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Youth Review
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Transforming the offer for young people in the UK

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Youth Review

Acknowledgments

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Foreword

Young people represent both the present and the future, and show us how strong Britain can be in years to come. But many young people face problems that ruin life chances - problems of bullying, violence, peer pressure, and underachievement. Many vulnerable young people don't get help quickly enough and increasing numbers of teenagers receive little parental support. In today's fast-moving world, young people often find themselves over-stimulated and bored at the same time. For all young people, growing up is more complicated than in the past, and many young people, as well as their parents, struggle to keep up.

When the Make Space Youth Review was launched in July 2006 we began a process of assessing the offer to young people today. We set out to give teenagers a voice. We wanted to know what life is like for young people in the UK, what the future holds, and what support would help fulfil their potential. A guiding principle of the Youth Review has been that all our findings are rooted in the views of young people themselves, and we met many truly remarkable young people. We hit the road and spoke to over 16,000 young people in schools, clubs, and voluntary organisations, as well as parents, teachers, and youth workers. The result is a fascinating insight into young people's lives.

We saw examples of great youth services that are changing the lives of teenagers across the country. But we also saw how much needs to be done - both to support vulnerable young people and to engage the vast majority of their peers who want a greater sense of belonging. We found that young people want a stake in their local community. They want more meaningful engagement and opportunities. They want high quality services and inspirational support. Of course, all this costs money. But doing nothing costs money and it's a cost we pay today. It is a cost placed on the policing and justice system, the education and benefits system, and the wider economy. A heavy price is also paid by individuals across the age spectrum and their local communities. The responsibility to act is shared by all, we hope that this report will focus attention on the most important areas for action. Supporting our young people is the single most important investment Britain can make. The potential benefit to us all is enormous.

Oona King
Co-Chair
Make Space Youth Review

Make Space Youth Review

An Inquiry into the Offer to Young People in the UK: Youth of Today and Tomorrow

- **What is life like for young people in the UK?**
- **What does the future hold for young people?**
- **What support will young people need to fulfil their potential?**

In the midst of unprecedented debate about society's attitude and responses to young people, the Make Space Youth Review took stock by looking behind the headlines, focusing on the real challenges faced by young people, their parents and the wider community.

The Youth Review approached young people directly, to uncover their aspirations and the challenges that they face in their everyday lives; from friends and family to their community, education to ASBOs, health and well-being to employment. The Youth Review has gathered original research, best practice and international evidence to propose solutions to these challenges.

The Review was co-chaired by Oona King, writer, broadcaster and campaigner, and Wilf Petherbridge, former Young Mayor of Lewisham. The Review panel drew together young people, academics, industrialists, media representatives, policy makers and specialists to examine the future needs of young people and recommend solutions.

Importantly, the Review has also gone out on the road to undertake the biggest ever national debate with young people and communities to hear their views and ideas. For the first time, from the countryside to the city centre, young people have played an active role in identifying their needs and defining the answers.

How did the Make Space Youth Review work?

Submissions: These were taken in writing, electronically or verbally

Review meetings: These meetings considered written evidence and heard presentations and verbal submissions from key individuals and agencies

Research: The Youth Review mapped UK and international evidence and best practice examples

Young people's involvement: 16,000 young people took part in consultation events and submissions around the country

Specialist seminars: Specialist seminars on the key issues of education, crime and youth services were held throughout the year

Who is the Make Space Youth Review?

Oona King, Co-Chair
Writer, broadcaster and campaigner

Wilf Petherbridge, Co-Chair
Former Young Mayor of Lewisham

Yasmin Ali
Young MP

Flo Armstrong
Head of Barnet Youth & Connexions Service

Graeme Cooke
Public Policy Researcher, IPPR

Charlotte Edwards
Make Space Youth Cabinet member

Isatou Faal
Make Space Youth Cabinet member

Leon Feinstein
Reader in the Economics of Education, Institute of
Education

Professor Helen Haste
Professor of Psychology, University of Bath

Anne Longfield OBE
Chief Executive, 4Children

Viv McKee
Director of Policy and Development, National Youth Agency

Mary McLeod
Chief Executive, National Parenting Institute

Lord Northbourne
Chair, Associate Parliamentary Group for Parents and
Families

Pip O'Byrne
Chair, 4Children

Ian Rayson
Corporate Affairs and Internal Communications Director,
Nestlé UK Ltd

The Big Issues

The Make Space Youth Review explored five key areas:

1. What is life like for young people in the UK today? How does this compare with the past and how will this change in the future?

2. What support and opportunities do young people need now and in the future to fulfil their potential?

3. What is our view of young people in society and how can we build positive involvement and interaction across communities and generations?

4. How should we respond to those young people who struggle to cope?

5. What should the role of Government, communities, parents and young people be?

Make Space Youth Review
Synopsis of Recommendations

Chapter 1: The Changing Environment for Young People

1. Step up action on child poverty

All evidence shows that poverty has a negative and pervasive impact on the life chances of young people, from education to health, crime, employment and participation in their local communities.

Government has made a commitment to end child poverty by 2020 but statistics show that the target is far from being reached, with only a quarter of the target having been met by 2006.

Further reform and investment is essential if this key ambition is to be made a reality. A wide-ranging review is recommended with key measures put in place, including both redistributive policies and support to better enable parents to work. Additional steps might include:

- **Reform of the tax credit system**, to halve rates of non take-up by 2010.
- **Income support and benefits for working parents**, particularly working mothers who still suffer from a gender pay gap. This will form part of a package of measures that support working families and ensure that wages reflect the cost of living.
- **Increase affordable childcare**, constituting a doubling of investment in current provision in order to reduce the cost to parents, increase the number of places and ensure sustainability. This can contribute to making childcare affordable and enabling parents to work.
- **Benefits for adult learning**, coupled with a wide-ranging publicity campaign to highlight the benefits of lifelong learning, starting from age 16 and using community based groups as well as formal institutions.

Opportunities in later life for parents to develop skills and achieve qualifications are essential in improving labour market prospects and tackling worklessness in families. Qualifications and training are as important for existing parents as they are for future parents, highlighting the value of widening access to lifelong learning.

Chapter 2: Health, Lifestyles and the Impact of Inequalities

1. Provide an advice and support point for young people in every community

Young people need out of school support and information - on health, well-being and emotional support - which is widely available and accessible. A central local contact point is crucial. Strong links and relationships between youth workers and health practitioners, as well as police officers and schools, are essential as part of early identification and support programmes for those young people who are at risk of vulnerability and offending.

2. All secondary schools to provide breakfast for pupils

Investment should be made to help primary and secondary schools provide breakfast clubs using their premises, that are open every morning, and that can provide a good, nutritionally sound breakfast for all pupils who choose to have it.

3. Free access to leisure services and school leisure facilities after school and during holidays

Local authorities need to invest in free leisure for teenagers. In addition, a high profile national programme focusing

on health and fitness for young people in out of school environments should be launched, to tackle obesity and support positive choices and healthy lifestyles.

4. Introduce nutrition and food preparation on the national curriculum for Key Stage 3 within Design and Technology teaching

A review of food and healthy eating as areas of the school curriculum should be complemented by food and health education in other settings where young people gather.

5. A fashion industry ban on size 0 models

A fashion industry ban on the use of models with a body mass index of less than 18 would reduce pressure on young girls to conform to an unhealthy self-image. Further, a fashion and lifestyle magazine code of conduct should be introduced by Government to reflect positive body image, including information on the lifelong damage to health by such low weight levels.

6. Greater financial support for young people living independently from parents

Young people living independently of parents can face enormous difficulties in supporting themselves, particularly those who are homeless. To raise income levels and to better enable them to meet the cost of living, the minimum wage and levels of Jobseeker's Allowance should be equalised between adults and young people and programmes of learning and support introduced for all.

Chapter 3: Supporting Parents and Families in Raising Young People

1. Flexible working hours for parents

Enabling parents to spend more time at home at key times in the day and in key parts of the year will help support young people, strengthen supervision and build relationships. Flexible working hours for all employees with children under 16 would help in achieving this balance. Companies should be required to act responsibly by enabling parents of children who become ill to take leave.

2. Parent support sessions and surgeries in every area

Whilst much support is available for parents of very young children, there is little parent support once children grow older. Parent helplines and local support sessions should be available in every area to offer advice and support on bringing up teenagers. Drop-in family surgeries in every area, backed up by ongoing guidance and information, can ensure that parents are never without support in bringing up their children.

3. Intensive support programmes available for parents whose children are in difficulty

More targeted support needs to be available for parents in particular need, including intensive outreach schemes. Too often parents and young people feel alone and unsupported at very difficult times, whilst it is in the interests of all that they are given the tools, skills and confidence to support their children. Young parents themselves need special attention.

4. Provide affordable and flexible childcare for children up to 14 to help parents work

Supporting parents to work is crucial if parents are to escape poverty. Childcare is particularly important for lone parents and will be essential if proposals from the recent Freud Review, requiring lone parents with children over 11 to work, are implemented.

5. Introduce a legal right to Family Group Conferencing

This can involve all family members and other stakeholders in a young person's life in creating solutions as a prevention and diversion tool for those teenagers who get into trouble. Family Group Conferencing provides a role for the whole family in providing elements of support to troubled young people, increasing sources of help and relieving the burden on parents. The legal right to be able to self-refer to Family Conferences should be extended to all families, following the successful example of legislative rights to self-referral in the Republic of Ireland.

Chapter 4: Cohesive Communities

1. New intergenerational programmes for every community

Encouraging local intergenerational activities is a key way to increase understanding and build shared experiences in the local community. Local Authorities should be encouraged to create much greater impetus on generating projects with an intergenerational element.

2. Powerful steps to promote integration between communities

Local Authorities should step up progress in implementing policies to tackle segregation within communities, particularly through the instrument of housing policy. Steps should be taken to implement in full the recommendations of the Cantle Report concerning a duty on Housing Agencies to reshape their allocation programmes to promote greater contact between people of different communities. Local Authorities should consider services aimed at youth to be a powerful method of tackling tension between young people of different communities, with a view to using activities and shared leisure interests as a means to build a common local identity.

3. Increased use of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) to promote integration and achievement

Increased use of PSAs and performance rewards for Local Authorities that can demonstrate the success of local initiatives to raise GCSE performance amongst teenagers from ethnic minorities can level the achievement gap between communities. Through a system of commitment and agreement with Local Authorities, backed up by rewards for evidence of increased achievement locally, strategies can be nurtured. Local initiatives for English language teaching for children of families where English is not the first spoken language will be a key element of closing the divide between communities in achievement and qualification.

4. Intense training for workers on the needs of young asylum seekers

Young asylum seekers face significant pressure in trying to integrate into the community, with many feeling a confused sense of identity that promotes vulnerability. Confusion over the asylum system, access to benefits, age assessment, accommodation, education, language difficulties and ultimately removal from the UK can all provide barriers to

integration and, in some cases, pressure to offend. More intense training for key workers, particularly those involved in Youth Offending Teams, can give a much greater sense of the needs facing this group, particularly in areas in which there is a high number of young asylum seekers.

5. A national youth volunteering programme

A new high-profile youth volunteering programme should be launched to re-energise local initiatives, extending and building upon the reach of organisations such as 'V' so as to provide volunteering opportunities for every young person by the age of 18. Volunteering should be developed and supported as a part of mainstream extra-curricular activities. Projects can be accredited and promoted through publicity and a national branding of initiatives and opportunities.

Chapter 5: Young People and Crime: Risks, Offending and Victims

1. A new victim support scheme for young people who have been victims of crime

35% of 10-15 year olds have become victims of crime in the last year. A new support scheme would offer advice, guidance and a confidential service offering someone to talk to for victims of crime.

2. A consensus to redouble efforts and eradicate bullying

A commitment from schools and other services aimed at young people can create a concerted national effort reduce bullying, recognising that this is the number one concern for children and young people.

3. Align the underpinning principles of the Criminal and Civil Law

This should be a priority, recognising the inherent vulnerability of children between 10 and 14 years. Steps should be taken to strengthen the Criminal Law to reflect a child's and young person's evolving capacities, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

4. A new community 'Turn Around' programme for young offenders to replace imprisonment for less serious crimes

A strong statutory presumption against the imprisonment of young offenders, reserving prison for only the most serious violent offences, can ensure that young people who offend are not hardened through the experience of imprisonment. 'Turn Around' programmes will not be soft options; rather, a mix of challenge, contribution to the community and a process of identifying and reaching personal goals. Further, Youth Offenders' Panels are having a positive effect on the balancing of needs in respect of offenders and victims. A national campaign for volunteers in communities to sit on Panels, supported by high-quality training and preparation, can have a positive effect in widening their scope.

5. Specific strategies for young people with mental health needs

Each Primary Care Trust should have a strategy for young adults with mental health care needs, including those within the criminal justice system. The National Offender Management Service with the Department of Health should consider how young adults with mental health problems can be identified and diverted away from custody where possible. Greater investment in Children and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) services should be backed by specific training for youth workers and teachers on dealing with the needs of emotionally vulnerable young people, with recognition of the differing needs of boys and girls.

6. Rapid Intervention Teams in areas of trouble

Rapid Intervention Teams should be established to provide speedy interventions in areas of disruption, whilst protecting the safety of the community at large and other young people.

Chapter 6: Education, Development, Skills and Employment

1. All secondary schools to become learning centres

Raising expectation and aspiration is a key goal to enable young people to fulfil their potential. Many secondary schools are redefining themselves as Learning Centres to reflect the wider range of activities and services now located around the school. This would be extended and formalised. Reframing the formal school around the wider context would be particularly important in motivating and involving disengaged young people. Closer connections between formal and non-formal programmes of learning should be established.

2. A national mentoring scheme to motivate and support, backed up by learning and careers coaches

Often teenagers lack real-life role models and advisors linked to their interests and chosen professions. All secondary schools should take part in a Government-promoted National Mentoring Scheme. Young people need to have greater opportunities for support with the increasing number of choices available to them regarding jobs and careers.

3. A new 'Young People in Work' programme

Work experience in the community is an essential part of raising aspirations, alongside formal learning. Despite examples of positive opportunities through organisations including Young Enterprise and Education Business Partnerships, some schools find it difficult to provide meaningful placements. A Government-sponsored programme that links local employers to pupils in schools and further education colleges is recommended. The Department for Work and Pensions should lengthen the time that young adults can spend on unpaid work experience to six weeks before they lose benefits.

4. A review of support for young people excluded from school

An inspirational programme to engage and re-motivate excluded and truanting young people should be launched. As a key element, a reshaping of the teaching and learning experience within Pupil Referral Units should take place, linked to proposed 14-19 curriculum changes, recognising that disengagement peaks during Key Stage 4 and is expressed through truancy, exclusion and misbehaviour.

