



Youth

Directors' summary 8 September 2010

Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

“The challenge really is to get young people to think more long term, to think more about new skills,... trying to do something that's a bit different...”

Youth support worker

C4EO's work on young people supports directors of children's services and all the professionals who work together in young people's services within a local area, by providing the knowledge, data and tailored support to help improve outcomes for vulnerable young people. This summary provides concise and accessible guidance drawing on the three research reviews in the youth theme.

The reviews set out to answer three questions relating to young people:

- how to increase young people's engagement in positive activities
- what works in terms of targeted youth support
- how to reduce alcohol consumption amongst young people.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download the full and in-depth research reviews.

What do we know?

Young people's participation in positive activities¹ can help to develop their personal, social and emotional skills, such as self-esteem and confidence. This improves their relationships with their peers and with other adults, particularly teachers and parents. A wide range of activities needs to be offered to enable young people to make choices and to reflect age-related preferences. Participation in multiple positive activities brings additional benefits.

¹ 'Positive activities' covers adult-led, structured leisure-time activities outside of school hours which take place in, or are delivered by, children's centres, extended services, youth services, school-based extra-curricular activities, play and leisure services, sports and recreation services, private providers and the arts. Specific activities include youth groups, sport and physical activities, performing and creative arts, courses and learning-related activities (outside school hours) and volunteering.

Young people 'at risk' need to receive relevant, appropriate and non-stigmatised support. Interventions can help to improve family relationships, as well as provide young people with enjoyable activities that contribute to their sense of achievement. Support for vulnerable young people (targeted youth support²) should take a holistic approach addressing multiple risks and be flexible enough to meet individual needs.



The effective delivery of services for young people requires:

- agencies to work together
- the input of schools to help with referral/access and as a base for services
- the involvement of young people in the design, provision and promotion of services.

Programmes that have shown promise in reducing alcohol consumption among young people³ include those that:

- engage and work with families to improve the quality of their relationships
- assist pupils to learn about alcohol and apply what they have learned to resisting drug and alcohol use
- seek to improve the quality of pupils' experience at school
- provide young people with enjoyable out-of-school activities that contribute to their sense of achievement.

² Targeted youth support aims to ensure that the needs of vulnerable young people are identified early and met by agencies working together in ways that are shaped by the views and experience of the young people themselves.

³ This includes all levels and types of alcohol consumption by 11–17 year olds.

What action is needed?

Increase young people's engagement in positive activities

Work in partnership with other statutory services and voluntary organisations to deliver or fund positive activities. Agree with partners how you will monitor participation, measure positive outcomes and secure value for money.

Develop a commissioning process between providers which promotes collaboration, not competition.

Work closely with schools and encourage other agencies to do the same – schools offer useful venues for activities, can help to promote positive activities and provide links with the broader community.

Offer neutral venues for some older young people.

Provide longer initiatives at an earlier age, and allow a longer lead-in for young people to learn about and trust new initiatives, which whilst incurring extra cost, can offer value for money.

Commission activities that enable young people to gain from a long-term, consistent involvement of a supportive adult – this increases the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Engage young people in decisions about services so they gain a sense of ownership and can influence provision.

Promote positive activities and encourage uptake

Highlight the main benefits as having fun and enjoyment and a chance to try something new.

Publicise services to all young people – not only specific groups – whilst recognising that providing universal services may create additional costs.

Develop a comprehensive communications strategy, based on research with the young people you are targeting.

Use a variety of media to promote initiatives – magazines, websites/blogs, text messaging and viral marketing – and use the right message for the right medium.

Provide parents with clear and up-to-date information about activities available in the local area, when and where and at what cost.

Involve young people in promoting activities to their peers.

Offer taster sessions.

Use existing activities to promote other activities.

Meet both direct (e.g. payment for coaching sessions, entrance fees) and indirect costs (e.g. transport to matches/events, equipment) for young people from low income families.

Ensure the positive activities provided:

- are markedly different from in-school activities, as more of the same is not effective
- enable young people to make choices about whether to take part – offer a range of activities
- are tailored to different age groups – different activities in different settings that are promoted differently.

Improve targeted youth support (TYS)

Strong leadership is key: leaders need to 'champion' TYS programmes and be accountable for the programme's success or failure.

Work in partnership with other agencies – this is particularly important to identify and refer young people to TYS and to deliver a holistic service.

Agree with partners on a shared definition of 'young people at risk', and develop principles and processes to ensure adequate record-keeping, sharing of information and consistent referral of vulnerable young people across services. This information should feedback into the programme as it progresses.

Develop innovative approaches to TYS which take on board the different types of risk in a young person's life. This needs a coordinated approach between all the relevant agencies and families. Interventions aimed at one area of a young person's life can also produce good outcomes in other areas.

Work closely with schools, as they are the main site for the uptake and recruitment of young people into TYS. They can help to target seldom-heard groups and staff are frequently involved in the implementation of programmes.

