyone says what a wonderful job you're doing. That mitigates the situation; we don't just work with 'bad boys' and we encourage young people from our unemployment group and so on to come down and work with young kids... that all helps to build up good relations.

The importance of volunteers

It was part of the project's policy that the bulk of the youth work be delivered through volunteers. The youth club ran on only one paid worker; all the others were volunteers. Furthermore, the young users were encouraged to work as volunteers in other parts of the project: some members of the youth club helped in the summer playscheme, while members of the unemployed group helped in the youth club. This gave young people the opportunity to demonstrate a different side of their behaviour to the community, and to develop their social skills and work experience. All volunteers took part in training sessions, providing the workers with an opportunity to do issue-based work with the young people, as one worker explained:

These volunteers are also involved on a Thursday afternoon in a workers' training session that I take and they are alongside trainees on a Government scheme, so there are trainees, there are adult volunteers and there are the younger volunteers who are all involved in Thursday afternoon training. This can be on good youth work to looking at issues of discrimination.... it is a very exciting session.

5.5 A youth shop initiative

This local authority-funded initiative was a relatively new project and had been running for a year at the time of the NFER study. One of five similar initiatives in the local authority, this drop-in centre/cafe was located in a town centre and had been set up in direct response to a survey of young people's needs. The Shop was staffed by one full-time youth worker and between eight and nine part-time youth workers. The part-time workers' main responsibility was face-to-face work with the young people and they worked on average 16 hours a week, on a rota basis between the afternoon and evening shift. There were no volunteers involved in the project.

Aim of the initiative

To provide open access youth service provision in a format which would be attractive to young people, and based substantially on social education.

Activities on offer

The Shop offered a variety of activities to young people ranging from social education programmes to leisure and entertainment, advice and support. Primarily, however, the Shop operated as a drop-in cafe, providing an informal and comfortable central location for young people to meet their friends. Drinks, snacks and meals were available from a cafe counter situated at one end of the Shop managed by a member of staff. The Shop offered satellite music television, a jukebox and a pool table and from time to time had hosted live bands, karaoke nights, discos and live theatre performances.

Opening times

The Shop was open from Wednesday to Sunday inclusive, from midday to 10 pm except on Sundays when the Shop opened between 6 pm and 9 pm. The workers had taken the decision not to open on Mondays as most of the young people went to a local night-club holding an alcohol-free night.

The young people

Attendance figures collected for the local authority indicated on average 60 attendances each night. Most of the young people using the Shop were aged between 14 and 17 years although the Shop welcomed young people aged between 12 and 20. Some older young people with special needs also used the Shop. The initiative was more popular among women by a ratio of 3:2. The facilities were available free of charge.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

In the relatively short period since it had been open, the initiative had become very popular among young people, attracting on average over 60 attendances per night.

The senior youth worker believed that its popularity was partly due to its location in the town centre, en route to almost any location in town to which the young people might be going. It was often used by them as a

meeting place if they were going out. He felt that the relaxed coffee bar atmosphere appealed to the young people. There was no pressure on them to take part in structured activities; the emphasis was on providing a warm and friendly place where they could spend as little or as much time as they wanted. Consequently, groups of young people often drifted in and out of the Shop two or three times a day:

> *I liken it to the sixties coffee bar style thing, but there, if you had finished your coffee, if you didn't buy another coffee, you went. In a way, the Shop is about young people being able to come in and not have to buy anything. They can just sit there and chat with their friends. At Christmas, it was like a left luggage place; people were coming in, meeting their friends there, going up to town, buying their Christmas shopping, dropping it off at the shop, meeting their friends again, going shopping again, then home for tea. Then back in the evening to meet their friends again.*

The young people provided similar reasons for coming to the Shop. As with the other initiatives in this study, the young people came primarily to meet their friends. They felt made welcome, found the youth workers easy to get on with, and liked being able to smoke there and to buy food. There were no other places where they could go to meet their friends without spending much money, or where they were treated as equals.

