

Must know for youth services



Key messages

Councils have a statutory duty to “secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people” and to make sure young people have a say in the local offer.¹ This is often referred to as the ‘youth services duty’.

However, local government faces a huge challenge in providing youth services. Due to cuts to funding from central government and an increase in demand for child protection services, councils have had to divert increasingly scarce resources away from early help like youth services, and into services for children at immediate risk of harm. Even so, councils were forced to overspend on their children’s services budgets by £605 million across England in 2015/16, and councils will face a funding gap of £3.1 billion by 2025.² Local authorities have responded in different ways, such as looking into different models (like youth mutuals), integrating youth services with other support for young people and their families, and by targeting limited resources towards more vulnerable groups.

Local authorities also have a duty to set up one or more youth offending teams in their area, with each requiring the involvement of the local authority, police, NHS and probation services.³ They are overseen by a management board usually chaired by a senior official within the local authority.⁴

What you need to know

The Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) is the lead government department for youth services. While there is no government strategy or over-arching policy dedicated to young people, 2018’s Civil Society Strategy included ‘opportunities for young people’ as one of three ‘missions’ to enable a lifetime of contribution by citizens. This focuses on empowering young people to take part in and influence decision-making and to become socially responsible, with an additional focus on supporting disadvantaged young people to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

The strategy also commits the Government to a review of the statutory guidance on the youth services duty; this is expected to take place in 2019.

In 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA) published its Vision for Youth Services (www.local.gov.uk/youth-services-vision) to outline the key principles of effective local youth services, and the ways in which councils can support this in the context of reduced resources. This includes the importance of providing local leadership and direction, coordinating provision and looking at new ways of commissioning and funding.

As part of the youth vision work, the LGA has commissioned the Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) to produce a Framework of Outcomes for Young People to support councils, commissioners and providers to deliver the right outcomes for young people in their area. The Centre and the National Youth Agency (NYA) are developing support and training to use the framework, which will be published on the LGA, CYI and NYA websites as they become available.

1 Section 507B, Education Act 1996

2 <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/bright-futures-our-vision-youth-3>

3 Section 39, Crime and Disorder Act 1998

4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389746/statutory-partnerships.pdf

National youth programmes

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is a four-week voluntary programme open to all 15-17 year olds in England. The Government committed £1.26 billion of investment in the scheme between 2016 and 2020.

Participants develop a social action project to deal with a local issue they're passionate about, and spend 30 hours putting the project into action in their community. It also gives young people involved the chance to spend a short time away from home to take part in team building activities. NCS guidance recognises local authorities as key partners, and the NCS should work closely with councils on the design and delivery of the programme locally to ensure that it supports the needs of local young people.

There is a wide range of other youth programmes that operate across the country, including the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, Prince's Trust, uniformed youth organisations such as the Scouts and Girlguiding, and the #iwill youth social action campaign.

Youth offending and youth justice

Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the cooperation of statutory partners to form a Youth Offending Team (YOT). There is a duty for the local authority, the police, the probation service and health named partners to cooperate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area.

To support the YOT, additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people. There may be one or more teams in each area, or a team covering a number of councils.

YOTs are partially funded by the Government's youth justice grant, in addition to funding from councils themselves and statutory partners, and deliver elements of the youth justice system at a local level. These are generally hosted by the local council (county, in two tier areas), although in some authorities they are supported by agencies such as the police or the office of the police and crime commissioner.

There are three main aims for youth offending services:

- to reduce first time offenders
- to reduce repeat offending
- to reduce entrants to custody.

YOTs must work closely with young people and families to identify and address risk factors, and encourage restorative justice and attention to the needs of victims of crime. YOTs link closely with social care and education, aiming for positive diversion from crime and improving life opportunities through skills, routes to training and employment.

YOTs are inspected by HMI Probation. YOT inspections fall into two categories: full joint inspections (a small number of YOTs each year that are considered to have causes for concern) and short quality screening (broader inspections focussing on YOT work).⁵

Young offenders who are remanded into custody are designated as 'looked after', and financial responsibility for supporting these young people has been transferred to local government, to provide a further incentive to prevent problems escalating.

