

# Call for Evidence - Youth Sector Support Arrangements

## Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 5 April  
2008

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for  
**children, schools and families**

**THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).**

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

**Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.**

Name **Barbara Robinson**  
Organisation (if applicable) **Barnardo's**  
Address: **Tanners Lane**  
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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Damon Boxer on:

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## Responses

There are more specific questions under each of the following headings. **These are intended as a guide only** so that submissions are focused on the key issues that DCSF is most interested in addressing as part of this consultation.

We are particularly keen to receive **propositions** (both individual and joint) from partners about how sector support arrangements overall could be improved and what practical actions would need to be taken by Government – to secure coherent support for organisations from across statutory, third, and private sectors.

Please tell us your job title: **Senior Research Assistant, Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit**

Comments:

**Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit plays a key role in the organisation's campaigning and influencing work, contributing to the development of policies at local and national level. Through its research function, the PRU collects, communicates and supports the application of research evidence for the benefit of children and families.**

Please choose from one of the following statements:

I am responding on behalf of a public sector organisation / local authority

I am responding on behalf of a for-profit organisation

I am responding on behalf of a third sector organisation (see TOR)

I am responding on behalf of a network, for example a national youth sector membership organisation or a local voluntary sector forum

I am responding as an individual

Other, please specify

Please Specify:  
**Barnardo's**

Please choose from one of the following statements:

<input type="checkbox"/> My work / the work of my organisation is focused solely on teenagers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I / my organisation works with a range of clients, including teenagers	<input type="checkbox"/> I / my organisation does not work with teenagers, but they may be affected by my/our work (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify		

Please Specify:

**Barnardo's runs 394 projects, working with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people across the UK. We provide support to young people with a variety of needs who may find it difficult to access mainstream youth services, including care leavers, young carers, those excluded or disengaged from mainstream education and children and young people in trouble with the law.**

Are you / Is your organisation a member of any networks for example a national youth sector membership organisation or a local voluntary sector forum? Please list all applicable.

**Comments:**

Barnardo's are members of the National Youth Agency and many of our regions and services are members of local voluntary sector forums.

## **Supporting regional and national partners**

### **1) How could regional and national youth sector organisations work better together, and with Government, to enhance delivery and challenge underperformance in the youth sector?**

Points to consider in your response:

- Do you think current regional and/or national support arrangements are coherent and well coordinated?
- How effective are regional and/or national support arrangements at meeting the needs of professionals/organisations working with teenagers in your area?
- Do you think that underperformance is challenged effectively within the youth sector, and is this true regardless of what type of organisation is providing the service?
- Is there a need for rationalisation at regional and/or national level – to reduce the number of different associations / organisations/ authorities offering support to the youth sector?

Comments:

***No comment***

## **2. Supporting effective practice**

If we are to implement the reforms introduced by 'Aiming high', as well as to secure high quality, Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) in every local area, we need to be confident that all youth sector organisations can access information to help them in their work with young people; and to engage effectively with other professionals providing services for young people.

### **2) How would you improve support arrangements so that all youth sector organisations have equal access to: coherent, high quality**

## information on practice; integrated working; and training opportunities?

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for you / your organisation to access the latest information about 'best practice' in working with young people?
- Do you feel there is sufficient support and guidance to help youth sector organisations engage effectively with other professionals providing services for young people?
- How easy is it for you / your organisation to access training and development opportunities?
- Is this information equally accessible to all parts of the youth sector, for example to: individuals; local authority youth services; private providers; voluntary groups and other third sector youth organisations?

### Comments:

Partnership work and a good quality, well-trained staff base will be critical to the success of Government plans set out in Aiming High.

These points are especially relevant in the context of plans to raise the participation age, which will require a significant expansion in support for youth services. Third sector organisations such as Barnardo's have an important contribution to make in reaching out to the most marginalised and who have rejected state provision, in order to facilitate their route back to mainstream learning.