5. Parents and teachers online

A new 'School/Parent Partner' programme, providing weekly online updates for parents and text communication, would support parents to keep in contact with progress and issues at school.

Chapter 7: Access to Local Services

1. Create 2,000 Young People's Hubs

The creation of 2,000 new Young People's Hubs - targeted in the 20% most disadvantaged wards - can offer fun, structured activities, social space and support after school, on weekends and during school holidays for all young people. Hubs would also provide a focus for coordinated support and referrals for young people in difficulty and wider services for young people. Hubs may be based in schools, youth centres or other community buildings and would provide a focus and coordination point for wider support.

2. A new young people's workforce

An additional 4,000 Young People's Workers, led by 2,000 Young People's Champions (youth workers who have demonstrated exceptional skills and experience in respect of working with teenagers) would be recruited to lead and coordinate the offer to young people around the new Young People's Hubs. A wider workforce development programme should be rolled out to transform the youth worker profession.

3. Entitlement to a recognised and Inspirational Young Person's Curriculum

The curriculum would guarantee an offer to young people of wide ranging and high-quality activities in their area. The core areas of skill, knowledge and understanding would be emotional literacy, creativity and enterprise, health and well-being and active citizenship. The framework will enable young people's organisations to focus their work and develop good practice.

4. Free public transport for all young people under 18

Free transport supported by local authorities for young people under 18 and a review of young people's transport needs in every area would ensure that support and activities are never out of reach for teenagers. Good and affordable transport is essential in enabling children and young people to access the services they need, whether they are living in inner city, urban or rural communities

Chapter 8: Young People, Government and Citizenship

1. Young People Impact Assessment to be required in all public policy decision making by law

Involvement of young people in shaping design of policy and the local environment should be backed up by an impact assessment on all local decision making and on new public buildings and plans.

2. The right to vote from 16

At the age of 16 a young person can choose to finish education, leave home, join the armed forces, have sex, and start a family. If a young person is earning enough they can even pay tax - and yet they do not have the right to vote or to have a role in deciding who will make law and govern the country. In order to raise participation and promote involvement, teenagers should be given the right to vote from their 16th birthday.

3. A Youth Mayor in every area

Every area should have a Youth Mayor post, backed up by an elected Youth Parliament, as a way of giving young people a say over their area as well as experience of voting and decision making. Budget spending powers should be made available to these elected representatives, with decisions publicised through schools and youth groups.

4. A Youth Fund for every area

Every area should have its own Youth Fund. The Funds will offer young people the opportunity to shape and influence contributions to the communities around them. These funds should be increased and automatically renewed each year, whilst guaranteeing the sustainability of existing projects.

5. Youth Manifestos

Candidates for political office should be encouraged to produce Youth Manifestos to be distributed through schools and local youth groups. These will have a specific youth focus and will recast the platform of the candidate in the language of young people and in a way that is relevant to the issues that concern teenagers.

" The importance of addressing the life chances of children and young people lies in the impact of the quality of childhood on skills, opportunities and social inclusion during adulthood "

Chapter 1

The Changing Environment for Young People

1. Young people live in a world that is radically different from that experienced by their parents and grandparents. Dramatic changes in work patterns, family structures and mobility have changed beyond recognition patterns of caring within the family, the make up of communities and the way that children grow up.

2. Family structures have changed dramatically. The rise of divorce has meant that more young people are living with lone parents or step families, giving way to a revolution in the diversity of family structures. At the same time there has been a major rise in the numbers working mothers, with 80% of mothers of young people now out at work.[1] This increased maternal employment, coupled with greater mobility, means that traditional family caring arrangements and the wider support of the community are no longer available for many.

3. Life outside the family home is also changing. The teenage years are a crucial point of development, during which long-lasting attitudes and capabilities begin to form. They are a period of experimentation, of identity formation and learning. Good parenting is crucial but so also is support in facing challenges outside of the home. For the first time, young people begin to spend significant amounts of time away from their parents. Their characters are formed through formal lessons in school and by informal lessons outside of it, through peer groups and through relationships. Unfortunately, for some, the growing influences of drugs and the impact of living in communities with high unemployment and poverty means that young people often have few positive influences in their lives. A lack of places to socialise and strained access to activities denies young people the opportunity to develop and fulfill their potential. Teenagers are taking in new experiences at a vast rate, every day. For many, positive contact with trusted older people with whom to reflect on and share these experiences is now lacking. Choices and flexibilities have also led to an increasingly complex environment with young people having to navigate

their way through a highly sophisticated world of study, transport, communication, housing and support on a daily basis.

4. Changing lifestyles, technologies and a faster pace of life can mean that, for many, daily life can feel busier and more fraught than in the past. For more vulnerable young people and families it can also mean that escape from poverty and underachievement becomes ever more elusive. Whilst the majority of young people and their families meet the challenges that the modern day world throws at them head on, a deeply concerning minority are unable to fully respond, with damaging and often high profile consequences as a result. For some young people the complexity of the world and the necessity to navigate these changes is simply too much. Despite being one of the most affluent countries in the world, indicators of emotional health and statistics relating to risky behaviour in the United Kingdom demonstrate that levels of well-being and happiness are in many cases low.[2]

5. The importance of addressing the life chances of children and young people lies in the impact of the quality of childhood on skills, opportunities and social inclusion during adulthood. There is a systematic edge to inequality that is played out through children born in poverty having a much higher chance of living in poverty as adults, with their children then suffering similar levels of disadvantage in turn. The task of intervention in the lives of vulnerable young people can be eased through measures introduced to prevent vulnerability in the first place. Key indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality rates continue to vary in line with social class and have, in fact, differentiated increasingly over the last 30 years in accordance with the income level and employment status of parents.[3]

6. Despite a general increase in life expectancy, the gradient between projected life span and social class for males and females was 1.9 years and 0.4 years higher,

respectively, than in 1975.[4] Childhood disadvantages have a huge impact on adult outcomes, whilst multiple disadvantages during childhood are a strong indicator for social exclusion during adulthood. Studies have indicated that childhood poverty and low parental interest are amongst the strongest precursors of disadvantage during young adulthood.[5] To provide support to parents and to even out the playing field for disadvantaged young people early on in their life is to reshape the conditions many young people find themselves in as they approach the challenges of adulthood.

7. For too long we have let these issues drift - shocked when consequences reach the courtrooms and media front pages but lacking the foresight to have intervened earlier to prevent difficulties escalating. The statistics speak for themselves - these young people are the 2.5% of every generation caught in cycle of disadvantage referred to by the Social Exclusion Taskforce report; they are the 10% of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training, which has remained doggedly static for over 10 years.[6] They are the 7,500 families with complex needs identified by the Respect Task Force and the 60,000 children in Local Authority care at any given time.[7] Action is needed to offer these young people something more. 10% of 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training and this percentage has been static for over 10 years.

8. The teenagers of today will become the adults of the future - making up the bulk of the labour force and experiencing for themselves the importance of being properly equipped to deal with the demands of parenthood. As they grow into adults we will rely on the current cohort of teenagers in all aspects of our daily lives. In this way the future of young people is the future for us all. Concerns for their life chances are concerns for all of us. Their ambitions, and the opportunities to realise them, give a sense of the reality of the social and economic foundations of the future. Their skills, aptitude and well-being together form a series of indicators for the future health of our society, economy and culture.

9. In responding to these many changes a number of key issues become apparent:

(a) The needs of children, young people and families are all interlinked

10. Outcomes for young people are closely interlinked with the welfare of their wider family. All evidence shows that young people benefit most when they have the support of a strong and stable home environment, free from poverty and with a support system in place for when things go wrong.

(b) Young people are the concern of all of us

11. Making up 14% of our community, young people's welfare has a direct impact on us all. Furthermore, as our future decision makers, professionals, carers and wider labour market, we all have an interest and concern in ensuring that young people have high aspirations and are able to fulfill their potential. We all have a stake in their lives today and future tomorrow. Providing a positive and supportive environment in which young people grow up is therefore a responsibility we all share - from media messages and positive role models to reflecting and helping to meet the needs of young people in their own community.

(c) A continuum of support throughout childhood and into adulthood is crucial

12. Young people's transitions into adulthood are more complex than ever before, with powerful trajectories set from birth onwards. Investment in the early years has been an important priority. However evidence suggests that early gains begin to drop off if ongoing support is not available - especially at the crucial times of transition from primary to secondary school and adolescence into young adulthood. It is important therefore to ensure that a continuum of support is in place if persistent inequalities are to be overcome from birth, throughout the school years and beyond.

(d) Increasing aspirations and expectations is important

13. Many social problems develop from low aspirations from individuals, families, communities and professionals. Too often, experience tells us that poverty can lead to low expectations, aspirations and self belief which can continue over generations. Setting sights high whilst supporting individuals to realise their potential can provide a powerful catalyst to break cycles of disadvantage and underachievement. Offering new horizons to young people can help them to break out of local contours of low aspirations and limited opportunity. A lack of positive and supported opportunities out of school is a key area of neglect for many young people at the moment.

(e) All young people test boundaries, but some young people cannot cope and get involved in risky behaviour

14. As children enter their teenage years they start spending more time away from their parents, with their friends becoming fiercely important in their lives. Teenage years are about discovering independence and freedom. Testing out boundaries and the world around them is a crucial part of growing up. The experiences gained and self knowledge acquired is as important as lessons learnt in the classroom. However, some young people are not able to cope with the challenges of adolescence and can participate in behaviour which places them at risk. Some young people come from homes and community environments which in themselves put them at risk. Ensuring these young people have the skills and support they need to discourage their engagement in damaging risky behaviour, as well as providing early supportive intervention for when things go wrong, is crucial.

(f) Early intervention is vital to stop problems escalating and getting out of hand

15. Early intervention is critical if problems are to be dealt with before they get out of control. Positive relationships with trusted adults are crucial for young people in order to provide advice, guidance on their aspirations and someone to talk to during times of difficulty. Targeted intervention and personalised support can help young people to overcome powerful negative trajectories. Parents and communities need support in communicating with young people and helping young people to articulate their views, needs and feelings.

16. Front-ended investment in preventative youth services can lead to longer term financial savings, achieving a reduction on costly crisis intervention programmes when things go wrong. These range from policing, maintenance of the courts system, the cost of custodial sentences, unemployment benefits and pressures on the NHS.

(g) Young people gain most if support offered is joined up

17. Too often young people told us that they had nowhere to go that was 'theirs' and that they had to relate to many different agencies and individuals when things go wrong - each tackling only the problem that is their direct concern and not seeing the young person as a whole. Evidence shows that this is not an effective way to tackle the core

causes of the concern or to offer an effective solution, often resulting in young people becoming disaffected and disconnected. A joined-up response which puts the need of the young person at the centre will be essential and is more likely to be achieved by national and local structures which coordinate their focus on the young person.

(h) Young people must be able to shape their own future

18. We all want young people to achieve to the best of their abilities, but we must also accept and enable them to shape their lives now and their futures. Giving young people a say in the decisions that affect them as well as building their self confidence and assertiveness skills is key. We need to help give them the tools they need to become effective adults capable of managing their own lives and seeing themselves as part of a community, whilst contributing to and positively influencing the lives of others. Offering all young people and their families the support they need to flourish in this ever changing environment is crucial, whilst providing enhanced support for those who are the most vulnerable is essential.

The reality of more pressured lifestyles for young people

19. Busy lives, work and communications mean that young people have faster-paced lifestyles than ever before, making it harder for parents and families to engage with each other and with their community.

20. New ways of communicating, opening up new avenues for young people to socialise and converse, with constant marketing of new products towards teenagers, have meant that young people's lives are 'stylised' in a way not experienced by their parents as they grew up. Products, fast-flowing information on trends and the latest look have meant that young people's sense of self-image has become extreme and closely tied up in the ever-changing ebbs and flows of fashion. The internet has revolutionised global media, making it easier to exchange information and to quickly shape mass viewpoints. All of these things, plus gradually increasing levels of overall wealth, have provided opportunities for young people of which their older relatives could not have dreamt.

21. For some, the frenetic environment as described is part of the reason that there is a growing sense of lost childhood. Many have commented that young people are growing up

> *"...the current generation of young people, once they have grown into adults interacting in the labour market, will be under more pressure than previous generations to support older people "*

more quickly, with a tendency to experiment with adult behaviour - both good and bad - at a much earlier age than in the past. From a worryingly early stage but increasingly through their pre-teens, children are bombarded with information - not just through education, but through magazines, the internet and through the influence of those around them. The consensus of a children's survey by 4Children in 2004 suggested that respondents believed that childhood now ended at the age of 12.

Enduring themes for young people such as their identity and culture are given higher significance by the challenge of ensuring that our communities are safe and cohesive in the face of globalisation on neighbourhoods, families and individuals. The pace of change is forever quickening as technology continues to affect the ways young people learn, work and play.
National Youth Agency

Changes in population

22. There are 14 million people living in the UK who are under the age of 24. Following on from the 1950s 'baby boom', population projections suggest a decline in the proportion of the total UK citizenship made up of children and young people. Predicted also is a gradual 'ageing' of the population as people live longer and fertility rates decline. In 2001 there were 21% fewer children under the age of 16 and 23% more people aged 65 or over than in 1971. Figures indicate that by 2044 this trend will intensify, with comparative figures at 31% and 56% respectively.[8]

23. One of the other contributors to this overall decline in population growth has been an increase in the number of childless women. Recent family size projections indicate that 22% of women born in 1990 or later will remain childless, an increase of 2% on the generation born 20 years before in 1970.[9] The effect of this will mean that the current generation of young people, once they have grown into adults interacting in the labour market, will be under more pressure than previous generations to support older people. The number of people of working age for every dependant rose from 1.6 in 1971 to 1.8 in 2001 as the 'baby boomers' dominated the workforce. However, by 2044 this figure is set to fall to just 1.4 as that generation enters retirement and approaches pension age.[10]

24. Current debates on pension age and benefits for the elderly are shaped and coloured by population projections relating to the number of young people likely to contribute to the UK labour force. Linked to this are the skills base, education and social effectiveness of the current cohort of young people. Whilst demands on that generation look likely to intensify as they get older, the sense that policy relating to this generation is of critical importance becomes inescapable: put simply, this is a generation that we cannot afford to fail.

25. As significant as population change has been population movement. Changes in where families choose to live have a significant effect on decisions on spending and public services. Broadly speaking, the last two decades have seen a move from families choosing to live in large cities to smaller towns, and from towns to more rural areas. Studies carried out on population movements have identified the skilled and professional classes as being the most likely to relocate in this way - creating a situation in which parts of larger conurbations have experienced an 'achievement gap' in the wake of these departures. The effect of this is that poverty and low social and economic expectations have created a grip on many, especially urban, communities.