As a drop-in facility, attendances varied from night to night. The youth officer explained that not only did this depend on what other activities were taking place on any given night, but that since the Shop catered for different groups of young people, each had their preferred times of attendance:

> *It is very difficult to quantify, because, not only does it depend on the night, it depends on what else is happening. Early evening, you will get between 12 and 20 [young people]. That is in the five to seven o'clock period. It surprised me when I first visited the Shop that so many young people congregate there at that time − you'd think they would be at home having their tea. It is actually a place to come after school, before they go home for their tea, and then there is probably a changeover − the ones who come between five and seven are not the ones who come later in the evening, or they might come back later in the evening after they have been off somewhere else. It is difficult to quantify because they might come and go. There might only be a dozen in the Shop at any one time, but 40 could have gone through the course of an afternoon.*

Saturday daytimes and the Christmas period were usually very busy, as most young people tended to be in the town centre at some point and would drop in, even if it were only for ten minutes. During the summer holidays attendance went down.

The Shop was particularly popular among young women, who outnumbered the young men by at least three to two. The senior youth worker commented that the Shop was one of the most female-dominated centres within the local authority. Not being a sports facility may have reduced its appeal to young men; and the youth officer interviewed suggested that the predominance of female workers was attractive to the young women: 'We actually noticed that where we had a female worker in charge of a unit, the numbers [of girls] rose'.

The youth work curriculum

Many of the activities had a recreational slant in order to attract young people in to the Shop, consequently enabling youth workers to do more intensive, social educational work as was felt necessary:

> *The recreational activities are only a means to an end – helping young people recognise their potential and grow. Education has got to be an important feature of that for us. I don't think we have ever been in a situation where it has been purely recreational... you have got to get them through the door before you work with them haven't you?*

Through the Shop's management committee, the young people were given a voice to comment on any aspect of the Shop and to request facilities and activities. The juke box, pool table and music satellite television had been the result of often prolonged negotiations between the workers and the young people. There had been conflict over what the workers felt the young people should have, and what the young people wanted, usually ending in a compromise situation. Reluctant to provide a pool table, the senior youth worker had finally conceded with a distinctive *round* pool table, thereby maintaining his principles regarding the kind of facilities the Shop should provide. As the youth officer explained:

> *It is a compromise between the standards that we might like to help them achieve, and the needs that the young people express. A lot of what [the worker] is saying to you about why he resisted it is because he had this great vision about the standards he would like young people to rise to, and they have said, 'Enough is enough'.*

In addition to its own social education programmes, the Shop had been involved in partnership work with other agencies such as the probation service, the health authority, the education welfare service and the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). For example, the Shop was collaborating with the careers service to encourage recent school-leavers to take up the guarantee of a youth training place and retain their eligibility for benefits. In addition, the workers played an important part in developing the young people's social skills:

> *Our part of the chain... is about developing their social skills. It may well be just confidence building; it may be literacy skills; it may well be just learning how to fill in forms. Personal hygiene and how to present yourself at an interview – those kinds of things.*

The role of youth worker

Situated in a relatively new youth centre, the youth workers had not been able to develop their relationships with the young people to the same extent as had happened in some of the longer running projects in this study. As a consequence, some activities arranged by the workers had not been well-supported by the young people, because the events had taken place too soon after the Shop opened and the young people had not yet got to know the workers well.

The physical layout of the Shop helped in bringing the young people and youth workers together. Since there was only one large room, the workers and young people were together most of the time. As the youth worker explained:

> *There is no hiding place in there – it is not like centres where you have a variety of different rooms, levels, that kind of thing. When you walk in the front door, there it is, there is nowhere else to hide, so in a sense my youth workers are right there in the middle of it all.*

Operating somewhat like detached workers on the street, the worker needed to approach the young people and engage them in conversation:

> *On some occasions it is a question of sitting down and getting involved, on other occasions you have young people coming in and coming straight to you – you may not have to be that proactive. If you overtly become proactive, there is a certain silence, in the quietest possible way, that gives you the idea that they don't want you to sit down and talk to them, but by and large, you have got to.*

89

Funding

At the time of the study, the Shop was funded entirely by the local authority's youth and community service. It was acknowledged that, nonetheless, the Shop would need to find other sources of funding, particularly for some of the project work. It was also hoped that the young people would take part in fund-raising activities although they had not done this yet.

Cafe sales were intended to make a profit, or at least break even, but it was too early to tell whether this was happening. Workers were aware that the young people did not have much income to spend on food.