The overall YOT model has been very successful. The number of first time entrants into the youth justice system has fallen by 85 per cent over the last 10 years.⁶ Importantly, the drop in numbers means YOTs are increasingly working with a smaller but harder to help group of young people. Central government funding to local authorities

⁵ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/our-work/article/criminal-justice-joint-inspection/youth-offending-teams-joint-inspections>

⁶ YJB 2016/17 statistics: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676072/youth_justice_statistics_2016-17.pdf

tackling youth crime has fallen from £145 million in 2010/11 to £72 million in 2017/18.⁷

For more detailed information and key lines of enquiry for councillors, please see our Youth Justice Resource Pack: www.local.gov.uk/publications

Youth homelessness

Certain groups of young people are more at risk of homelessness than others, including care leavers and young offenders. Family relationships and breakdown can be a particular issue during adolescence, which may lead to homelessness or entry into the care system.

According to Homeless Link, family relationship breakdown continues to be the leading cause of youth homelessness.⁸

As a result of the complex needs of this group, children and young people's services need to work closely with housing colleagues to be clear about their respective responsibilities, and to agree a coordinated approach to youth homelessness. In two-tier areas, this will require strong joint working between counties and districts.

Young people aged 16-17 are a priority group for housing services, though the primary duty for finding accommodation for this group is with children's services. However, if children's services decides that the young person is not a 'child in need', the homelessness services team must find them accommodation. Many organisations who support homeless young people suggest that there is not enough youth-specific emergency accommodation available in local areas.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on local housing authorities to provide a range of services that support young people at risk of homelessness, including family mediation and loans for

deposits, and advice and assistance that is tailored to the needs of specific groups including care leavers and those released from youth detention.

Skills

Raising the participation age (RPA) extended the age to which young people must be engaged in education or training to 18 (or up to 25 where an Education, Health and Care plan is in place). Councils have a statutory duty to support them to do so, including reengaging those who have left, or are on the verge of leaving, education and training, and developing a local strategy that provides young people with choice and sufficient places. This strategy should include support for specific groups of young people including those with special educational needs, young offenders and children in care.

The September Guarantee entitles all 16 and 17 year olds to an offer of a suitable place in education or training. It helps councils fulfil their duty to provide education and training to young people by working with partners – schools and colleges – to agree the process for their particular areas.

Councils also have a responsibility to track and record young people's progression in learning and training, and identify numbers of NEET (not in education, employment or training), or 'unknowns'. This tracking can help councils in their planning for RPA by identifying local need.

Careers

Schools and colleges are under a statutory duty to secure independent careers guidance for all registered pupils at the school or college in years 9-13 on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships and T Levels.⁹ While councils

7 <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Cuts-to-youth-services-lead-to-rise-in-crime-warn-councils/44850>

8 <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/apr/16/welfare-reforms-are-exacerbating-youth-homelessness-new-research-reveals>

9 T Levels are new technical study programmes that will sit alongside apprenticeships and A Levels. They are intended to prepare students for highly skilled jobs and enable them to adapt to meet the skills needs of the future.

no longer have a duty to provide CEIAG (careers, education, information, advice and guidance), there is a great deal of innovative work taking place in councils to coordinate and deliver schemes. For more information see the LGA position paper, 'Principles Underpinning Good Careers Advice and Guidance': www.local.gov.uk/lga-position-paper-principles-underpinning-good-careers-advice-and-guidance

In 2018, 20 new Careers Hubs were announced. Each Careers Hub consists of up to 40 local schools and colleges working together with universities, training providers, employers and career professionals to improve careers education for young people in the region. This initiative is part of the Careers Strategy, published in December 2017, which tasked The Careers & Enterprise Company to establish the Careers Hubs across the country. The aim is to establish at least one hub in every region of England outside of London.

Questions to consider

- Do you have an up-to-date assessment of the services young people in your area want and need? Are these services being delivered?
- How are you engaging young people, including in the design and delivery of services?
- How many young people are your Youth Offending Team working with? Has this number been reducing or increasing?
- How are you supporting young people at risk of homelessness? Is your authority experiencing increasing requests for support, and if so, what are the underlying causes of this?
- What information and provision is available to young people to enable them to remain in education or training up to the age of 18?
- How well are partners working together to deliver good outcomes for young people?



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