Develop effective means to target seldom-heard groups, particularly those excluded from education. Strong relationships between specialists and other agencies and strong links with the community will help.

Ensure the views and needs of target groups are heard, shared, and incorporated into TYS programme design.

Coordinate inter-agency policy and practice relating to the implementation of TYS services. Managers require reliable information and communication in order to achieve the goals of their services.

Provide systematic staff training and ongoing workforce support which is integrated into programme design, because those who provide TYS services need to be highly trained and knowledgeable.

Ensure TYS programmes are flexible enough to be tailored to the needs of the participants.

Consider developing peer-to-peer programmes – these have proved promising as a way to conduct programmes.

Ensure TYS programmes are evaluated and the lessons fed back to improve the programmes.

Reducing youth alcohol consumption

Ensure that alcohol-related issues are included in all local policies that focus on young people's health and wellbeing, safety, enjoyment and achievement, contribution to local communities, and economic education and wellbeing.

Develop population or community-wide approaches, as well as activities to engage individuals, in order to provide a comprehensive local programme of activities to reduce alcohol consumption.

Ensure that professionals are encouraged to work towards multi-layered and multi-component alcohol-use programmes – address individual and family factors and provide supportive activities in and out of school settings.

Provide young people with a range of opportunities or pathways to reduce their alcohol consumption. Ensure that a range of universal and specialist provision is available.

Work with schools to ensure their involvement in programmes that seek to improve health and wellbeing in general and alcohol use in particular.

Develop effective means to target at-risk and seldom-heard groups, particularly those excluded from education, looked after children and those whose family members misuse substances.

Tailor alcohol programmes to address:

- the needs of different age groups of young people
- young people's personality-related high-risk factors: sensation seeking, impulsivity, anxiety sensitivity and hopelessness.

Enable young people to be involved in commissioning services, to ensure they can participate in developing affordable and enjoyable local alternatives to drinking too much or 'binge' drinking.

What do you want to do next?

The following questions – based on the seven outcomes–based accountability (OBA) questions – will provide a catalyst for partnership action.

Q1 What is your vision for improving the lives of youth in your locality? What outcomes (quality-of-life conditions) do you want for them?

For example, young people have increased self-esteem, more confidence, improved emotional wellbeing, experience better relationships with their families and with their peers and other adults, are more engaged in school and have higher aspirations for their future.

Q2 What would the outcomes look like if you could see or experience them?

For example, more young people are taking part in a wider range of enjoyable out-of-school activities, especially those young people from low income families or rural areas. A variety of high-quality support is available for vulnerable young people, which meets their individual needs. Young people are more informed and better able to resist drugs and alcohol.

Q3 And how can you measure them?

(quality and quantitative measures are needed)

The indicators for measuring outcomes emerge from descriptions of the experience. (Q2) Below are some examples of national indicators relating to the outcomes within this theme, which you and your partners need to meet:

- NI 50 Emotional health of children
 - NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities
 - NI 111 First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10–17
 - NI 112 Under-18 conception rate
 - NI 115 Substance misuse by young people.
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Q4 Where are you now? How are you currently doing on the most important measures?

The web-based C4EO Data Tool provides relevant data on the national indicators. You may also be able to use your own local data to create data charts in order to analyse and compare performance with other authorities and monitor your progress.

Q5 Who are the partners for improvement?

A very broad range of partners have a role to play providing services and support to young people (see 'Who has the information you need?').

You may choose to undertake a 'Turning the curve' exercise on the measures where improvement is needed. 'Turning the curve' is an exercise from the OBA toolkit which facilitates partnership working.

www.c4eo.org.uk/obatoolkit/default.aspx

This will enable you to identify which partners/agencies should be involved. C4EO sector specialists are also available to support this work on request.

Q6 What really works to improve the outcomes you want?

C4EO's in-depth research reviews provide some evidence for what works. This evidence can be used to support the achievement of the outcomes you have identified.

Q7 What do you propose to do next?

Having identified your partners, your vision, the outcomes you are seeking to achieve for young people and the indicators to monitor progress on these outcomes, the next step is to agree joint action (possibly from the 'Turning the curve' exercise).

A report card format can be used which is clear and simple for you and your partners and provides a framework for monitoring progress against your outcomes.

(This is available in the OBA toolkit on the C4EO website.)



Who has the information you need?

- young people
- parents and carers of young people
- education-based staff including head teachers and teachers in different kinds of schools, tutors and designated teachers, pastoral support staff, and SENCOs.
- youth workers within local authority and the voluntary sector
- local authority and community service providers
- social workers
- specialist frontline professionals
- voluntary organisations
- policy-makers
- health
- police.

Directors' summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of C4EO's current work in this theme for directors of children's services.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download full and in-depth reviews and other resources.

How can C4EO support your vision?

C4EO offers wide-ranging support, including:

- validated local practice
- training events
- sector specialists providing tailored support
- knowledge and research reviews including key messages from research.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to access full information.