

Youth Services

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Representatives from the National Youth Agency (NYA) will join today's meeting to give an update on the recent work undertaken by the NYA, including the National Guarantee, the statutory duty and future campaigns.

Recommendation/s

Members are recommended to provide feedback on the challenges and opportunities arising for councils regarding youth services and any additional issues following the presentation from NYA.

Action/s

Officers will take action as required arising from the discussions.

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Background

1. Members will be aware that funding to youth services by local authorities in England and Wales saw a real terms decline of 70 per cent between 2010/11 and 2018/19. Since 2010/11, youth services such as [youth clubs and youth workers have been cut by 69 per cent](#). More than 4,500 youth work jobs have been cut and 750 youth centres closed.
2. The LGA has a [vision for youth services](#), for all young people to enjoy their lives, reach their full potential and make a good transition to adulthood. This includes six principles of youth services, a desire to see a national strategy for youth services and for councils to have the resources and levers to ensure a strong local offer for young people. The LGA has [produced a series of publications](#) to support councils in this role, such as a guide to engaging young people in commissioning and a framework for outcomes for young people.
3. In February 2022, the government has announced a [National Youth Guarantee](#), this included the revised Youth Investment Fund at £378m (reduced from the £500m announcement in 2019), a year round, more local approach for NCS and efforts to tackle waiting lists for uniformed youth groups and an expansion of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
4. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committed to review the guidance which applies in relation to [the statutory duty placed on Local Authorities](#) to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities to improve young people's wellbeing.
5. The LGA has continued to engage with DCMS with recent early sight of the Department's proposals. We have welcomed that the existing guidance continues to recognise that local authorities are best placed to work with local public, private and voluntary sector partners and young people to determine the nature and composition of their local youth offer. Councils should continue to have the freedom to shape provision according to local need rather than being constrained by national direction. Councils should be empowered to lead, co-ordinate and commission both universal and targeted youth services that meet the needs of their local communities.
6. We have also made clear that ongoing funding reductions set alongside a significant increase in demand for child protection services has meant that councils have had to divert resources away from universal and early help services to support those children most at risk. These funding challenges are ever more acute for local authorities. To truly develop a good quality youth service that is consistent across the country, there needs to be long term, sustainable funding. Fundamentally, although clarity is welcomed, if the changes to the guidance expect more of councils, they should be fully funded.
7. The LGA is currently working with the National Youth Agency (NYA) to develop a peer review model pilot for youth services. This will be piloted between January and May 2023 to inform longer term planning for the department.

Topics for discussion

1. Please see appendix 1 for a paper from NYA.
2. As shown in appendix 1, the NYA will outline; the national youth guarantee and the youth sector census, the statutory duty for youth work, and future campaigning work.

Implications for Wales

3. None – Wales has its own guidance regarding youth work.

Financial Implications

4. None

Next steps

5. Officers will use the discussion to inform future work in this area.

Appendix 1

National Youth Agency briefing for LGA Children and Young People Board – Leigh Middleton, CEO

1. It will be our pleasure to meet with the Children and Young People (CYP) Board to update you on the latest work and thinking from the National Youth Agency (NYA). Over the last year, the NYA has secured over £3m to invest in strengthening the role of youth work and the broader youth sector. During COVID-19, youth workers were re-asserted by the government as key workers and our youth services as an essential service. This has since led to a renewed focus on the vital role of youth work in supporting our most vulnerable and marginalised young people who often struggle to engage effectively with statutory services.
2. Attending the CYP Board during the National Children and Adult Services Conference (NCASC) is a poignant time to reflect on the role of youth work as part of the triad of support services for children and young people (social work, education and youth work). The government has published details of their National Youth Guarantee, which commits that all young people who need it can access weekly youth work-based provisions in their local community. Achieving this is a considerable challenge and will require significant new investment., the NYA, with our partners Social Investment Business, secured the rights to distribute the £360m Youth Investment Fund to invest in youth facilities in 600 wards across the country. The NYA has also secured a £1m investment this financial year to fund foundation-level training for youth work practitioners (Inc volunteers). These investments are the start, and much more will be needed during these tough fiscal times if we are to grow the quality and capacity of the youth sector across England.
3. The NYA and the LGA are now working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to scrutinise the statutory duty guidance for youth work and the role of councils in supporting a robust local ecosystem of provision for young people. The provision of youth services remains a statutory duty for Local Authorities (s507B Education Act, 1996).
4. We are pressing for new government investment to ensure these essential services are secured for all young people. As part of this collaboration, we are working to pilot a peer review programme for youth services led, supported, commissioned (or not) by Local authorities. As the government seeks to provide clearer guidance to councils, the peer review model is being developed to support them in a nurturing and supportive programme.
5. In the last five years, youth work has shot up the political priority list. The Treasury has told the NYA that to secure fresh investment, the youth sector needs to become more investable in. This work starts with knowing what youth provision exists where, who for, and how it is funded and staffed. To answer this massive challenge, the

NYA launched the Youth Sector Census, which has been steadily mapping the youth sector from grassroots providers up. When we meet, we will be able to show you how this work is rapidly delivering a powerful national data system to capture and map the local landscape. Sadly, returns from councils have been particularly weak, and we are keen to support them in improving returns. We've also learnt that the quality of s251 returns rarely matches local offers, and this is harming the case for investment in many areas. We'd welcome discussing how we can jointly improve this story.

Some of the topics we'll seek to cover in the time we have are:

6. Holding government to account for the National Youth Guarantee of regular (weekly) youth work and out-of-school activities. And to ensure equitable access across communities.
 - a. How: We deliver the Census, which will inform national investment and local planning. Increasing the capacity of youth work/services. After an initial 3-year programme of work, the census has reopened for 2022 self-reporting. In 2021 one-third of Local Authorities were completed; one-third responded; one-third had no reply. <https://www.nya.org.uk/national-youth-sector-census/>

7. Increasing accountability on the statutory duty for youth work (educational leisure and recreational time) by strengthening guidance for local authorities to secure local services - whether directly delivered, commissioned, funded or independently provided in their area.
 - a. How: We are working alongside LGA with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS); on the statutory guidance, and our latest NYA guidance has been published. To be supported by peer reviews (NYA-LGA pilot) and quality/standards (NYA, as the professional, statutory and regulatory body for youth work in England). <https://www.nya.org.uk/resources/resource-library/>

8. Campaigns: In the face of a cost-of-living crisis, to support young people (and families) with somewhere safe and warm to go, to be with friends, and activities outside of the school day with a youth worker for safeguarding and support.
 - a. How: As we anticipate LA funding cuts, we want to protect and grow youth services - but fear frontline cuts. We want to work with the LGA and local authorities in campaigns, reviews and evaluations.

*NYA guidance is a 2PS baseline of two qualified youth workers (FTE) and a team of trained, skilled support workers and volunteers accessible across communities (using secondary school catchment areas/ population count as a proxy for access).