Flexibility

The Shop was housed in rented premises, part of a deliberate policy which gave the local authority the flexibility to set up new initiatives in response to young people's changing needs. The youth officer explained how by not over-committing itself the authority was able to use its resources more effectively:

> *It is on a three-year lease, so if this was not what young people wanted, unlike building a purpose-built youth centre, we were not constrained. We could move on to another kind of provision that young people do want. So it is a bit more flexible in terms of the service and its funds.*

Marketing

Although the Shop was popular, the youth officer and senior youth worker were cautious about terming the project a success, as it was still a new initiative and this novelty was part of the Shop's appeal. They both recognised the importance of continuing to market the Shop and keep the programme of activities fresh and exciting:

> *We are looking positively at ways of remarketing the Shop even more, because I would like it to be filled up with eighty kids every night... Part of our marketing strategy for this year is to go out and start meeting new people who don't necessarily know what we are about and who we are. That will be done through a series of visits to schools, with some of the young unemployed people who come to the Shop.*

Strategies for raising the Shop's profile among young people and the community included distributing hundreds of fliers to young people on the street. In the past, a mobile information vehicle, parked outside the

Shop on a Saturday, had been used successfully to promote one of the authority's other youth Shops, and the same tactic was being planned for this one. The presentation of the shopfront was being improved to show that it was a free facility for young people, as the youth officer explained:

> *We are also looking at how to make the shopfront more obvious that it is about young people, because although it has got 'youth and community' over the shopfront, it doesn't say what it is for. A lot of it has relied on word of mouth, and part of our new marketing strategy will be to put something over the Shop that says this is a Shop for young people.*

Refurbishment was also being considered. The young people would be asked their views in a survey similar to the pre-launch one and would be asked to help physically with the refurbishment.

For 'branding' purposes all staff wore black sweatshirts printed with the name of the Shop. In deference to the young people who wanted to decorate the Shop interior all black, all publicity was also in black. It was envisaged that the same house style would be used in future local authority youth Shops.

The local community's reactions

The Shop had been well received by the local community who were clearly pleased that the young people had somewhere to meet other than in the street. Security staff from the shopping precinct had noticed a decline in the number of young people congregating in the centre, and

> *...the police, Social Services and other agencies think we are marvellous. They know where the kids are now. You have got this old idiom, 'they are off the street'...*

Where local residents lived above Shops, the youth workers were watchful of noise levels and the Shop's opening hours since residents had expressed concern over possible trouble. Meeting four times a year, the management committee was intended to be a vehicle for the Shop's acceptance into the local community. It consisted of representatives of the local community: a local police sergeant; a member representing the local residents; two local councillors; a development officer from the local TEC; three young people; a local businessman acting as treasurer; and the senior youth worker (non-voting). Relations with the police had already benefited as a result.

5.6 A successful 'traditional' youth club

Held in premises owned by the local authority and re-built from scratch five years ago to a purpose-built design, this youth club attracted weekly attendance of approximately 300 young people to a combination of mid-week programmes and a Friday night disco. It was run by one full-time youth worker with the rotating support of up to 12 part-time youth workers. No volunteers were involved in this project.

Aim of the initiative

To provide open access provision in the form of a traditional youth club offering a range of activities.

Activities on offer

Three times a week on mid-week evenings the club offered a variety of activities to young people ranging from arts and crafts and aerobics to quizzes and discussions. On Fridays a very popular (although alcohol-free) disco was held .

Opening times

The club was open on Monday and Wednesday evenings until 10 p.m. and on Fridays until 10.15 p.m. for the 14-21 year olds. On Tuesdays it was open for the 10-14 year olds. With rare exceptions (to host a special event) it was not open at the weekends.

The young people

The junior club took 10-13 year olds and the senior club, 13-21 year olds. The majority (75%) were aged 14-16. Attendance figures collected for the local authority indicated on average attendances of 100 on mid-week nights for each of the junior and senior clubs, and over 100 for the Friday discos. Entry was priced at 40p (70p non-members) for week nights and 70p (£1 non-members) for the Friday discos.

Issues emerging from the initiative

Take-up

The youth club represented the authority's most successful form of youth provision in terms of take-up rates. At least 100, and often 150, young people filled the premises to capacity for the disco on Friday night, and the monthly attendance average was 970. Some young people attended

on all three nights, others the Friday disco only. Since the authority, via the youth worker, collected data on attendances only, it was unclear what numbers of young people were represented by these figures, although the youth worker estimated 200-300 regular users.