Changes in communication and leisure time

26. Challenges to the time spent by parents with their children are compounded by changes in the lives of young people themselves. The world in which young people grow up is a faster and more frenetic one than that faced by their parents and grandparents. Advances in media, an increasing commercialisation of youth and the dominance of the internet and mobile telephones have changed the way that young people relate to adults and to each other. Many young people now need look no further than their own bedroom to access a world of social networking, whilst video consoles and televisions answer their entertainment needs at the touch of a button. Popular youth networking site MySpace is estimated to have over 65 million members across the world - almost exactly the population of the United Kingdom - and records 4.5 million message exchanges every minute.[11] Nearly 1.5 million young people in Britain had access to the internet from their own bedroom in 2005[12], whilst 57% of young people reported having come into contact with pornography through surfing the net.[13] At the same time the traditional flow of family life has changed dramatically. Just 64% of 15 year olds say they eat with

their parents around a table several times per week - a lower proportion than any other country in Europe apart from Finland.[14]

27. Online peer-to-peer networking is a world complete with its own 'handshakes', protocols and social conventions, whilst the online 'acumen' of teenagers often eclipses their parents' understanding of a world that is increasingly geared towards teenagers. This gives rise to an unsupervised social environment from which many parents are alienated and which takes place within the home itself. Just like a 'real life' environment it gives rise to its own opportunities and challenges: in 2006 a report indicated that one in five teenagers in London schools had experienced cyber-bullying, whilst two in every three young victims kept this problem from the attention of their parents.[15] Concerns amongst parents over a lack of knowledge about where their children are and who they are spending time with is not limited to what happens outside the family home.

28. Meanwhile intense targeting of young people as consumers has resulted in a 'commercialisation' of youth. Magazines advertising beauty advice and offering advice on sex and relationships, a decade ago aimed squarely at the teenage market, are now increasingly being aimed at pre-teens. Marketing of a vast range of products is expressly designed with the intention of reaching the parent through appealing to the tastes of the child. As a result of this, young people are playing an increasingly prominent role as consumers, with unprecedented levels of brand-consciousness. Research published in 2005 indicated not just that 10-12 year olds are highly discerning according to brands when buying products but that they have already internalised between 300 and 400 brands that inform their choice.[16] In view of the fact that in 2005 over 80% of children aged between 5 and 16 owned a TV in their bedroom, the opportunities for them to have grown both brand-aware and brand-conscious have not been in shortage.[17]

> Young people often experience a range of physical, social and psychological events that are new and unexpected. They may find some of these events distressing and struggle to cope with the impact. Moreover, the duration and severity of these events and the distress caused could mildly, moderately, significantly or acutely affect their mental health, and give rise to a mental health difficulty.
> **Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and Rethink**

Changing means and poverty

29. The opportunities that parents are able to provide to their children can be measured in time, attention and support but also in means.[18] This relates not just to expensive video games or birthday presents but also necessities such as clothing, food and school books. Research from 1998 suggested that the average cost of having a child and raising them to the age of 17 was at least £65,000.[19] Other studies have placed this much more highly at between £90,000 and £180,000 before one-off purchases and luxuries are added to the mix. The Institute for Public Policy Research carried out a comparison in 2006 that suggested that the cost anywhere along this band was at least three times, and even potentially up to ten times, the median annual disposable income of a childless couple (at 2005 levels).[20] Linked to this is evidence indicating that the earlier a woman has a children, the more likely it is that earnings will suffer - provoking a stark trade-off between postponing childbirth and promoting education, training and employment or, on the other hand, having children early and jeopardising earning potential. Evidence from 2005 indicated that the average mid-skilled woman forgoes £564,000 in earnings over her lifetime if she has children at 24, compared with a similarly-trained childless woman; a figure that decreases to £165,000 if she delays childbirth until 28.[21] In the context of tackling rates of child poverty and in the light of increasing rates of teenage pregnancy these projections provoke some cause for concern.

> Lone parents give many non-financial reasons for wanting to work including: getting to meet people, using past experience, following a career, status, self respect/self fulfilment, planning for the future, having something to offer, learning new skills, breaking the cycle of disadvantage and providing a positive role model for children.
> **Gingerbread**

30. During its first term in office, the Government made the ambitious pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020, during a time when there were 4 million children living below the poverty level (defined as below 60% of the median income).[22] The proportion of children living in poverty increased dramatically between 1979 and 1981, from 14% to 20%, before peaking at a record 32% in 1993 and a startling one in three out of all children in 1996.[23] By 2005 that figure had fallen to below 3 million, indicating

that a quarter of the task of lifting children out of poverty had been achieved.[24] The scale of this commitment can be measured in the light of the opportunities that can arise from its completion - including better life chances for young people, improved opportunities to enter work or training and better living standards, particularly in deprived communities. However, less headway has been made in reducing the number of children living in persistent poverty (defined as being below the poverty threshold in three or four years of a four-year period). This figure remained constant between 1996-99 and 1999-2002: 16% of children remained in households living on incomes below 60% of the median, whilst 26% of children were below 70% of the median in three of the previous four years.[25]

> Recent reductions in child poverty rates are welcome, but poverty remains high by both historical and European comparison. No reduction has occurred to income inequality. Tackling child poverty must be a cornerstone of building a progressive, modern society, both decent and successful. High inequality and rates of poverty threaten not only the upbringing of children but our social and economic wellbeing and development.
> **Child Poverty Action Group**

31. In 1998 the UK had the worst rate of child poverty in the European Union, whilst by 2001 it improved its ranking four places to 11th out of the 15 member states.[26] The EU classes countries according to 'divisions' and efforts to reduce child poverty in the UK have resulted in a move from the bottom division to the top of the third division. However, the scale of the task ahead in competing with other major industrialised EU countries is illustrated by the significant gap between the UK and the bottom of the next division, which includes most of the major Northern European counties, including France and Germany. This can be contrasted with very low levels of child poverty in countries such as Denmark and Finland, where the poverty rate is less than 10% when measured as 60% of the national median income, and less than 3% when measured as 50% of the median income.[27] Despite the achievements of the Government since 1999 in reducing child poverty, it is concerning that evidence is beginning to suggest that the rate of decline appears to be slowing, with an increase in rates of child poverty being reported in March 2007.[28]

32. Evidence demonstrates that child poverty rates vary between communities, with families made up of recent immigrants being significantly more likely to raise young people in poverty. For new Bangladeshi-born immigrants, 63.3% report earnings below half median level, a rate which is in itself significantly below the official poverty threshold.[29] Studies have indicated that ethnic minority households are more likely to experience poverty than those made up of white families, with Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black Caribbeans experiencing on average markedly higher unemployment rates and lower-paid employment than whites. This is borne out through household income levels, with four fifths of Bangladeshi households at or below the national average household income level, compared to just a quarter of white households.[30] By every measure of poverty used by the Policy Studies Institute - including housing, worklessness and the unique Families and Children Studies Index - ethnic minority children are more likely to live in households prone to hardship and characterised by disadvantage and persistent low income.

> Every child in poverty is a step further away from a well functioning society based on a relationship of trust and respect; children are stigmatised and bullied because they can't afford to fit in. People experiencing poverty are the same as everyone else, but are excluded from society, because they can't afford to participate. Many of them are in work - over half of the children in poverty today are from families with one or more parent in work. Living in poverty creates enormous pressure on families and can ruin mental and physical health. We are all diminished for looking the other way.
> **Campaign to End Child Poverty**

Whilst only 18% of white children fell into the bottom fifth of income distribution, 61% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi children, 43% of Black non Caribbean children, 34% of Black Caribbean children and 26% of Indian children fell within this categorisation.[31]

33. Patterns of ethnic minority achievement amongst young people are strongly associated with variations in social class and poverty. A related issue to educational achievement is the use of English as a first language in homes - with demonstrated links to attainment in class. The proportion of African Caribbean pupils achieving five good GCSEs in 2000 was 37%, compared to 50% for white pupils. Meanwhile, in the same year, 38 in every 1,000 Black Caribbean pupils in

England were permanently excluded from school - marking the highest rate for any ethnic group and registering at three times the rate for white pupils.[32] In the context of the fact that two out of three excluded pupils fail to return to full-time mainstream education, this forms a startling conclusion for those concerned with the life chances of children from ethnic minority households.

34. Disabled children and young people are also over-represented in the number of children living in poverty. An estimated 55% of families with disabled children are living in or at the margin of poverty.[33] Again, they face more challenges in school: disabled children and young people are 13 times more likely to be excluded from school than their non-disabled peers.[34]

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

• **Step up action on child poverty**

All evidence shows that poverty has a negative and pervasive impact on the life chances of young people - from education to health, crime, employment and participation in their local communities.

Government has made a commitment to end child poverty by 2020 but statistics show that the target is far from being reached, with only a quarter of the target having been met by 2006.

Further reform and investment is essential if this key ambition is to be made a reality. A wide-ranging review is recommended with key measures put in place, including both redistributive policies and support to better enable parents to work. Additional steps might include:

- **Reform of the tax credit system**, to halve rates of non take-up by 2010.

- **Income support and benefits for working parents**, particularly working mothers who still suffer from a gender pay gap. This will form part of a package of measures that support working families and ensure that wages reflect the cost of living.

- **Increase affordable childcare**, constituting a doubling of investment in current provision in order to reduce the cost to parents, increase the number of places and ensure sustainability. This can contribute to making childcare affordable and enabling parents to work.

- **Support parents to take up training**, coupled with a wide-ranging publicity campaign to highlight the benefits of lifelong learning, starting from age 16 and using community based groups as well as formal institutions. Opportunities in later life for parents to develop skills and achieve qualifications are essential in improving labour market prospects and tackling worklessness in families. Qualifications and training are as important for existing parents as for future parents, highlighting the value of widening access to lifelong learning.

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> **"** Many of the indicators of dangerous lifestyle choices are not only on the increase but are also markedly socially skewed towards children from low income families **"**

Chapter 2

Health, Lifestyles and the Impact of Inequalities

Summary

The teenage years are a period during which identity is formed, often through a process of experimentation with behaviour and attitudes. However, in an increasingly consumerised society, young people are bombarded with images: images of the perfect weight, images of the perfect body and the right clothes to wear. Teen magazines, lifestyle programmes and TV soaps form strong impressions on young people's sense of 'self' and can exacerbate the insecurity which young people can often feel about themselves, their self-image and how they fit in to society.

Young people can feel a lack of confidence in themselves and how they relate to friends, peers and adults. It is often only later in life that the grounding influences of careers and families give young adults a sense of stability and reassurance. Throughout the teenage period, identity is still in flux. It is a difficult time, which brings its own pressures relating to schoolwork, the effect of relationships or questions that young people ask about how they fit in with others. The impact of this uncertainty can vary, with some teenagers able to rely on the positive support of parents whilst others find it much more difficult.

35. Health and well-being indicators include both physical and emotional factors. International comparisons demonstrate that teenagers in the UK, despite living in a rich western country, fare particularly badly on many of these, including rates of teenage pregnancy, drug-taking and alcohol consumption.[35] The level of overall wealth in the economy has not translated to easy lifestyles for teenagers, with mental health being a real issue for high numbers of young people.

36. Whilst uncertainty and support needs are certainly not limited by class or family background, research has demonstrated a stark link between low family income and the likelihood of becoming involved in risky behaviour. Many of the indicators of dangerous lifestyle choices are not only on the increase but are also markedly socially skewed towards children from low income families. For many, there is a need for confidential and independent advice and support outside of the family, with many suggesting that they would welcome guidance outside of school. Some have commented that, inside school, they fear that teachers or those with whom they have long-term relationships might hold problems against them.

37. Young people often struggle to find that confidential and independent support. For many there is a lack of knowledge of where to get help and how to access it. Teenagers are aware of support through specific agencies, such as those dealing with drug and alcohol, as well as through GPs, but often wonder whether their concerns are relevant or sufficiently serious. They feel there is no overall contact point after school for someone to talk to or go to for advice. In many cases the support services that are

provided are not accessible to disabled children or young people, especially those who may have communication impairments or learning disabilities.

38. Whilst the teenage years can be exciting they can also be daunting. Even those young people who can be crudely classed as being in the 'mainstream' sometimes feel a need for help and advice. Meanwhile, for some young people, including those who are homeless, in care or living in sub-standard accommodation, the need for help is much greater. For those for whom these needs are left unmet, paths into crime, drugs and emotional health problems become much more attractive, with evidence that habits formed in youth can last long into adulthood. Prevention and support for teenagers is essential if we are to avoid creating increasing numbers of socially excluded adults.

Young people's health and well-being

39. A 2006 comparison of European Union (EU) states across 50 indicators of well-being found that the UK was 21st out of 25 states for overall child health and well-being, making it the lowest ranked of the rich western states of the EU. Whilst Britain ranked high on overall educational attainment and quality of housing, the index rated the UK poorly on indicators including health, relative poverty, risky behaviour and subjective well-being. The effect of this was that only the Slovak Republic, Estonia and Lithuania performed worse for overall child health and well-being.[36] An examination of the causes of this requires identification both of genetic and environmental influences, including the results of lifestyle choices and health conditions. In either case, the results of the EU comparison exercise form a powerful incentive for the identification of the causes of low levels of health and well-being.

40. The health and well-being needs of young people are central to effective transitions to adulthood. Through advances in medicine, as well as cultural changes, overall life expectancy from birth has increased steadily over the last half century. The effect of this provides much reason to be positive but closer analysis shows that there are some groups who have not benefited from these changes and also shows a clear link between health inequalities and family income.

41. Whilst there have been rises in life expectancy from birth across all social groups, evidence shows disproportionately slow rises amongst children born into lower-income families and amongst those growing up in pockets of deprivation. Men born in the UK during 2006 will on average live to almost 77, whilst women can expect to live to 81. This demonstrates a steady increase from 1983-85, when life expectancy at birth for men was 71 and 77 for women.[37] Research compiled by the Office for National Statistics compared Local Authority areas to identify regional variations in life expectancy. Results indicated that every one of the top 10 areas for longest life expectancy from birth is in England, whilst five are in the affluent South East. In Scotland, Glasgow is the only part of the country where men on average die before they are 70. The city also has the lowest life expectancy for women, at 76 years. In contrast, Kensington and Chelsea in west London has the highest life expectancy, with male residents in the borough living on average to 82 and women to 86.[38]

42. Life expectancy is determined by a number of factors, some of them genetic and others the result of environmental influences, including behavioural factors. Lifestyle choices and participation in risky activities - including smoking, drinking and drug-taking - can have a significant impact on the life chances of young adults. This is true both in the sense of available opportunities and physical and emotional well-being. Risky behaviour can have an effect not only on life expectancy but also on quality of life and standards of living. Habits, both positive and negative, that form during the teenage years can often have a powerful bearing on later life, with many government initiatives launching specific campaigns to young people in an effort to educate and influence positive lifestyle choices.