To help plan and deliver sustainable youth services, good working systems need to be in place involving local authorities, and third and private sector partners. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Identifying mechanisms for bringing partners together to share practice and raise awareness of training and development opportunities – e.g. local Youth Forums;
- Raising awareness of accessible and affordable training and development opportunities will be key to ensuring quality staff – a one-stop shop for information of this nature would be helpful;
- Youth work needs to have a leading role in IYSS – having a clearer function and place so that it is less vulnerable to cuts in funding;
- Recognising the importance of the role played by partners from the third sector, such as Barnardo's, who work with the most marginalised young people, but whose services are often most vulnerable to cutbacks in funding and short term contracts;
- Recognising and addressing potential conflicts of interest in partnership, especially where partners from private and third sector may be in competition for funding;

**Example 1:** Working with partners in social care, education and health services is integral to the delivery of Barnardo's work with vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. For example, a Barnardo's service in the Midlands has been involved in setting up a Youth Support Forum with Connexions and the local Youth service, under the auspices of the Children's Trust. The Forum acts as an opportunity for youth services to engage with one another, access information on development and training and to share best practice.

## **Improving local commissioning and assuring quality**

### **Local commissioning and growth**

To secure a high quality local offer for all young people, it will be vital that local children's trust arrangements, in particular local commissioning arrangements, are robust enough to engage, and harness the capacity of individuals and youth organisations in the third and private sectors. The role of local authorities – and the practical help they receive to act as strategic commissioners of young people's services – will be crucial in achieving this. It will be equally important to secure the sustainability of these providers, as well as, where appropriate, to promote and support their growth.

### **3) What improvements could be made to help youth sector organisations access local commissioning opportunities, and where applicable, to grow their business / organisation?**

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for you / your organisation to understand and access local commissioning opportunities (such as contracts and grant funding)?
- What are the barriers to growth for youth sector organisations?
- What support could we offer Local Authorities to help them improve their commissioning practice, including helping them to engage with and support local third sector youth organisations?

Comments:

While Aiming High recognised the importance of involving the third sector in commissioning and market-making, our services have reported problems with local commissioning processes. These issues include:

- Lack of clarity, transparency and forward planning in commissioning: while national commissioning guidelines have been set in place, there is still much variation in local practice and on-going difficulties with e.g. unclear specifications, funding opportunities not being linked to needs assessments etc;
- Lack of funding for preventive activities: evidence from our services suggests that money tends to be targeted at e.g. youth justice services at the expense of mainstream/preventive youth work (both are of course needed).
- Communications: it can be difficult to access information regarding commissioning opportunities – there is no single place where national and local opportunities are promoted. Consideration should be given to the creation of a dedicated and up-to-date website, where local authorities could post commissioning opportunities with clear and consistent specifications.
- With regard to education and training, there is some evidence to suggest that since responsibility for Connexions services switched to local government, charities and companies providing services to NEET young people have lost contracts to teams run by local authorities, (Financial Times, 2.4.08). This demonstrates the need for fairer, more open and sustainable markets for third and private sectors providing local youth services;
- Partnership work should be encouraged in the commissioning process, so that local organisations can provide good quality services together rather than competing for resources.

**One of the main barriers to service growth is the fact that funding provided by local authorities tends to be short term in nature.** The Department for Communities and Local Government has issued a compact that sets out clear principles for local authorities when commissioning services, which will be helpful to youth sector organisations bidding for services (for example, sustainable three year contracts). However, implementation of the guidance has been patchy and the Government needs to do more to improve local commissioning practice and to ensure that authorities follow the guidelines.

## Quality Assurance

### 4) What improvements could be made to drive up and assure the quality of services for young people?

Points to consider in your response:

- Is there a case for further regulation and what form could this take?
- What role should quality assurance and kite marking and award schemes play?
- How can we ensure more consistent standards of quality without creating barriers to smaller organisations?
- How can young people's safety and 'safeguarding' issues be included within quality assurance arrangements?
- How should young people be involved?

Comments:

In order to ensure a quality offer of youth activities:

- Third and private sector service providers, large and small, should be involved in the development of local Children and Young People's plans, in order to develop integrated and quality services and activities for young people;
- Barnardo's strongly advocates involving young people in the design, commissioning and delivery of services using innovative methods (see section 6).