There were some marked gender differences in take-up, with Fridays and junior nights attracting more girls, and Mondays and Wednesdays being male-dominated. Whilst admitting this was worrying, the youth worker suggested that it could be due to parental stereotypes of youth clubs. Also:

> *To be honest, I think a lot of the lasses are more academic than the lads and they will sit in on a Monday and actually do their homework.*

Most attenders fell into the 14 to 16 age-group. As the youth worker commented:

> *Once they get to 17 we lose a lot for about a year. Sometimes after about a year we do get them coming back again. They've experimented with the pubs, they've got cars, they've got their own transport and they're off. They will keep popping in, but we don't have the regular contact that we would have with them when they were 14, 15, 16.*

Youth workers and young people were at one in giving the main reasons for attending as the opportunity to meet the opposite sex and the lack of any other warm or cheap alternative. The young people appreciated being allowed to smoke, and wanted alcohol to be on sale to the over 18s. Several voiced a desire for the club to open to be open at the weekend and later than the 10.15 p.m. closing time currently operating on Fridays, since they stood about outside until at least 11.00 p.m. anyway. Although the younger participants on Fridays were described as something of an irritant, none of the older ones would have preferred more streamlined age-segregation.

The young people were broadly in favour of the club's provision, mentioning the discos in particular as a big attraction. Special events that had been particularly enjoyed and remembered included the visit from the Tyneside young people, a subsidised outing by coach to the seaside and a go-karting trip. Their main reservation was a majority preference for the previous building that this purpose-built one had replaced. The older building had offered 'more for them to do' and lots of little rooms for 'hanging out in'.

93

The youth work curriculum

The emphasis at the club was on providing a relaxed, social atmosphere through which young people could meet each other. The PYO conceded that most of the club's work was not intensive but operated at a mixture of levels on the 'staircase' model. Whilst the work of the membership committee was high-quality and high intensity, the Friday discos were directed at social contact from which workers were able to identify issues for future discussion.

Staffed by the minimum practicable number of workers (not more than seven), the discos offered, inclusive to the entrance price, a meat and vegetarian barbecue prepared by staff and young people together. The youth worker commented:

> *Cooking is a huge thing, they love to do cooking. We have a specific member of staff responsible for making people self-sufficient – being able to cook a meal. Believe it or not, we have had people come in here and say, 'I don't know how to make a cup of coffee', so you are working from that level.*

Other Friday events included quizzes (always popular) and occasional candlelit dinners, prepared, as with the barbecues, to a reasonable standard by some young people who in exchange ate free.

On other nights of the week a variety of activities could be offered, such as pool, dressmaking, cooking, weight-training, aerobics or trampolining, depending on which staff were on duty. Flexibility among the workers was essential: a popular activity might fail when repeated six months later and it was essential that this should not distress them. Whilst all options implicitly contained a high level of 'social education', the youth worker believed that the participants were entirely unaware of this. They were even unable to understand why, for example, he wanted them to make their own phonecalls to plan a club trip. He stressed that being overly motivational in encouraging them to take part in an activity was totally counterproductive.

Successful ventures into life-skills education had included the mock job-interview process with Midland Bank mentioned earlier, which had been a great success and benefited even those who were not offered a 'job' at the end.

The role of the youth worker

The youth worker's duty hours covered eight evenings each fortnight. In practice he often voluntarily worked an extra two. Outside of his club hours, he found himself increasingly weighed down with administrative tasks, but had developed a workstyle of delegating wherever feasible.

Whilst the young people were themselves nominally responsible for making special events happen, in practice this devolved upon the youth worker. He had been responsible for the highly successful visit to the club by some young people from Newcastle which had served to break down North-South preconceptions and prejudices. The club members were fairly certain that their return visit back north would be guaranteed since it was high-profile enough for the youth worker to take on as his responsibility to organise. However, on other occasions the young people had risen to the organisational challenge: for example, catering for a 20-strong members' committee with no support other than the building being opened for them.