43. Fitness is a factor that has a significant impact on quality of life as well as on lifelong health prospects. Amplified by significant media attention, there has been widespread concern over the last decade of an 'obesity crisis' amongst young people. This has followed a similar pattern to concerns raised in the United States, where the popularity of fast food has led to warnings from health campaigners and dieticians. This has not been without some foundation, with figures released in 2001 indicating that 15.8% of British 13 to 15 year olds are overweight, compared to 10.4% in Sweden and 11.2% in France. Recent research has indicated that 11-16 year olds in the UK eat on average 133 pre-packaged ready meals and takeaways per year (nearly three every week).[39] The World

Health Organisation has reacted to international concern by calling for a limit on the consumption of saturated fats, sugar and salt, especially in snacks, processed foods and drinks. Concern has also been raised about the direct advertising of these products to children and young people.

44. The issue of obesity amongst teenagers continues to take on increasing prominence, with the last decade seeing rapid rises in the number of weight problems in the UK. The concern in relation to long-term health prospects is underlined by international research that demonstrates that overweight teenagers often grow into overweight adults as a direct result of long-term eating patterns. A study released in 2007 tracked a sample of Australian children over the period since 1985 and found that the teenage years are critical in predicting obesity in adults. The researchers based analyses on the weight ranges of people now aged 25-35 who were first surveyed when they were between 7 and 15 years old. The results, published in the Medical Journal of Australia, found that children who were overweight or obese were up to nine times more likely to become overweight adults.[40] The long-term impact of weight problems can result in a wide range of chronic diseases, ranging from mild ailments such as breathlessness and varicose veins to serious conditions such as diabetes and cancer. Prominent also is a link between obesity and disadvantaged backgrounds, with research conducted in 2001 indicating that children aged 2-10 and living in households in the lowest two quintile income groups had an 18% obesity rate, whilst children in the top two quintiles had just a 10% chance of being obese.[41]

45. Mirroring concerns about eating habits are worries about decreasing physical activity amongst teenagers and the development of a sedentary lifestyle fuelled by technological developments. A study released in 2005 tracked changes in the amount of physical exercise undertaken by young people walking to school, rather than going by car or by public transport.

Activities for young people, including sport, can play their part in tackling all kinds of social problems. Sport isn't just about winning medals. Opportunities to play and be involved in sports can enrich people's quality of life, raise self esteem, build safer communities, strengthen the economy, develop the skills of local people and improve everyone's health.
Sport England

Results indicated that, whereas in 1992 a total of 61% of children walked to school and 30% were driven, by 2004 these figures had become 50% and 41% respectively.[42] A MORI survey published in 2001 provides a sense of the exercise habits of young people, as well as providing encouraging signs that teenagers would welcome the opportunity to do more physical exercise and overcome the obstacles to becoming fitter. According to the survey, teenage children want to spend more time exercising with their parents. The study, commissioned by BUPA, found that most children spent the majority of their leisure time watching television. However, responses indicated that they wished they were more active and considered that they did not do enough physical activities with other members of the family. Around two-thirds of the 600 families surveyed said that teenagers spent the majority of their free time watching TV, whilst more than half also spend many hours playing computer games. Teenagers canvassed said their parents' lifestyles are mostly to blame for their own lack of exercise, with a third citing their parents' hectic work lives as the cause of their own lack of physical activity.[43]

46. Diet is also an important factor in averting obesity amongst young people. Evidence shows that government campaigns encouraging young people to eat five pieces of fruit or vegetables per day are failing to have a dramatic effect on eating habits. In 2001, just 27% of British children ate fruit every day, compared to 42% in Germany, 38% in Italy and 34% in France.[44] Teenagers understand the importance of a healthy diet but plan to put off worrying about it until they are 30, according to research published in 2003 by the IGD food and grocery think-tank. Of 1,000 13 to 17 year olds questioned in the survey, 39% said they did not always have breakfast before they went to school and 30% did not eat with their parents in the evening. The study found that one obstacle to a healthy diet was a lack of cooking skills. The report found that many teenagers failed to eat a healthy meal during the school day and 14% visited a fast food outlet several times per week to buy junk food, fatty snacks and fizzy drinks.[45]

47. The importance of ensuring that parents are involved in helping develop healthy lifestyles for children is exemplified by research from the Food Standards Agency which found that nine out of ten children's lunchboxes contained foods high in fat, salt or sugar. The study also found that children's packed lunches contained up to twice the recommended amount of sugar, half of their suggested daily salt intake, plus high levels of saturated fats. School meals, eaten by fewer than half of children, must offer at least one portion

of fruit and one portion of vegetables, a portion of milk or a dairy item, a portion of meat, fish or other protein source and a portion of a starchy food, such as bread, pasta or rice. In contrast, results showed that the most popular items in children's lunchboxes were a white bread sandwich, found in 87% of packed lunches, followed by crisps (71%), a biscuit or chocolate bar (60%) and dairy items such as yoghurts or fromage frais, found in 48% of packed lunches. The survey, which involved children from 24 primary schools across the UK at the end of 2004, found that 80% of those who took a packed lunch to school tended to have similar things to eat every day.[46]

48. There is also worrying evidence that parents are not identifying problems with their children, with one study showing that that just 25% of parents with overweight children recognised the problem, whilst 33% of mothers and 57% of fathers described technically obese children as being of average weight.[47]

CASE STUDY
Tackling Childhood Obesity - Tower Hamlets

The 2006 Best Practice Award by the Association for the Study of Obesity was given to a project in Tower Hamlets. It is a children's weight management programme for 8-16 year olds living in the borough. So far, in excess of 100 obese children have completed the programme. Called BEST (Better Eating, Self-Esteem and Total Health), the programme uses family based behavioural management to teach children and parents the skills needed to change unhealthy behaviour patterns. BEST is helping young people and their families to adopt healthy eating habits and regular exercise. Parents whose children have completed the programme have commented on their child's improved confidence, increased physical activity and new healthy eating habits. The course for 12-16 year olds and their families ends with an invitation to join a weekly activity and fitness club to help sustain progress.

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49. Problems with diet are not just concerned with those overweight, with evidence of startlingly young children suffering from eating disorders linked to their physical self-

image and esteem. Figures released in 2007 to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health annual meeting indicate that over the previous 13 months, 206 children under 12 years were treated for an eating disorder in Britain and Ireland - including one 6 year old girl. Half of the children had to be admitted to hospital and 45% had exercised excessively to keep their weight down. From this evidence the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit estimated that 3.5 children in every 100,000 in the UK are treated for an eating disorder, including anorexia, bulimia and binge eating.[48]

50. The recent phenomenona of 'Size 00' models and increasing sales of fitness magazines to teenage boys have given rise to increasing concern amongst young people about their image, particularly in relation to weight. A survey conducted in 2007 by BBC Radio 1 Newsbeat and 1xtra reported high levels of insecurity over body image and a widespread enthusiasm amongst young people for measures designed to improve their image. The study found that some 51% of young women would have surgery to improve their looks and a third of those who are a size 12 considered themselves to be overweight. The survey of 25,000 people, mostly in their teens, attempted to identify how respondents felt about their bodies.

The image of slim models in the media are a marked contrast to the body size and shape of most children and young women, who are becoming increasingly heavier. We have noticed an alarming increase in the numbers of young people aged 13 years or under contacting our youth helpline with issues around eating.
Eating Disorders Association

Almost half the women surveyed said they had skipped a meal to lose weight, while 8% had made themselves sick. Further evidence from the survey suggests that young people feel that their body can act as an obstacle to becoming happy in relationships, with more than half of girls aged 12 to 16 claiming that their body image either stopped them from getting a boyfriend or from relaxing in a relationship.

Risky behaviour

51. Teenagers involved in the Youth Review spoke of wanting support in making difficult decisions and the importance of receiving help and guidance at key times - from choices over school and careers to health and personal issues. Many spoke of the attraction of risky behaviour such as underage drinking, drug-taking and smoking, whilst others commented that in many local areas there is an effect of 'peer pressure' that can lead to dangerous behaviour. Research published in 2005 indicated that the average ages for the onset of truancy and crime are 14 and 14.5, whilst the average age for drug use and alcohol abuse are 16 and 18 respectively.[50] 78% of 11-16 year olds involved in the Youth Review commented that it is during times that teenagers are outside of the control of their parents, and mostly outdoors, that they engage in many of these activities.

52. Analysis conducted by IPPR in 2006 suggested that the wider peer context of young people has more of an impact on their behaviour than the prevailing culture in schools. This underlines the dramatic impact of peer pressure on teenagers, particularly during a time when they are spending larger amounts of time unsupervised and away from their parents. The teenage years form a period of experimentation, during which young people search for a sense of identity - one that is often crafted and influenced by the company they keep and the behaviour of their friends. Many of those involved in the Youth Review talked of a 'macho' culture, particularly amongst young teenage boys, in which achievement in school is shunned in favour of risky activities that are perceived to be cool. An IPPR analysis of research sought to test the influence of peer groups in the classroom on the tendency to engage in five activities: drug use, alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, church going and the likelihood of dropping out of full-time

education. The effect of moving a child from a school in which none of her classmates used drugs to one in which half used drugs increased the probability that she herself would use illegal drugs by 13%. Similar effects were found for drinking (9% increase), smoking (8% increase), and dropping out of school (8% increase).[51]

53. Evidence suggests that many, and sometimes increasing numbers of, teenagers are engaging in risky behaviour in friendship groups outside of school. One of the most widespread of these relates to alcohol, where the evidence demonstrates that large numbers of teenagers are binge drinking outside the supervision of their parents. A Department of Health study released in 2006 demonstrated the prevalence of drinking amongst teenagers, with around 45% of 15 year old boys found to have drunk alcohol over the preceding week. Additional figures give a sense of quantities consumed, with data showing a rise in the average weekly consumption of alcohol for drinkers aged 11-13: this increased from 3.4 units in 1992 to 8.2 units by 2005. For slightly older boys, at 15, the average number of units per week was found to have risen from 9.6 to 13.1 units over the same period, suggesting that consumption increases as young people approach the mid teens.[52] International comparisons demonstrate that British teenagers consume significantly higher levels of alcohol per week, with studies indicating that UK adolescents are now the third biggest 'binge drinkers' (defined for a man as drinking 10 or more units in a single session, and for a woman as drinking 7 or more units in a single session) in Europe, coming close behind Ireland and Denmark.[53] Studies in the 1990s suggested that binge drinking was much more of an issue for young men, whereas recent figures indicate that young British women are now also amongst the biggest drinkers in Europe.[54]

There is a need for government action to address the problems of underage and teenage drinking. This must involve changes to legislation, responsible marketing, effective monitoring of the drinks industry and health education.
Alcohol Concern, 2006

54. Commentators have suggested that much of the increase in alcohol consumption amongst teenagers is owed to the direct marketing of bottled drinks to young people. So-called 'alcho-pops' are labelled and presented as colourful, sweet drinks that taste similar to soft drinks, whilst containing high levels of alcohol. The effect of increases in consumption, as well as a wider 'drinking culture' in the UK, is demonstrated by figures released by the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital accident and emergency department. These show a tenfold increase in the number of young people admitted for alcohol poisoning between 1985 and 2000 - suggesting that increasing numbers who drink to excess are ending sessions in need of medical intervention.[55] The notion of a UK 'drinking culture' is reinforced by the findings of a report by *The Food Magazine,* released in 2007, into scenes of drinking in popular culture. These findings indicated that alcohol featured in an average of 20% of scenes in UK soap operas whose target audience included teenagers. The report also found that the rate of such scenes in one teenage soap opera whose target audience was 15-24 year olds was as high as 40%.[56] The British Medical Association published a report in 2006 that suggested that, whilst many of the more serious health effects of drinking affect those who have been drinking for many years, alcohol abuse during the formative years sets a pattern for later life. The urgency of tackling rates of teenage drinking was underlined by a report by the charity Alcohol Concern that suggested that a third more 11-15 year olds are drinking regularly than in previous years.[57]

55. Evidence demonstrates encouraging signs in the number of young smokers, with research released in 2006 by ASH indicating that, whilst 40% of 16-19 year olds smoked in 1974, these figures had fallen to 24% by 2005.[58] This average reinforces the results of a study from 2003 that found a greater likelihood that teenage girls would be smokers, with 23% of 15 year old boys and 26% of girls regularly smoking cigarettes.[59] However, there continues to be a link between family income background and the likelihood of being a teenage smoker, with children from better off backgrounds being markedly less likely to smoke

cigarettes than those from poorer families. Figures from ASH demonstrate that this is accompanied by a greater risk of becoming addicted, with 50% of teenage smokers from a more affluent background having given up by the time they reach the age of 30, compared to just 25% of those from poorer backgrounds.[60] Much of the impetus for children to smoke comes not just from peer pressure within friendship groups but also within the family itself. Parents who smoke have a marked influence on encouraging their children to smoke, with young people with two parents who smoke being three times more likely to become smokers themselves than had neither parent smoked. [61]

56. A biennial study conducted by the Office for National Statistics in 2000 examined cigarette and drug use amongst 11 to 15 year olds in England and 12 to 15 year olds in Scotland with a view to identifying the quantities of consumption. Almost a third of smokers had more than 10 cigarettes a day, while 70% smoked at least 20 a week.

