

Civil Society Strategy

Purpose of report

For discussion to inform work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Summary

The Government published its Civil Society Strategy on 9 August 2018, which outlines how it intends to work with and support different sectors, including the private sector and charities, to work together for the benefit of wider society. “Mission 3” within the strategy focuses specifically on opportunities for young people, including youth services, social responsibility and involvement in policy design.

The strategy commits the Government to review the guidance setting out the detail behind the statutory duty on local authorities to provide appropriate local youth services, to clarify the government’s expectations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to provide feedback to officers on lines of enquiry to pursue with DCMS.

Action

Officers to take any action arising from discussion of the report.

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Civil Society Strategy

1. In November 2016, former youth minister Rob Wilson announced that a new Youth Policy Statement would be published to provide a clear vision for support for young people.¹ However, in November 2017 it was announced that this would be replaced by a wider civil society strategy, with consultation carried out on the youth policy statement incorporated into this instead.
2. The Civil Society Strategy was published on 9 August 2018, and draws actions and recommendations together under five headings: People; Places; Social Sector; Private Sector; and Public Sector. Each heading is underpinned by “missions”, with Mission 3 focussing on opportunities for young people.

Young People

3. Mission 3 emphasises the importance of young people having opportunities to improve their life chances, fulfil their potential and avoid negative pathways.
4. The strategy states that local authorities are responsible for funding open access youth services, and highlights areas where councils have taken innovative approaches to delivering this, for example Young People’s Foundations in some areas of London, and Youth Mutuals such as those in Knowsley and Lewisham.
5. Commitment is given to developing evidence around what works in open access youth provision, along with fully embedding the National Citizen Service in the wider youth sector.
6. Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 states that local authorities in England must, “so far as reasonably practicable”, secure sufficient education and recreational leisure time activities to improve the wellbeing, personal and social development of young people aged 13 to 19 (or to 25 for those with a learning difficulty). The statutory guidance supporting this duty was last revised in 2012.
7. The following paragraph from the Civil Society Strategy outlines the government’s intention to revisit the guidance, and its rationale for doing so:

“While the government recognises the priority that local authorities must place on functions such as child protection, it also recognises the transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage. The guidance which sets out the statutory duty on local authorities has not been revised since 2012. Much has happened to change the way these services are provided in the intervening years. The government will therefore review the guidance which sets out the statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide appropriate local youth

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-positive-agenda-for-young-people>

services. We expect that the review will provide greater clarity of government's expectations, including the value added by good youth work."

8. The LGA will engage with the Government as it develops new guidance. In particular, it will be important to ensure that the clarification of the duty does not result in additional burdens on local authorities or over-ride the importance of local decision-making, for example prescribing the level and type of service expected. We will also seek realistic discussions about the long-term funding of youth services given the budget cuts faced by councils and the significant increase in demand for child protection services.
9. The LGA's Vision for Youth Services (**Appendix A**) will be a key document in the negotiations. As outlined in the Vision, we will emphasise that councils are best placed to bring partners and young people together to develop and set a local vision, and to coordinate the range of provision available in their area. Delivery and commissioning of services should be decided locally and not nationally prescribed.
10. Furthermore, we will seek to clarify how the Government's expectations around local youth services fit with the Government's broader ambitions and services for young people, including the National Citizen Service.

Implications for Wales

11. The statutory duty applies only to local authorities in England.

Financial Implications

12. None.

Next Steps

13. Members are asked to advise officers of key lines of enquiry to raise with the government during discussions on the statutory duty on councils to ensure sufficient youth services.