The youth worker felt that good personal relations with the young people was an essential factor in their continuing to return:

> *I love it when they get that kind of feeling that they feel as though they can talk to you, and they come in at any time during the day.*

This feeling was reciprocated by the young people, who claimed to see the workers as friends rather than parents:

> *They hear your views and you can have a laugh with them, have a conversation. Its not just, 'Hello, how are you?' – they listen to you.*

Funding

Two years previously the youth service budget had suffered large cuts. The workers had responded by launching a major programme of income generation, which had been a success. The process had now become more familiar to them, and had created within the youth service a more business-minded mentality. For example, other groups wanting to use the youth centre now had to pay 'full whack' since subsidies were no longer available.

As regards financial contributions from the young people themselves, the members committee had at an earlier point been keen on fund-raising. To raise money, they had run a cloakroom service during the discos but, finding it excluded them from the fun they had been reluctant to continue. Money raised was banked through the club and members decided where it was to be spent.

Ownership

The young people served by this club were substantially involved in its running. Members staffed the cloakroom and bar, thereby helping with fund-raising; they were consulted over choices of activities, and they constituted a members' committee. Their involvement had proved a motivator for the part-time staff. Seven members (with a minimum of two of either sex) had representation on the committee for six months, with a ceiling on repeated re-election. In order to promote its empowerment, the committee was given the right of veto over the club's programme and could meet without a staff member being present.

Club use was not restricted to members. Membership, gained through submitting an application form and provable by card, brought the benefits of lower admission prices and quicker entry,

> *But no matter how much you make it attractive to people to become members, there will still be people who don't want to join.*

Low take-up rates for membership (21 for the juniors), despite almost half-price entry, corroborated suggestions made by some of the young people themselves that being a member was somehow not 'cool'. Young people mentioned finding the process of joining 'a hassle'.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

A major focus of this study was the question of take-up of opportunities offered to young people by the youth service. In this final chapter, the key issues emerging from the research are drawn together with particular emphasis on the main aspects affecting levels of take-up and on the ways in which the service was addressing the problem of collecting relevant and useful data on take-up.

6.1 The quality versus quantity debate

Local authority youth services are operating in a world of fierce competition for limited local authority resources. Lacking a statutory basis for local authority provision, most youth service officers emphasised how vital it was to make a good case for continued funding for youth service provision in the authority. This usually included the presentation of figures on take-up rates as one measure of performance. Most officers tended to accept this as an inevitable consequence of the 'value-for-money' culture prevailing in local authority decision-making on budgets. However, there was widespread concern at both officer and worker level that take-up rates were becoming the main performance criterion for assessing the value of youth service provision. They were keen to point out that much of the best youth work took place when relatively small numbers of young people were involved. Thus to equate high numbers with success was misleading and potentially damaging to the quality of service provided. It was felt to be important to relate take-up rates to the size of the groups actually being targeted by particular types of special provision. Therefore, seemingly small groups of young people could actually represent relatively high take-up within a particular target population.

When asked what forms of provision attracted high rates of take-up, youth workers everywhere commonly replied 'discos'; if you wanted to boost your numbers you organised a disco. This connection between high take-up and discos was so universally reported that it appeared almost a truism. However, youth workers argued that holding discos in order to

97

attract hundreds of young people on a Friday night did not in itself constitute good youth work. The long-standing aim of youth work to provide education that leads to an understanding of economic, personal, social and spiritual issues were most clearly set out in the report arising from the three ministerial conferences on the youth service which took place in the early 1990's.[1]

Although discos attracted large numbers of young people, they were generally perceived by youth workers as a means to an end: a way of attracting young people into the type of provision that would address this main aim, and a means of identifying issues of concern to young people that could be the subject of future discussion sessions.

This is not to say that high quality youth work always had to be issue-based; usually it involved a combination of leisure and social educational activities. Outdoor residential activities, for instance, were not only very popular among young people, giving them an opportunity to be away from home and to experience a wide range of activities not usually available to them, but also enabled workers to develop trusting relationships with the young people and to address issues of concern in an environment conducive to developing discussions. Similarly, youth exchanges, visits to the theatre and coffee-bar type initiatives appealed to young people while also providing a base from which to develop more focused youth work. While relatively small numbers of people might be involved in these types of initiatives at any given time, there was far greater potential for positive outcomes for the young people involved. Therefore, judgements about high and low take-up need to be made in the context of the *type* of provision being offered and the potential *outcomes* for the young people involved.