The prevalence of ill-health in a community is seen to arise not only from individuals' behaviour choices, but also from social and economic deprivation, social exclusion and a lack of opportunities for purposeful activity. Tackling factors such as smoking and poor diet remain crucial but an increased significance is placed on creating broader positive activity.
YMCA

Results reinforced the conclusion that fewer teenagers in England and Scotland are smoking, although the older that young people become the more likely, according to this data, they are to take drugs. The overall figures also showed that in Scotland, 18% had used illegal drugs at least once, as had 13% of the children in England. However, the likelihood of drug use was found to increase with age, with figures increasing to 39% and 33% at 15. There was also evidence that smoking or drinking can lead to a higher probability of drug use, with figures from England demonstrating that 63% of regular smokers had used drugs, compared to 21% of those who had never smoked, with a similar trend observed amongst drinkers.[62]

57. Home Office statistics released in 2002 indicated that over 30% of 15 year olds had taken cannabis, whilst between 5% and 10% had taken Class A drugs and volatile substances including solvent-sniffing.[63] Figures relating to older teenagers reinforce the conclusion that the likelihood

of experimentation with drugs increases with age. In 2003, 47% of 16-24 year olds, in the older teenager category, had used one or more illicit drugs during their lifetime, whilst 28% had done so in the last year and 17% had done so during the previous month.[64] Official Department of Health statistics reinforce the picture of increasing levels of drug use, with figures released in 2006 indicating that, during 2005, 34% of 15 year old boys had taken drugs in the last year, as had 6% of 11 year olds. These levels are significantly higher than those measured in 1998, when 29% of 15 year old boys, 25% of 15 year old girls and 1.5% of 11 year olds were found to have used drugs over the preceding year. Whilst trends in cannabis use and Class A drugs rose only slightly between 1998 and 2005, the use of stimulants doubled and the use of glue increased seven-fold.[65] Police and policy makers have identified links between drug use and the likelihood of becoming involved in crime, whether as a result of behavioural changes or the need to fund expensive substance habits on low incomes.[66]

> The reasons young people take drugs are often similar to the reasons adults drink and smoke. They're associated with relaxing with friends, listening to music or watching a video. In addition, teenagers like to experiment: some will try drugs just because they are curious and want to find out what the effects are. The influence of peers is huge, so it may be easier for teenagers to have a go than to say no and look un-cool. Teenagers like to rebel and kick out against parents' rules.

58. Drug use is another example of risky behaviour that is markedly socially skewed, with figures suggesting that young people from the poorest households are significantly more likely to take drugs, with lower levels of prominence amongst young people living in more affluent areas and coming from better-off families.[67] The provision of support in tackling alcohol and drug misuse is essential. The Good Childhood Enquiry reported in 2006 that around 5% of teenagers self-defined as having a problem with drugs, whilst 8% self-defined as being alcohol dependent - this degree of usage outstrips occasional use and demonstrates that for some young people their experimentation has reached such levels that they self-define as having a problem.[68] The Government has responded to increases in drink and drug use by increasing the role and responsibilities of Drug and Alcohol Teams. These teams are required to produce specific Young People's Plans and meet targets set in some detail with the

aim of reducing usage by teenagers and young adults. The National Strategy governing Drug and Alcohol Teams defines young people as being under the age of 25, whereas teams in England are required only to produce plans and targets for young people up to the age of 19. In contrast, in Wales, the measures and targets set under the Tackling Substance Misuse in Wales Strategy explicitly works with young people right up to the age of 25.[69]

59. As teenagers grow up they begin to experiment with relationships and for some, sex becomes a part of this. Unsafe sex is another element of risky behaviour, with the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections becoming more prevalent amongst young people. Between 1995 and 1999 instances of infection with gonorrhea increased by 58%, with cases of genital chlamydia rising by 76%. Trends in reported instances of sexually transmitted infections indicate that the bulk of the increase in cases of chlamydia is amongst those under the age of 25.[70] Moreover, between 1995 and 2004 the number of men aged 16-19 diagnosed with syphilis increased by almost fourteen fold.[71] Complacency over safe sex is being blamed for a dramatic rise in cases. According to government figures diagnoses have hit a ten year high, with the number of people visiting Genitourinary Medicine Clinics (GUM clinics) in the UK doubling in ten years. Experts warn that complacency about safe sex messages had led to the soaring infection rates, particularly among young women and young gay men. This has led to calls for doctors to try and persuade teenagers to abstain from sex altogether.[72]

60. Whilst protected sex amongst those over 16 is legal, calls have been made for clinics to do more to convince teenagers of the value of contraception. Instances of young teenagers becoming pregnant as a result of unsafe sex have provoked widespread public concern, with the UK famously having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe. Figures indicate that in 2003 there were 25 live births per 1,000 women aged between 15 and 19, four times the rate experienced in Denmark and Sweden.[73] In 2001 studies indicated that just 70% of British 15 year olds used a condom the last time they had sex, compared to 89% of Spanish and 82% of French teenagers.[74]

> Choices available to young women about their sexual health may be limited by ignorance, difficulties accessing health services, low self-esteem and pressure. These factors can result in high levels of teenage pregnancy and alarmingly high rates of sexually transmitted diseases.
> **YMCA**

Figures show that the number of under-18s who became pregnant in England and Wales rose from 41,868 in 2002 to 42,173 in 2003 whilst in 2000, the government pledged to halve the rate of teenage pregnancies by 2010.[75] In 2002 the Government identified 150 local authorities governing 'hotspots' of teenage pregnancies, providing support to encourage them to provide better sex education. Across England, there will be more sex education training for teachers and healthcare workers under the new strategy. In urban areas, which account for the majority of the hot spots, as many as one in ten young girls become pregnant. Around 20% of conceptions among under-18s are second pregnancies. Three of these 'hotspots' for higher than average rates of teenage pregnancy include Lambeth (104.9 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-17), Blackpool (80.3) and Nottingham (73.5).[76]

CASE STUDY
Tackling Teenage Pregnancy - Save the Children and British Gas

Save the Children and British Gas co-produced a magazine that seeks to demonstrate the realities of teenage pregnancy. Existing work had already been carried out, with a scheme using peer educators as adisors in youth clubs and schools allowing young people to talk about teenage pregnancy and sexual health issues was already running. Building on this it was propsed a tool ought to be created that reinforced what they have to say and provided a tangible resource that young people couild keep and reflect on. The project also had the virtue of demonstrating that existing young mothers could add value to the debate on teenage pregnancy by passing on the their own experiences.

A partnership with a similar project in Rhondda Cynon Taff was formed on the basis that previous magazines had been jointly published. The mothers involved received software training and wrote the magazine themselves. They learnt to work together, to write properly, to take photographs and to design pages using desktop publishing packages. Additional work involved budgeting and project management, as well as a good deal of salesmanship in persuading other young mothers to take part in and join the scheme.

Mental health and emotional well-being

61. The physical support needs of teenagers give only half of the picture relating to health and well-being needs. Growing up is a difficult time, with many teenagers feeling alone and unable to rely on their friends or parents for support and someone to talk to. Often, young people feel self-doubt as they grow up through the experimental teenage period, throughout which they are in search of identity and independence. For some, this process can be particularly difficult. Whilst adults enjoy the stabilising influences of careers and families, young people can often feel 'groundless', particularly when they find it hard to imagine what their life will be like in years to come. When consulted by The Good Childhood Enquiry in 2006, only 66% of young people felt that their life had a sense of purpose, with such a sense being linked closely to well-being and stability.[77] What clinicians may term as mental health issues can often creep up on young people, with teenagers being unlikely to foresee emotional health crises if they have no experience or diagnosis of mental illness.

62. Parental background and the likelihood of suffering from mental health problems are closely linked, with 17% of children whose parents had no educational qualifications having some form of disorder, compared to 4% of children whose parents had a degree-level qualification.[78] Research from 2003 suggests that mental health problems are more common amongst children in lone parent families, with children of single parents being 16% more likely to suffer emotional stress than those born into two-parent families. Further, children in families in which where neither parents work were found to be 8% more likely to need support.[79] Statistics relating to mental health demonstrate the extent of concerns over emotional support needs, with figures from the Office for National Statistics released in 1998 indicating

that around one in ten children aged 5-15 have a mental disorder of sufficient severity to either cause distress or have a considerable effect on the way they live.[80]

CASE STUDY
Cornwall Youth Emotional Support Service

The mission of the Youth Emotional Support Service is to contribute to the strengthening of the community, as well as its sustainability, through providing emotional support to young people. The services offered are geared towards facilitating teenagers to develop into responsible and mature adults – they include information and advice, mentoring, and a general Well-being Programme that focuses on all aspects of the 'whole' young person. The counselling services offer young people a one-to-one opportunity to talk with a trained professional, enabling teenagers to discuss their problems in private. Counsellors can assist with issues ranging from family and relationship problems to managing feelings and building self-esteem. Specific programmes are offered which focus on bullying and harmful behaviour. For information and advice young people can access a 'Share Shop' at the Cornwall Youth Service. Staff are available to help young people find information through personal advice on topics including jobs and training schemes, drugs, alcohol, housing and legal rights. A designated mentoring scheme provides young people with an adult volunteer for up to 12 months who will be in place to provide personal support, training on personal and social skills, and general encouragement and 'cheerleading'.

63. The numbers of young people suffering from depression in the last ten years has risen worryingly, with Government statistics suggesting that one in eight adolescents are depressed.[81] Unless doctors recognise the problem to the point at which more young people with depression can be diagnosed and treated then teenagers could slip through the net, according to a 2006 report by the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health.[82] A survey of childhood depression conducted through Bliss magazine in 2005 indicated that the top sources of stress for teenagers included pressure to look good (94%), school work (84%), bullying (67%) and broken homes (52%). Almost a third

said they had harmed themselves, usually because they were 'confused' or 'no-one was listening', whilst 15% had binged on drink or drugs. *The Stressed and Depressed?* survey polled 2,000 girls aged 14 and 15, finding that just 32% said they felt 'greatly loved' by their parents, and two thirds reported that they thought life was emotionally easier when their parents were young. Some 30% revealed they drank alcohol every week, mainly to make themselves feel better, whilst almost 20% said they had no-one to talk to about problems and 68% said their friends were 'the only ones who will listen'.[83]

64. Tackling bullying has always been a key concern for those who work with young people. As young people define their own identities alongside peers, bullying has always been a concern for teachers and parents. To be bullied is to be victimised, plain and simple, and the effects of bullying have been found to have an adverse impact on school work and social confidence amongst victims - with many reporting that they are too scared often to go to school, let alone participate fully in classes. Often this can be accompanied by a desire not to tell parents or teachers due to either fear of retribution from bullies or a desire not to be stigmatised or perceived as having 'become a victim'.

"I'm bullied sometimes at school, and after school too. When I walk home some of the kids on the buses shout at me out the windows. I don't want to tell my parents because they'll just make a big deal out of it. The teachers would try to stop it but when it happens on the way home there's no teachers around."
Anonymous, 15, Wakefield

One in five parents has a child who has been bullied in the past year, according to a survey released in 2006. The results of the poll of 1,600 parents, for the umbrella group of England's parent-teacher associations (NCPTA), suggested that bullying is an important issue for 97%. A national anti-bullying week has become a fixture in the school calendar, with campaigners having claimed that most parents believed more should be done to tackle the problem. Of the 21% of parents who said their child had been bullied in the past 12 months, six out of ten said the bullying had been verbal, whilst three out of ten said it had been physical. Nearly 80% of bullying incidents reported took place during break or lunch periods and the playground was the most common place for a child to be bullied, the survey found.[84] The charity Mencap reports that the need for help to tackle

bullying was even more urgent for children with learning disabilities, who are often seen as 'easy targets' by bullies. It is important to remember also that victimisation of young people does not just take place in school. The Forum on Children and Violence was created to counter incidents of violence against children. In 2005, the child protection charity released figures that claimed that between 40% and 60% of children are bullied at some stage, with one-fifth of children having been hit at home with an object as a result of domestic violence or careless conduct.[85] With bullying consistently cited as an overriding concern by children and young people further action to reduce bullying is essential.

> The danger of sexual abuse in adolescence is well known. However, little attention has been paid to the threat of physical and emotional abuse to this group. Adolescents are commonly subject to different forms of ill treatment. Largely unreported, this abuse only comes to light when young people develop anti-social or disruptive behaviour.
> **NSPCC, 2006**

> Children and young people with a learning disability have told Mencap that bullying is a big problem. We know that 8 out of 10 children with a learning disability are bullied and scared to go out for fear of being bullied. Mencap believes disablist bullying wrecks children's lives, leading to social exclusion in childhood and adulthood.
> **Mencap**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teenagers

65. To be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and a teenager is difficult, with widespread perceptions of homophobia, particularly amongst teenage boys in the playground. Young gay teenagers can feel isolated, with the added pressure of having to 'come out' to their parents and relatives. Often the school environment can feel like one in which difference and diversity are not sufficiently protected, with many gay teenagers feeling a need to hide their sexuality to conform and to avoid stereotypes. Sometimes gay teenagers can feel stigmatised as a result of the more

'extreme' or comedic portrayals of homosexuality in the media, with many feeling unrepresented by caricatures of gay people and worrying that they are 'signing up' to an identity that is not their own.

> The range of problems faced by LGBT and confused teens is humbling. There are kids who think that being gay is wrong, who don't understand the concept of bisexuality, many who are triply isolated by unhelpful teachers, parents and 'friends'.
>
> Childline received nearly 2,800 calls in the last year about sexual orientation or homophobia. 60% of callers were 12-15 years old, 34% between 16-18.
> **Childline, 2006**

66. The charity Stonewall has suggested that schools are not doing enough to tackle homophobia or to provide sexual health information, leaving young gay men more vulnerable to HIV and feelings of isolation and depression. The National Aids Trust, marking an international day against homophobia in 2006, reported that homophobic bullying in schools was common and often unchallenged by staff. Whilst linking increased likelihood of sexually transmitted diseases with a lack of education born from isolation, the Trust has called for LGBT sex and relationships education to be placed on the national curriculum.