## Promoting Private Sector and Personal Contributions

It is clear that there are many individuals and businesses willing to invest expertise, resources and time to support local and national third sector youth organisations and projects.

This can range from substantial financial investments in buildings or projects, to a commitment of a few hours a week to offer advice and support on finance, fundraising or project planning. Regardless of the scale of investment, it is always valued. Government believes there is potential to do more, through reform of youth sector support arrangements, to attract such investment to the youth sector, and match investors to projects.

### 5) How could support arrangements be improved so that third sector youth organisations can benefit from expertise, resources, and time offered by private individuals/organisations?

Points to consider in your response:

- How easy is it for third sector organisations to access support from private individuals / organisations?
- Do you feel there is sufficient support to help individuals / organisations match their skills and resources to suitable third sector youth organisations?

Comments:

***No comment.***

### **Empowerment: young people influencing services**

Programmes such as the Youth Opportunity Fund have demonstrated clearly the benefits of empowering young people to influence local decision making. New legislation requires local authorities to ascertain and take account of young people's views on local positive activities and facilities and the Government has committed to extend the Youth Opportunity Fund until 2011.

These are important steps, but Government is keen to go further by empowering young people to influence national policy, including decisions taken about a wider range of services which affect and interest them – such as environment, health and transport.

#### **6) What would be the best way to help young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, influence policy making at national level?**

Points to consider in your response:

- How effective are mechanisms and organisations currently offering a voice to disadvantaged young people and/or those from minority groups?
- What more could these organisations do to secure that young people's voices are heard?
- What role should be played by central Government departments?

Comments:

Aiming High emphasizes the importance of involving young people in the commissioning, design and delivery of integrated services. Barnardo's strongly supports this principle – we believe that service users should be actively involved, if necessary using innovative methods.

No group should be left out because they are considered 'hard-to-reach'. Our services work with the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised young people and around 17 per cent of our service users are from minority groups. Their rights to participate and influence decisions are embedded in our work. Partnership working across the statutory and voluntary sectors also offers the opportunity for involvement by all young people.

Our services have highlighted a number of areas that need to be addressed to ensure that young people are empowered to influence policy-making:

- There needs to be a clear understanding of what constitutes meaningful participation across the youth sector, in order to develop a culture of empowerment that is recognised at all levels;
- At the moment, the concept of participation is better embedded in practice at service level, but less so at senior levels. A model of participation for youth sector services should be developed, which could be cascaded throughout the sector;
- Services need to use varied and creative participative methods to ensure that all young people, especially disadvantaged groups and those less likely to become involved, have an opportunity to influence decision-making;
- Many organisations, including Barnardo's, have dedicated participation and rights workers, but there is a need for participation training across the workforce to ensure that participation of young people is central to service delivery.

**Example 1 – Care Matters Consultation:** Barnardo's Children's Rights Service (Barnet and Enfield), which particularly supports young people in care and care leavers, supported the involvement of a wide group of looked-after Children from Enfield in the national consultation regarding the Care Matters proposals. Young people from the service were invited to a reception in central London arranged by the DFES to launch the Green Paper, giving them the opportunity to discuss issues around the care system with MPs including Beverley Hughes and Alan Johnson. A total of 22 young people submitted consultation forms to the DCSF, helping to ensure that Government proposals were informed by the experience of service users.

**Example 2:** In summer 2007, Barnardo's service users aged 13 -18 from three alternative education and training projects in the North West participated in a piece of research to inform Government plans to raise the school leaving age to 18. A DVD was made with the young people, which was shown at party political

conferences in the autumn. A group of young people from one the services involved also attended a Barnardo's event in Westminster in February, where they spoke to Ed Balls and Beverly Hughes.

**Example 3:** Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit has developed a Participation Practice Guide for SCIE, in partnership with young people, their families, practitioners and managers. The guidance aims to improve the experience of people accessing services by developing and promoting knowledge about good practice, and to embed participation as part of good practice.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply X**

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes  No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 9th April 2008

Send by post to:

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S1 4PQ

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