6.2   Whose agenda?

In the course of the research it became apparent that three distinct agendas were in operation: those of the young people themselves, the youth workers and the local community.

For the young people, the most attractive offering was a congenial environment in which to meet their friends – hence the frequent references

---

[1]   NATIONAL YOUTH AGENCY (1992). *Planning and Evaluation in a Time of Change. Report of the Third Ministerial Conference for the Youth Service.* Leicester: NYA.

to discos and coffee bars. However, it should also be noted that some mention was also make of activities with a more obvious social educational focus such as drama, arts and crafts, discussions and role playing on issues of concern. Many of the more successful initiatives were characterised as imparting to young people a sense of ownership. Activities were selected through negotiation and clubs managed by committees with elected representation from their young members. Participants often expressed pleasure in knowing that their venue, or the facilities available, were for their exclusive use.

The expressed aim of the youth workers invariably focused on the social development and empowement of their clients. While it was necessary for initiatives to meet the young people's agenda in order to attract them in the first place, it was then vital for the workers to take advantage of whatever opportunities arose to engage their clients in productive activities. Workers were well aware that the youth service might be a young person's only source of information and advice on, for instance, health, sexuality, welfare rights and careers, and their only opportunity to practice roles of responsibility and leadership in a secure environment.

The agenda of the local community was most frequently reported as directed towards getting young people off the streets. In some authorities it was said that councillors, the police and certain sections of the community were beginning to see detached youth work, in particular, as a way of solving 'social' problems that were proving difficult to address through other means. Youth service personnel felt that this was beneficial to the service in terms both of raising the profile of youth work and of helping to secure external funding for detached youth work. Nevertheless, there was also concern that detached youth workers were being seen as trouble-shooters who were providing a service to the community at large, rather than as youth workers providing a service to young people within a broader educational framework.

Not all of the initiatives described in the previous chapter had the wholehearted support of their local communities. Some suffered from the negative image sometimes attached to youth work and its supposed attraction of 'undesirable' young people. Yet where members of the local community were actually involved in running projects, or young people took on roles of responsibility within the community, a positive reputation resulted.

6.3 Encouraging participation

One of the most consistent findings emerging from this study was the crucial influence of the youth worker on the success of any form of youth work. The relationship between the youth worker and young people was absolutely central to any successful initiative. Quite simply, no amount of additional funding, curriculum planning or new facilities could compensate for youth workers who did not engage with young people in a way that they found acceptable. Thus the successful youth worker, as perceived by young people in this study, was someone in whom they could confide, who treated them as equals, whose relationship with them was that of a friend rather than a parent or teacher (the cliché often stated was that teachers tell you what to do, while youth workers ask your opinion). While these essential components appear straightforward enough and certainly all youth workers undoubtedly aspired to this type of role, the number who achieved it in the eyes of the young people we interviewed was significantly lower. Those workers who had a special rapport with young people were undoubtedly able to achieve the aims identified for good youth work to exert a positive influence on the lives and attitudes of young people. The importance of the skills that these individuals brought to their work should not be under-estimated; without them, even the best facilities and youth work programmes were unlikely to achieve their full potential.

This does not, however, mean that the quality of facilities was unimportant. Although the youth worker's role was pivotal, poor facilities and resources were often a source of great frustration and concern to those working in the youth service. Numerous examples of run-down, badly-located, inadequately resourced youth service premises were described, and were criticised by the young people themselves. Some of those working in the service felt that this undermined what youth work was about, since it conveyed to young people a feeling that society generally placed a low value on them and their needs.

Encouraging participation through marketing of the youth service to its potential users was something which had received growing attention in recent years, although many officers felt that this was an area where more progress was needed. Youth workers were increasingly expected to be proactive in seeking potential users of their services. It was widely reported that in the past the youth service had been very bad at 'selling' itself to young people and that the community in general knew little about

the youth service and what it offered. The need was repeatedly stressed for youth workers to go out into the community and meet young people, tell them what was currently available and discover what would be of interest to them, rather than waiting for the young people simply to turn up at youth clubs and centres. As well as drawing more young people towards youth provision, there were other potential spin-offs from the active promotion of the youth service in terms of helping to attract external sponsorship.