Local support frameworks

67. Frameworks for support in local Health Authorities suffer from a 'gap' in provision between treatment aimed at youth and adult support services. An Audit Commission survey released in 2002 reported that 20% of Health Authorities responsible for commissioning mental health services were unsure at what stage their adolescent services finished and their adult services began. Amongst those who did suggest a cut-off point there was evidence of considerable disparity of viewpoints, with a third suggesting that adolescent services finished at 16 and others suggesting ages beyond 16 right up to the age of 25.[86] Research published by The Prince's Trust demonstrates the difficulty caused by young people moving around and its effect on Local Authorities' ability to provide ongoing support. The data, published in 2004, indicated that 43% of 18-25 year olds have been at their current address for less than one year, whilst a further 20% had lived in the same place for less than three years.[87]

"Imagine if bullying and terrorising happened in your home, carried out by the people who are supposed to love and protect you. Imagine trying to work out why your mother abuses and your father neglects. Imagine being a child subjected to humiliation, trapped behind closed doors. It's a dark existence with depleted aspirations."
Camila Batmanghelidjh, Kids Company

68. The price of failing to provide sufficient support to young people can be measured most starkly in the number of instances of self-harm and suicide. In 2001, the UK had one of the highest rates of self-harm in Europe, with the National Enquiry into Self Harm Amongst Young People reporting in 2006 that by the end of the teenage years an estimated one in ten will have harmed themselves in some way. This is reinforced by research published by the Samaritans in 2005 that reported that one in five girls aged 15-17 had self-harmed and nearly a quarter had at some point considered harming themselves.[88] Figures released by the Office for National Statistics indicate that the suicide rate amongst 15-17 year olds in England is 1 in 500,000 young people, whilst the rate in Wales is 5 in 500,000. Between 1971 and 1998, the suicide rate for women in England and Wales almost halved, while in the same period the rate for men almost doubled. Latest figures show the suicide rate for young men has fallen to its lowest level for almost 20 years, having dropped almost 30% from its peak in 1998 to 8.6 deaths per 100,000 population.[89] However, suicide still accounts for a fifth of all deaths amongst young people aged 15-24 and is the second most common cause of death amongst young people after accidental death, according to the Samaritans.[90] Around 19,000 young people attempt suicide every year and about 700 of these die as a result.[91]

69. Modern education provision has recognised the need to provide support for special needs that was often ignored in the past. The number of pupils diagnosed with special educational needs has increased, with 243,000 pupils receiving special support in 2005, compared with 195,000 in 1994.[92] However, this may be in part a result of heightened levels of awareness amongst practitioners, alongside better diagnosis. Behavioural problems have also received much greater levels of attention in the education system and in respect of parent support over the last two decades. A detailed study comparing the experiences of 16 year olds found that conduct problems amongst young people had more than doubled, and emotional problems increased by 50% between 1974-99, with particularly high rises occurring during the late 1990s.[93] A report from Ofsted, released in 2004, examined how children with special needs are being included in mainstream schools, concluding that the 'hardest test' for the principle of inclusion comes with pupils with behaviour problems. Inspectors found there had been a 25% increase in such pupils being sent to 'referral units' for problem children, whilst there had also been a 10% increase in pupils being sent by their Local Authorities to independent special schools.[94]

Homeless young people

70. The Government's child poverty target takes on an even starker level of importance in the light of the number of children and young people who are homeless or live in sub-standard accommodation. A report released in 2000 found that almost one in four children in England lives in housing that fails to meet the minimum standards of decency.[95] Meanwhile, the Barrow Cadbury Commission reported in 2006 that an estimated 250,000 16-25 year olds each year experience at least one episode of homelessness. Child poverty is closely linked to homelessness, with many being caught in a cycle of deprivation as a result of the debilitating effects of being homeless, including low living standards and a lack of support. Young people aged 18-24 are entitled to less Jobseeker's Allowance if they are not in work, whilst those aged up to 21 are paid a lower minimum wage - making it difficult for many young people to get back on their feet after they become homeless. This can make it harder to afford housing, to manage budgets and to escape crime. Moreover, state Housing Benefit rules dating from 1996 entitle those under 25 to lower levels of benefit payments.[96]

Depression, eating disorders, behaviour problems, suicide attempts, drug and alcohol abuse, are all signs that children are having trouble getting on with their lives. These are children who are more likely to be excluded from school, to commit offences or to become homeless.
Young Minds

71. The link between homelessness and risky behaviour is a stark one. A study of 160 homeless young people aged 25 and under found that 95% had taken drugs, 17% were problem drug users and almost 25% had overdosed at some

point on either drugs or alcohol. In half of cases, substance misuse was a reason for their leaving their home, with other factors including family conflict and the emotional impact of abuse. 70% of these young people had been diagnosed with depression or other mental health problems, whilst 95% admitted to having committed at least one offence.[97]

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CASE STUDY
Preventing Homelessness:
Talk, Don't Walk – Warrington

The Talk, Don't Walk project based at the Relationships Centre, Warrington is set up to address the issues surrounding young runaways. The whole purpose of the project is to give young people and their families who are facing difficulties in the home an alternative to running away. The main reason for youth homelessness is family breakdown, whilst current trends demonstrate that many young people who reach the age of 16 experience parental 'eviction', when the family home has become over-crowded and the oldest child feels an impetus to leave home, often before they are emotionally prepared to do so. The project has developed a wide range of resources for children, young people, parents and professionals surrounding unhealthy relationships. The project seeks to tackle the causes of homelessness and to keep children happy and families together.

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To prevent homelessness it is necessary to target the young people most at risk. It is also necessary to address the whole range of problems that could contribute to a young person becoming homelessness. These can include circumstances for those young people who have poor relationships with their parents, are excluded from school, and/or have run away from home.
Shelter

Meeting ongoing support needs

72. Research published in 2003 suggests that disadvantaged teenagers have less access to sources of advice and guidance. 18% of disadvantaged 14-17 year olds said they would never turn to their parents or other family members for help, whilst 45% said they were confused about where to go for support. In response to questions over where teenagers would be most likely to turn to ask for support, 81% liked the idea of a single organisation that could assist with all their problems through referrals or direct assistance. 79% of 11-16 year olds involved in the Youth Review agreed that they would be more likely to access a 'one stop shop' for support services than if those services exist in different places. There is evidence of a desire amongst young people who are in need of support to have ongoing advice and contact, with research from The Prince's Trust indicating that over three-quarters of young adults surveyed would like someone from a support service provider to keep in touch following initial support, with 80% indicating that they would like to speak to the same person each time they require help.[98]

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **Provide an advice and support point for young people in every community**

  Young people need support and information - on health, well-being and emotional support - which is widely available and accessible. A central local contact point is crucial. Strong links and relationships between workers and health practitioners, as well as police officers, and schools and families are essential as part of early identification and support programmes for those young people who are at risk of vulnerability and offending.

- **All secondary schools to provide breakfast for pupils**

  Investment should be made to help provide breakfast clubs in schools that can provide a good, nutritionally sound breakfast for all pupils who choose to have it.

- **Free access to leisure services and school leisure facilities after school and during holidays**

  Local authorities need to invest in free leisure for teenagers. In addition, a high profile national programme focusing on health and fitness for young people in out of school environments should be launched, to tackle obesity and support positive choices and healthy lifestyles.

- **Introduce nutrition and food preparation on the national curriculum for Key Stage 3 within Design and Technology teaching**

  A review of food and healthy eating as areas of the school curriculum should be complemented by food and health education in other settings where young people gather.

- **A fashion industry ban on size 0 models**

  A fashion industry ban on the use of models with a body mass index of less than 18 would reduce pressure on young girls to conform to an unhealthy self-image. Further, a fashion and lifestyle magazine code of conduct should be introduced by Government to reflect positive body image, including information on the lifelong damage to health from such low weight levels.

- **Greater financial support for young people living independently from parents**

  Young people living independently of parents can face enormous difficulties in supporting themselves, particularly those who are homeless. To raise income levels and to better enable them to meet the cost of living, the minimum wage and levels of Jobseekers Allowance should be equalised between adults and young people and programmes of learning and support introduced for all.

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Chapter 3

Supporting Parents and Families in Raising Young People

Summary

The importance of parents is undeniable, and the home environment represents the single most important factor in shaping the short and longer term prospects for children's well-being and achievement. Parenting is a difficult job and one which some of the changes in community and family structure over the last half a century has made harder. Long working hours makes it difficult for parents to devote the amount of time to parenting they would like. More teenagers than ever before are living in one-parent households; and at the same time, improved transport links and looser connections to areas of birth have decreased the support available from the extended family, resulting in less family and community support than was once the norm.

Whilst other European countries prize the role of the extended family and neighbours, many in this country have perceived an 'atomisation' of communities - with many shying away from asking those outside the immediate family for help. Parents need to know that they can get support to help them in this important role and that help is available when it is needed rather than arriving only when crisis point is reached.

The importance of supporting families to improve outcomes for children has become increasingly important but has tended to focus much more on support during the early years. The teenage years bring with them their own challenges for parents who may struggle to relate their own experience of teenage years with the sorts of issues their children need to deal with in today's world.

The importance of parents and families

73. Children need their parents for support, to be nurtured and to learn. A number of experts have pointed to the importance of personal and social skills in improving life chances - whilst many have assessed their significance as being higher than that of measures of strict intelligence such as IQ. These attributes include resilience, self-awareness, empathy, persistence and self-discipline. A sense of stability and control is essential for young people and their perception of this is often influenced most fundamentally by their home environment. Happier homes give rise to happier and more well-rounded young people.[99] This is borne out through figures relating to emotional resilience, which suggest that incidents of depression are higher for children whose parents have no educational qualifications or are on a low income.[100] Studies show that, above all other factors, parental interest in a child's education and development has the biggest positive influence on that young person's self esteem and sense of control, whilst parental hostility has the most dramatic adverse effect. The life chances of those children who are taken into care demonstrate the challenges of providing opportunities in a non-parental environment: looked-after children are statistically more vulnerable to missing out on education and generally have lower levels of attainment, whilst being 13 times more likely to be excluded from school than their peers.[101]

Changes in families

74. The importance of a stable and loving family life for children is non-contentious; however, the structure of families has undergone significant change over the last 30 years, resulting in increasingly diverse home environments for young people. Whilst the population grew by 6% between 1971 and 2003, changes in family structure have meant that the number of households in the UK rose by 32%- more than five times the rate of general population increase, representing the rising number of parents living apart. [102] Increases in the number of lone parents, step-parents and parents living apart have meant that the traditional model of a two-parent family has declined. In the early 1970s, only 8% of children lived in a one-parent family, whereas by 2006 this figure had risen to almost one in four young people. These figures vary across different ethnic groups: 50% of children born in 2000 to Black Caribbean parents were living in a single-parent household during 2006. This compares to 5% of children from an Indian or Bangladeshi background and 13% of children of white British background.[103]

"I think parenting is a private thing. None of us have perfect kids but we don't want to advertise our problems because you don't know what other people will think. I don't know if I blame myself for my boy's problems in school but I don't want others to think I'm a bad mum. It's hard being a single mum, it's not like I have many people to bounce things off..."
Carole, 39, Bristol

75. This diversification has in part been caused by a reduction in the number of marriages and also by an increase in the rate of divorces and separations. Between 1972 and 2004 the number of marriages fell by 36%, whilst divorce rates rose rapidly up to 1993 before settling down again. By 2003 there were just over 160,000 divorces, more than six times the number in 1960.[104] The proportion of children born outside marriage in the UK has leapt from 12% in 1980 to 42% in 2004, according to the Office for National Statistics. Increases in the number of remarriages have resulted in a rise in the number of children living in step-families to two and a half million - representing the fastest-growing form of family life in the UK.[105] 55% of all divorcing couples had at least one child under 16 in 2003, and by 2005 one in ten of all families with dependent children in the UK was a step-family.[106]

76. A growing phenomenon has been the reduction in the size of families: the average household size has decreased from 2.9 in 1971 to 2.4 in 2004. Whilst 9% of households in 1971 were made up of at least three children, this had fallen to just 4% by 2005.[107] This departure from the norm that children live in a home made up of both parents has placed significant pressure on contact between parents and their children, creating challenges for parents in providing support. Nearly 40% of children born in 2000 who lived with just their mother had no contact at all with their father in 2003.[108]

77. The recent nature of these changes means that policy has perhaps not yet caught up with how best to support the diversity of family structures and to counter the challenges faced in this new world order. The important role which parents play in their children's lives needs to be encouraged and maximised irrespective of the sort of family structure in which children live. Positive parental influence can help offset disadvantage, with parental involvement in a child's schooling between the ages of 7 and 16 being a more

powerful force than family background, size of family and level of parental education in controlling outcomes.[109]

CASE STUDY
Parent Support Group – Greenwich

The Parent Support Group (PSG) is a non-profit making organisation based in Greenwich that offers one-to-one help and support for parents. The organisation offers a variety of services that enable parents to access the full range of support needed in bringing up children, from advice on everyday issues to more specialist advice and guidance. Programmes provide a specific focus on those parents dealing with children going through their adolescent years who may need extra support in dealing with challenges arising from the onset of maturity.

The organisation provides a free advice service that allows parents to talk with an experienced volunteer, either on the phone or in a one-on-one meeting, about problems they are having with their children. On Wednesdays, the service offers 'drop-in' hours from 10.00am to 4.00pm that allow parents to spend the day with other parents and carers, and additionally give them the chance to participate in an organised support group that meets throughout the day. In addition, PSG holds parenting skills courses that emphasise the benefits of positive communication, boundary setting and building relationships with the school. The services are entirely confidential and parents can stop or restart using the services whenever they choose. The services offered by PSG provide a free and easy way for parents to get support when needed and together the package helps them to become more confident in handling the demands of parenthood.

Intergenerational challenge

78. Difficulties in relating to teenage children is not a new phenomenon, but one which has been exacerbated by the identification a of an increasing 'intergenerational gap' - relating both to the number of generations produced over a given period and the distance in years between generations. Since the 1980s women have tended to have children later in life. This can be for a number of reasons, including increased life expectancy, greater levels of participation amongst women in the labour market and the number of female professionals holding high-level jobs. In 2005, British women in their early thirties had higher fertility levels than women in their late twenties.[110] This phenomenon has had a number of effects, the most immediate of which is that it has created a tendency for women to have smaller families. As childbirth becomes later with each generation, the gap between generations becomes larger and the overall number over a set period falls.[111] Moreover, evidence has suggested that increases in the length between generations have contributed to a decrease in the level of inter-generational empathy and understanding. This poses new challenges for policy makers in creating conditions in which people of different generations can come together and share experiences.

> There is a major gap between government policy and service delivery. Whilst strenuous efforts need to be made at all levels to reduce this gap, attention must simultaneously be paid to societal changes that are impacting on the mental health of children and young people in ways which are unclear. Changing family structures, shifts in patterns of employment and a commercialisation of childhood occurring against a background of rapid technological development have all played their part.
> **Young Minds**

79. Whilst there have been recorded increases in the average age of childbirth, the number of teenage parents has also grown, providing new challenges for support. The pressures of parenthood during a time when the mother herself is still growing up should not be underestimated. Outcomes for the child can often be affected by early single parenthood as part of a link between poverty and early fertility.

80. Furthermore, the rapid pace of change which has characterised the last 20 years, combined with the dramatic societal changes and growing impact of technology on the lives of children, can also add to a sense of bewilderment which many parents feel about how to interact with their teenagers. With traditional sources of support such as extended family often not available, there is a vacuum which needs to be filled to ensure that the difficulties faced can be dealt with swiftly.

> *"I don't know how to talk to him anymore. He's my son and I don't know how to talk to him. He's 15 and he's been excluded from school so many times. He's been aggressive towards other kids and I don't know how I can go there and stick up for him. I love my son and I'd never leave him - when he's not been getting high on cannabis he can be a lovely kid but sometimes he can be so aggressive... he's hit me twice. That makes me feel ashamed, to admit that."*
> ***Anonymous, 45, East Ham***

CASE STUDY
Challenging Perceptions - A2 Housing Group

Older people often have negative perceptions of younger people: "They're always getting into trouble" or "They have no respect for others". Challenging these opinions is often simply a matter of bringing the two groups together. A project involving a group of older people from sheltered housing schemes and students aged 12 and 13 from a local secondary school challenged the stereotypes.

The council provided transport, and during June and July 2006 nine older residents made a series of visits to the school. One group of students taught the older people computer skills, such as accessing the internet and desktop publishing, while another group worked with them on a piece of drama reflecting their memories of growing up in the 1920s and 30s. Each visit included time to talk together and review new learning. At the end of the project the older people received a booklet of their IT work, and the final piece of drama was performed at a local day centre, attended by those involved in the project and other older people from the area. A great deal of fun was had on both sides. Residents enjoyed interacting with the students and sharing their memories, and the students learned some history that wasn't out of a text book and enjoyed being able to share their IT skills.

Changes in the conditions of parenting

81. Getting the balance right between parenting and work has become more difficult over recent years, especially in the light of increasing stress at work experienced by many parents. The balance between work and home for families is very different to during the second half of the last century, owing to a range of factors including dramatic increases in the number of working mothers, longer working hours and increasingly stressful jobs. In the 1970s the main model for household income was based on the father acting as the sole 'breadwinner' for the family. An increased sense of independence amongst women, as well as fairer employment and recruitment practices, has resulted in a surge in the number of working mothers. In 2006, 70% of couples with dependent children both held down separate jobs. 80% of mothers of teenage children now work, representing a major increase from the 34% who were in paid employment 30 years ago.[112] Even more significantly, 53% of women with children under the age of 5 now work, whilst 86% of fathers are also in full or part-time jobs.[113] The movement of new parents back into work has been driven in part by a series of legislative provisions and tax incentives from Government, many introduced since 1997, with the aim of supporting new parents back into jobs. These have included the Working Family Tax Credit and other tax credits, the minimum wage, extended maternity provision, paternity leave, investment in child benefit and the New Deal for Lone Parents.[114] The effect of this has been that from very early on in the life of a new parent, there is a focus on returning to work and balancing parenthood with their commitments to their employers.

82. How easy is this balance to strike and what are the conditions in which adults exist both as workers and parents? One factor that has a considerable impact on this balance is working hours - both in terms of their length and their flexibility. Parents in the UK work some of the longest hours in Europe, with little support from outside the immediate family in providing care for their children once they grow beyond the very early years. The number of parents working more than 45 hours per week peaked in 1997 at 40%, but this figure remains high at 30% by 2006.

> **Legislation has introduced the right for parents who have children under 6 to request unpaid parental leave and time off to care for dependents** "

> Research suggests that many parents know what their children's problems are, yet cannot access the service that they want or have to wait too long to receive it. For example, in a survey of parents who were receiving services from one Local Authority 83% of those with parent-child difficulties said that they would have liked help sooner, with 84% agreeing that: "Things have to reach crisis point before they [social services] help".
> **Parentline Plus**

The number of women who regularly work over 45 hours per week currently stands at one in ten, whilst increases have also been identified in the number regularly working over 35 hours per week.[115] Moreover, figures indicate that working during weekends, during which children are away from school, is an increasing phenomenon: four in ten families with dependent children, in which at least one parent works, have a parent who regularly works at the weekend. The corresponding figure relating to single-parent families stands at 28%.[116] The type of jobs that lend themselves more readily to weekend working have been found to be low-skilled or self-employed work, with 80% of those parents working weekends in such jobs commenting that they have no choice in the matter due to financial needs or job requirements.[117] Those parents who work very long hours over the course of a working week are more likely to be required to work on weekends, with twice as many working parents who worked at the weekend also reporting that they worked over a total of 48 hours during the week.[118]

83. Part of the reason for this is a greater cultural acceptance in the UK of longer working hours. However, evidence suggests that this is not a conscious choice for many workers who wish to spend more time with their children - nearly three quarters of people surveyed in 2006 commented that they would like to spend more time with their families, whilst over a third of full and part-time workers reported that when they return home from work they are so exhausted that they fall asleep on the sofa in the evenings.[119] Nearly one in three workers surveyed in 2005 report that they have less time for their parenting responsibilities than they would like, a figure that rose from just 21% in 1992.[120] Whilst 15% of the total workforce comment that they are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their current jobs, over 60% report that they would like to work fewer hours in order to devote more time to their home responsibilities (a figure that rises to over 70% for fathers).[121]

84. Government initiatives to increase the availability of flexible working patterns have done much to ease the balance between work and parenthood, more notably during the early years. Legislation has introduced the right for parents who have children under 6 to request unpaid parental leave and time off to care for dependents, whilst fathers are now able to request two weeks of paternity leave. The coming into force of the Work and Families Bill in 2007 has implemented a new right for women to nine months paid and three months unpaid maternity leave, whilst new fathers have the right to three months paternity leave at a statutory rate.[122] Further moves forward have included the right for carers to request flexible working arrangements.

85. However, there is evidence both that these provisions do not go far enough, and that what entitlement there is falls away once children grow into the critical teenage years: First, the right to request relies on workers feeling able to assert that right, and figures relating to rates of flexible working suggest that this fails to be borne out in practice for both parents: whilst 27% of women are working flexibly, only 18% of fathers enjoy the same arrangements.[123] Second, those reasonable requests ought be granted. Studies have indicated that on occasions when fathers ask their employers for more flexible working hours they are more likely to be refused than mothers: 14% of men compared to just 10% of women.[124] There remains evidence of a 'gender gap' in taking time off work to care for children. An important element of providing support for young people is to look after them when they are unwell, either physically or because of stress related to school or relationships. Figures indicate that 44% of women would take time off work if their teenager became ill, whilst only 3% of that number commented that their partners would be likely to do the same.[125] Parents of disabled children and young people face even greater challenges in striking a work-life balance. Due in large part to the lack of affordable, accessible childcare for disabled children, only 16% of mothers of disabled children are in paid work compared with 61% of all mothers.[126]

86. These factors combine to indicate shortcomings in practice whilst balancing work and home, most notably amongst fathers' contact with their children. This may be as a result of the more intense effects of pressured working lives affecting men but may also be related to the stronger linkage between women and the conduct of tasks at home. Data collected by the Equal Opportunities Commission indicates that on an average weekday mothers spend over

three times the amount of time on domestic tasks than fathers, whilst women surveyed were more than 12 times more likely to take on most of the childcare duties. Contact with fathers is an important part of growing up and evidence suggests that challenges facing families in this respect are down to external pressures rather than a lack of inclination on the part of men: more than eight out of ten fathers reported to the Equal Opportunities Commission that they would like to spend more time with their children.[127] However, pressures remain, with many fathers reporting that they feel less able to be involved in school meetings and parenting support classes. There are less than 200,000 stay at home fathers in the UK, a figure trailing the number of women who choose not to work dramatically, potentially owing much to gender preconceptions.[128] Women, conversely, are more likely to take on jobs that have the flexibility to allow them to spend time at home - often leading to lower paid work and more irregular hours for mothers who work. This additional element of gender role-play is visible across a number of professions: women make up 88% of nurses, care assistants and home carers, 80% of cleaners and domestic assistants, and 77% of retail workers and check-out staff.[129]

> As is so often the case when we talk to parents, it is family and friends who parents like to talk to but even then, parents are wary of elaborating on their problems because they are protective of their child and do not want her or him to be seen as a problem.
> **Parentline Plus**

Changes amongst extended family and friends

87. Respite for hard-pressed parents in providing care for their children has historically been found in friends and relatives, particularly grandparents. However, new challenges emerge with the changing geography of families, with greater mobility, improved transport and working requirements resulting increasingly in adults living further away from their own parents. Figures demonstrate that in 2005 34% of parents lived 50 miles or further from their own parents.[130] Further pressures have resulted from changes in the structure of the family itself, with decreases in the number of multi-generational households. In the 1950s a study suggested that three out of every

five older people in a community in East London lived in 'three-generational extended families'[131] - meaning that they either lived with their children and grandchildren in the same household or, at the least, had some contact with them every day. By 1998 the British Social Attitudes Survey indicated that this figure had fallen to just 2% of grandparents.[132]

88. Southern European countries have experienced trends that have resulted in a much more prominent role for the 'extended family' - placing a strong reliance on support on other relatives, as well as neighbours and friends. However, evidence suggests that this is not experienced on the same level in the UK. Informal support networks for parents, that may at their best create the sense of an extended family, rely on strong relationships with neighbours and friends. However social and attitudinal studies have suggested that people in this country are becoming, if anything, less reliant on others outside of the family, with 29% agreeing in 2006 with the statement that 'people can be generally be trusted', compared with a figure of 44% in the 1980s.[133] Social networking institutions such as primary schools have also experienced some decline, with only a third of parents reporting that they had been introduced to other parents through conversations at the school gate.[134]

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **Flexible working hours for parents**

  Enabling parents to spend more time at home at key times in the day and in key parts of the year will help support young people, strengthen supervision and build relationships. Flexible working hours for all employees with children under 16 would help in achieving this balance. Companies should be required to act responsibly by enabling parents of children who become ill to take leave.

- **Parent support sessions and surgeries in every area**

  Whilst much support is available for parents of very young children, there is little parent support once children grow older. Parent helplines and local support sessions should be available in every area to offer advice on and support for bringing up teenagers. Drop-in family surgeries in every area, backed up by ongoing guidance and information, can ensure that parents are never without support in bringing up their children.

- **Intensive support programmes available for parents whose children are in difficulty**

  More targeted support needs to be available for parents in particular need, including intensive outreach schemes. Too often parents and young people feel alone and unsupported at very difficult times, whilst it is in the interests of all that they are given the tools, skills and confidence to support their children. Young parents themselves need special attention.

- **Provide affordable and flexible childcare for children up to age 14 to help parents work**

  Supporting parents to work is crucial if parents are to escape poverty. Childcare is particularly important for lone parents and will be essential if proposals from the recent Freud Review, requiring lone parents with children over 11 to work, are implemented.

- **Introduce a legal right to Family Group Conferencing**

  Family Group Conferencing (FGC) should be made a legal right as in New Zealand and Republic of Ireland, to be used as a prevention and diversionary tool across the 0-19s spectrum, supporting families and enabling young people to participate in decision making and identifying solutions to meet their needs. Families and young people should have the right to self refer. The key strength of FGC lies in enabling the child or young person and their family to discuss with professionals and wider stakeholders their problems and issues of concern, supporting and enabling the family to devise an action plan to resolve problems. The child's or young person's participation is essential to achieving a successful outcome. It builds upon the strengths of families and communities in keeping the child or young person connected and accountable for their actions.

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Chapter 4

Cohesive Communities

Summary

Young people are an important part of our community. We have all been young, most of us have a teenager in the family, and we all are likely to live near to young people in our community. Making up 14% of the total population[135], young people are a crucial asset both for the present and the future. As such, we all have a stake in ensuring that young people fulfill their potential and are actively and positively engaged in their local environment. Yet for all the degree to which young people can symbolise hope for the future of communities, experience tells us they can also in some instances symbolise both fear and despair of the present. There is growing awareness of a worrying disconnection between young people and the wider community.

Perversely, whilst teenagers' involvement in online and virtual communities grows exponentially it is concerning that this level of engagement is not reflected in 'real world' communities. Many teenagers report feeling isolated and alienated in their local neighbourhood, with little say over what goes on. Young people have reported a sense of a lack of belonging to their local area, whilst feeling that services have been designed without their needs in mind. The overwhelming orientation of both buildings and services towards adults has meant that teenagers feel unheard and unrepresented.

In many communities, cohesion is threatened also by tensions surrounding race and ethnicity. The climate since September 11 and the London tube bombings has brought into a sharper focus the challenges encountered by many, particularly Muslim, teenagers who struggle to feel a part of communities on an equal footing. The perception of prejudice and the risk of feeling marginalised or held in suspicion by other young people or adults form causes of social exclusion in themselves. Community cohesion can be supported through identifying new activities, projects and interests on which to build relationships in the local area, yet currently in many areas there is a lack of such activities and projects. To develop such initiatives to build relationships within and between communities is to make an investment in community cohesion. This can stimulate new opportunities, the results of which can have a positive impact not only on crime figures, but also through raising aspirations and enhancing the ethos of troubled communities.

Young people as members of communities

89. Teenagers' involvement in virtual sites is instructive. Sites such as MySpace and Facebook are built on the ethic that people should have their own unique space in a universal community, from which they can contact and interact with others of all ages. This offer has been met with high levels of involvement by young people, with 30 billion monthly page views being recorded as a global figure.[136] The appeal of these sites to mainly younger teenagers has been underlined by the success of the peer website Bebo, marketed at early teens, in uniquely overtaking MySpace in popularity in the UK - suggesting that membership of these sites is concentrated within the early to mid teenage audience.

CASE STUDY
Young people working with the Police - South Norfolk

When the Norfolk Police were invited to meet South Norfolk Youth Action it became clear that most of the young people had never met a police officer before. This highlighted a need in South Norfolk for greater involvement between young people and the police, as part of a broader push to ensure that young people felt more integrated into the fabric of the local community and its institutions. Most young people had never spoken directly to officers, whilst others had only had contact with the police through having been involved in offending and criminal activity.

South Norfolk Youth Action arranged for a group of 15-19 year olds, some of whom had been involved with the police, to take part in a day of training with Police Community Support Officers. They wanted to challenge the stereotypes of young people as potential criminals. The experience enabled both sides to break down the barriers that had caused injury to community relations. Eviddence from the project indicates that young people have begun to recognise the police as valuable 'allies' and role models in the community, rather than through a lens of antagonism - some participants are even considering a career in the police force because of their involvement. As a result of the project, young

people will eventually be involved in the training of all new police officers. Norfolk Police is has put in place a programme of work experience placements and the Norfolk Police Children and Young People's Strategy was co-written by the young people themselves.

90. Worryingly, the sense of having a stake in a real-life community is much weaker amongst young people, forming a stark contrast with their levels of engagement in cyberspace. Young people have reported a sense of exclusion from communities and a feeling that services are imposed on them by adults, with less than a quarter of 11-16 year olds involved in the Youth Review Roadshow agreeing that they have a significant say over support services and activities aimed at them. Participants in the Youth Review went further by reporting a sense that services, public buildings, opening hours and transport links are often designed 'over their heads', leading to a feeling of irrelevance and unsuitability. Less than one in five commented that they feel involved in decisions taken by adults that affect their life. Despite an increasing focus on children's participation, disabled children and young people are much less likely than non-disabled children to participate at any level, particularly those with complex needs or communication impairments.