6.4 Moving on to new initiatives

Youth workers in successful projects stressed the need for frequent change in their programmes in response to particular local needs and in consultation with the young people. They had to be alert to the potential for new activities lying within young people's reactions to existing provision, and to recognise that as youth culture changed and new issues arose in the wider society young people would have different requirements. Even premises might have to change to meet fresh demands, making renting sometimes more advisable than purchase.

Flexibility was the key to offering appropriate provision. Workers needed to acknowledge that an initiative that had been highly successful for one group of young people might well be inappropriate for another. Thus, the decision to end such an initiative should be seen as a positive step and, moreover, as a fresh opportunity to market their new provision and their service as a whole to existing and potential users.

6.5 Data collection

Data on take-up rates were collected and used for a variety of purposes: as a management tool to justify staffing levels; as a way of monitoring participation among target groups; and as an indicator of accountability to the local community and external sponsors. In most authorities responding to the questionnaire survey, annual or bi-annual snapshots of provision had been in use for some years. However, this method was increasingly being seen as providing an inadequate representation of the rates of participation and was being replaced by on-going data collection.

Perhaps the main issue to be highlighted was that data collection and analysis was very time-consuming. Some youth workers questioned the need for extensive data collection exercises partly on these grounds and partly because they believed that excessive emphasis was being placed on overall numbers as the mark of success, to the exclusion of other arguably more significant variables. It should, however, be noted that those workers who were actively involved in the systematic collection of data on attendances/contacts (rather than numbers) did comment on the benefits they saw as accruing from this both in terms of streamlining their monitoring and evaluation procedures and in enabling them to argue their case to outside agencies and individuals.

For youth workers, the critical element in the process of data collection and analysis was the vital decision-making about why the information was being gathered and how precisely it was going to be used. These decisions had to be carefully considered and clearly communicated to all those involved if the resultant data were to be useful and relevant.

6.6 Targeting and funding

This study took place within a context of generally declining local authority funding for youth services. Many of those working in the youth service felt that they were experiencing a disproportionate share of local government cuts due to the service not having a statutory basis. The impact of such reductions was being felt to varying degrees in the different local authorities, but commonly reported problems included: declining condition of premises; reduced levels of staffing and/or reduced hours of opening; and cuts in the overall number of clubs and other youth service outlets. Another consequence of declining local authority funding was an apparent increase in seeking and relying on external funding. This could be from agencies such as the Training and Enterprise Councils, the Basic Skills Agency and the Further Education Funding Council, or from central government programmes such as Urban Aid.

Three issues arise from this increasing reliance on external funding. First, in situations where reduced staffing at officer level was already a debilitating factor, added time commitments in terms of seeking potential sponsors and preparing bids were a burden that took them away from other important aspects of their managerial and supervisory role. Secondly, since most external funding was usually for very limited periods of time, there was a constant pressure to look for additional sources of funding in order to ensure the continuance of work that had already begun. Many officers were uneasy about raising young people's expectations by introducing new provision which met their needs for only a very short time and then had to fold prematurely because funding came to an end.

Thirdly and of greatest concern, external funding was usually forthcoming only for tightly-targeted youth work. Thus relatively small numbers of young people were being catered for, and youth officers found themselves spending a disproportionate amount of their own time and their service's limited resources making provision for a minority of their youth population, while the needs of the majority of young people were not being addressed adequately. Most youth service officers seemed to feel that with reduced funding for youth service provision, the need to target resources on those 'at risk' or disadvantaged in some way was inevitable. Despite this, there was real concern in some authorities that local authority youth work was losing its traditionally broad-based, social education focus and was no longer a generic service able to offer something of interest and value to all young people.

nfer

Providing For Young People:
Local Authority Youth Services in the 1990s

This report presents findings from a one-year study into local authority youth service provision in England and Wales. It offers a detailed account of current local authority policy and practice in relation to youth service management and provision, at a time when the service is facing considerable pressure for fundamental reform.

In addition, six popular youth-work initiatives taking place in different local authorities are explored in detail and provide an insight into the key issue of what attracts and sustains young people's involvement with the youth service, according to the young people themselves and youth workers involved in these projects. These case studies highlight the crucial role of youth workers in delivering high-quality work that is relevant to young people, as well as the importance of raising awareness of, and adequately funding, youth-work initiatives.

This report will be of great interest to LEAs and policy makers at the local and national level, and in both the maintained and voluntary sectors of the youth service.