91. There is evidence that this feeling of distance from decision-making is compounded by a sense that teenagers are misunderstood or misrepresented by adults. The Good Childhood Enquiry reported in 2007 that only 63% of young people felt that their own parents or carers understood them.[137] Much of this may be owing to a feeling that adults are unwilling to engage with young people, either by way of formal consultation on services and planning, or even on a much more basic and personal level. 70% of older secondary school pupils consulted in 2003 offered mixed views when asked whether adults in England were generally friendly to young people, with most young people agreeing that whilst 'some are, some are not'.[138] This uncertainty over the willingness of older people to engage with them, combined in many communities with a lack of dialogue between adults and teenagers, has given rise to a perception of exclusion amongst many young people.

Positive contributions

92. Young people's potential as key members of the community is reflected by their contributions to local areas.

Negative stories concerning children and young people often linger in the public consciousness much longer than reports of positive contributions to communities, including volunteer projects, stories of extraordinary achievement and success at sport or school. The Youth Review encountered many examples of involvement amongst young people in dynamic community projects, often with an intergenerational element that brought teenagers into contact with older age groups.

> *"I think we'd definitely get involved in something with older people. A lot of my mates are like, 'Why would you want to spend time with old people?' but I think there's a lot we can learn from them. Both lots of my grandparents died when I was in primary school so I don't know what it's like to have older people around, except for my parents, and they're both quite young. So I'd get involved in helping older people in the area, yeah."*
> *Kate, 19, Wentworth*

Contributions to the community in these forms demonstrate a willingness amongst young people to engage positively in important local projects. In return, the opportunity to take ownership over a shared group contribution and the experience of teamwork provide benefits for young people who take part. In a more formal sense, these works provide opportunities to build skills, boost CVs and create material for job and university applications. The National Youth Agency's 'Hear by Right' consultation identified an enthusiasm amongst young people to become role models amongst their peers by becoming Youth Leaders.[139] Many teenagers volunteer abroad, whilst joining up the experience with traveling through taking a gap year - however in too many cases this is limited to young people from better-off backgrounds who can afford the experience and have the aspiration to travel abroad between studies rather than go straight into the workplace.

> Intergenerational projects are, to coin a phrase, 'proven quantities'. They are of enormous benefit to the two groups in society most likely to experience marginalisation and exclusion - i.e. older and younger people. Intergenerational work is a powerful and rewarding way of working and both groups invariably find that they have lessons to learn from each other.
> **Age Concern**

93. Enthusiasm for the right kind of volunteering work was also identified through the Youth Review, with over eight in ten 11-16 year olds indicating that they would be prepared to become community volunteers. Important qualities to attractive volunteering work were felt by young people to include an element of fun, opportunities to learn new skills, consistent organisation and the chance to gain accreditation. The opportunity to learn from older people other than parents and teachers was also welcomed by participants, with 79% indicating that they would welcome a community mentor - an adult involved in the same career or field of study who can provide advice on interview technique, job applications and career planning to their mentee. This system, one that can be run through schools and youth groups, can provide significant opportunities for intergenerational engagement between young people and older members of the community.

CASE STUDY
Challenging Perceptions: The A2 Housing Group

Older people often have negative perceptions of younger people, with many feeling that young people often get into trouble or that they have no respect for others. Challenging these opinions is often simply a matter of bringing the two groups together. A project involving a group of older people from sheltered housing schemes and students aged between 12 and 13 from a local secondary school successfully challenged the stereotypes and demonstrated the potential success of intergenerational voluntary projects.

The Local Authority provided transport to enable nine older residents to make a series of visits to the local school during the summer of 2006. One group of students taught the older people computer skills, such as accessing the internet and desktop publishing, while another group worked with them on a piece of drama reflecting their memories of growing up in the 1920s and 30s. Each visit included time to talk together and review new learning. At the end of the project the older people received a booklet of their IT work, and the final piece of drama was performed at a local day centre, attended by those involved in the project and other older people from the area. The great

achievement of the project was the element of learning on both sides - young people were able to offer older people the opportunity to have new experiences, whilst the older people gave the teenagers insights and perspectives that they would not otherwise have encountered. Residents enjoyed interacting with the students and sharing their memories, whilst the students learned history that came from a different source to their usual textbook learning enjoyed being able to share their IT skills.

94. The signs for this kind of engagement are encouraging: in 2005, teenagers were more likely than any other age group to take part in voluntary initiatives, with around 50% of 16-19 year olds informally volunteering at least once per month, 32% having formally volunteered over that period and 78% having informally volunteered at some point over the last year.[140] The latter figure shows a 5% increase on levels of involvement from 2001.[141]

> "The local community centre asks for volunteers but all they want us to do is paint it and clean up around there. I don't fancy doing that because all I'd be doing is the dirty work no one else wants to do. And I don't want to do it by myself. If they put something on that my group of mates could get involved with, like designing a mural or helping put on a show or, I don't know, some sporting thing that can fundraise then I'd probably do it. If the school got involved in volunteering projects locally that would be a step in the right direction."
> *Craig, 17, Cumbria*

Accreditation available through the Millennium Volunteers initiative applied a new focus to volunteering opportunities, whilst its successor, 'V', aims to engage and inspire over a million new young volunteer workers. However, despite this enthusiasm for voluntary work there is evidence, notwithstanding some important examples, of a gap relating to participation in forms of community activism. Figures analysed by IPPR indicate that just 8% of 16-19 year olds have been involved in at least one form of civic decision-making - including acting as a school governor or youth representative. In addition to this, fewer than 20% had taken part in some form of consultation on services or policy, such as through filling in a questionnaire or taking part in a focus group. This means that for large numbers of young people,

having their voice heard and influencing the communities around them is not yet a reality, with many being unused to forms of civic expression and involvement.[142]

Racial inequality

95. An important element of community cohesion is race relations, a topic that has assumed a much greater focus in many, especially inner city, areas over recent years. Evidence exists of social exclusion based on problems concerned with racial equality, as well as links between race, poverty and underachievement. The Commission for Racial Equality reports on poorer outcomes across a range of indicators for ethnic minority families, including a higher proportion of mental health problems, higher rates of teenage pregnancy, over-representation amongst children in need and significant over-representation amongst young people in custody. The Commission cited figures that demonstrate that young people in ethnic minority households are around three times more likely to become statutorily homeless than the majority white population.[143] This is caused by conditions in deprived communities, as well as discrimination, which limits not only self-esteem but also aspirations and opportunities to achieve.

96. Problems of Islamophobia and discrimination on the basis of race are widely regarded to have intensified since the 2005 London bombings. Unprecedented numbers of people reported suspicion of young Muslim men in the wake of the attacks, with polling evidence amongst Muslims indicating greater perceptions of discrimination and incidents of abuse. According to Home Office figures there were 269 religious hate crimes in the three weeks after 7 July, compared with 40 in the same period of 2004. Whilst most of these consisted of verbal abuse and minor assaults, damage to mosques and property - creating a considerable emotional impact on victims - also occurred.[144]

> "I think the bombings in London have made it a lot harder for Muslim kids like me. We live in the Midlands but I know we're looked at differently because of the whole 9/11 thing. It makes me angry because none of that had anything to do with me but it feels like I'm being made to pay for it. None of my mates are like that, but you know that when you meet someone new or see someone in the street that's one of the first things they think about."
> *Isaq, 17, Birmingham*

97. The legacy of that period, measured in an adverse impact on race relations within communities, is one that endures. A survey undertaken in 2006 by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies found that 47% of Muslim students have experienced discrimination[145], whilst Peace Direct published reports in 2006 that young Muslims are concerned both about the way they are understood by the general public and are portrayed in the general media.[146]

> Government funding of all after-school youth programmes has decreased in recent years, and in many areas there is an absence of any positive framework for young people outside the classroom. This makes children especially vulnerable to those forces that would promote radicalisation or even violent extremism.
> **Demos**

An Ipsos MORI poll conducted two months after the attacks recorded 62% agreement to the proposition that the terrorist attacks will make it harder for different ethnic communities in London to get along together.[147] Discussion between young people on the Muslim Youth Helpline, a confidential helpline for young Muslims, has included topics such as ineffective services for young Muslims, discontent over foreign policy and the difficulties of integrating when people have the dual identity of being British and a Muslim. Home Office statistics released in 2004 indicate that between 2001 and 2003 there was a 302% increase in 'stop and search' incidents among Asian people, compared with 118% among white people.[148] Over half of young people involved in the Youth Review in one inner city school, within which there was a majority BME pupil population, commented that they believed the police stop black people regularly and without justification.

> We believe steps should be taken to educate young people on the negative effects of the stereotypes we come across in the media and everyday life, particularly cultural stereotypes. In order to tackle the issues mentioned, we believe that more multi-cultural events should occur within communities. Schools should also promote multi-cultural events. This should be done in various formats including cultural fashion shows, the showing of movies not of a western origin and interesting events organised by young people. Essentially, we need to broaden the cultural horizons of young people if we want to promote community cohesion.
> **UK Youth Parliament Manifesto**

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **New intergenerational programmes for every community**

  Encouraging local intergenerational activities is a key way to increase understanding and build shared experiences in the local community. Local Authorities should be encouraged to create much greater impetus on developing projects with an intergenerational element.

- **Powerful steps to promote integration between communities**

  Local Authorities should step up progress in implementing policies to tackle segregation within communities, particularly through the instrument of housing policy. Steps should be taken to implement in full the recommendations of the Cantle Report concerning a duty on Housing Agencies to reshape their allocation programmes to promote greater contact between people of different communities. Local Authorities should consider services aimed at youth to be a powerful method of tackling tension between young people of different communities, with a view to using activities and shared leisure interests as a means to build a common local identity.

- **Increased use of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) to promote integration and achievement**

  Increased use of PSAs and performance rewards for Local Authorities that can demonstrate the success of local initiatives to raise GCSE performance amongst teenagers from ethnic minorities can level the achievement gap between communities. Through a system of commitment and agreement with Local Authorities, backed up by rewards for evidence of increased achievement locally, strategies can be nurtured. Local initiatives for English language teaching for children of families where English is not the first spoken language will be a key element of closing the divide between communities in achievement and qualification.

- **Intense training for workers on the needs of young asylum seekers**

  Young asylum seekers face significant pressure in trying to integrate into the community, with many feeling a confused sense of identity that promotes vulnerability. Confusion over the asylum system, access to benefits, age assessment, accommodation, education, language difficulties and ultimately removal from the UK can all be barriers to integration and, in some cases, create pressure to offend. More intense training for key workers, particularly those involved in Youth Offending Teams, can give a much greater sense of the needs facing this group, particularly in areas where there are a high number of young asylum seekers.

- **A national youth volunteering programme**

  A high-profile youth volunteering programme should be launched to re-energise local initiatives, extending and building upon the reach of organisations such as 'V' so as to provide volunteering opportunities for every young person by the age of 18. Volunteering should be developed and supported as a part of mainstream extra-curricular activities. Projects can be accredited and promoted through publicity and a national branding of initiatives and opportunities.

[135] Office for National Statistics (2007)

[136] Dixon M and Margo J (2006) *Population Politics*, Institute of Public Policy Research

[137] *The Good Childhood Enquiry* (2006) The Children's Society

[138] *ibid*.

[139] *Hear By Right* (2007) National Youth Agency

[140] Kitchen S, Michaelson J, Wood N & John P (2006) *Citizenship Survey, Topic Report: Active Communities*, London: TSO

[141] Attwood C, Singh G, Prime D, Creasey R (2001) *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities*, Home Office Research Study 270, London: TSO

[142] TSO (2006)

[143] *Tackling Homelessness Among Ethnic Minority Households* (2005) London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

[144] Home Office, the Associations of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Scotland and the British Shooting Sports Council

[145] Federation of Student Islamic Societies (2005)

[146] *Young Muslims Speak* (2006) Peace Direct

[147] *Post London Bombings Survey* (2005) Conducted by Ipsos MORI

[148] Home Office (2004)

Chapter 5

Young People and Crime: Risks, Offending and Victims

Summary

Whilst young people are portrayed as the most significant perpetrators of crime it is often forgotten that they also make up the biggest group of victims. Both the likelihood of offending and the probability of becoming a victim of crime are socially skewed towards teenagers living in deprived areas and from low-income backgrounds. Whilst even the number of reported instances of crime against teenagers outstrips those relating to older people, the feeling of being unsafe outdoors permeates across groups of young people in many, especially urban and inner city, communities.

Home Office statistics show clearly that the peak age for cautioning and conviction is between 15 and 25 - demonstrating the importance of targeting anti-crime and prevention initiatives at young people.[149] Pathways into offending are created from social conditions that affect young people during transitions into adulthood. For many young people who cause trouble there are distinct social trends that mark out the potential for offending, largely relating to poverty and low levels of aspiration. A feeling of isolation and underachievement can often provoke groups of young people living in deprived areas to become anti-social. Whether developed from a feeling that their parents do not care about them, through peer pressure or through a climate that works against aspiration, these young people feel that they have little stake in the world around them - undermining their sense of responsibility towards it. Interventions during this period are best placed to deter from offending, whilst to miss the opportunity to intervene risks the embedding of criminal behaviour into adulthood.

Young people can often experience problems that only targeted intervention and support can address - this might include tackling addiction, emotional support or help with family troubles. However, a culture of empathy and willingness to support is often not in place, with an overriding focus on more punitive measures within a system heavily weighted towards retribution and deterrence. A staggering 200,000 young people enter the youth justice system each year. Of these some 7,000 receive a custodial sentence.[150] Unacceptably high reoffending rates once prisoners are released highlight the need to tackle the social conditions that gave rise to the risk of offending in the first place. We must find new ways of intervening in the lives of these young people before they begin to offend, to engage and inspire them in ways that make use of their talents and build on their interests, whilst providing motivation and support from adults who they feel that they can trust.

Crime and anti-social behaviour

98. Vulnerable young people are more at risk of engaging in criminal activity. Greater levels of investment need to go into early universal preventative work - primary prevention - as well as earlier intervention work - secondary prevention. The latter involves work with children who are just beginning to get into trouble, targeting children under 15 years old to prevent and divert them from engagement in risky activities which can lead to involvement in crime. When the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 was introduced following the Audit Commission's Report *Misspent Youth*[151] it was acknowledged that there needed to be a shift of resources from punitive to preventative measures in order to reduce youth crime. An understanding of why and what causes young people to engage in criminal activity is essential in achieving a sustainable reduction in teenage crime and in supporting vulnerable children and young people.

> Youth crime harms communities, creates a culture of fear and damages the lives of some of our most vulnerable young people.
> **Home Office**

99. We have seen a 26% increase in the number of children and young people being drawn into the criminal justice system in the last three years.[152] There is an intense negative media focus on young people, with the number of stories in newspapers specifically referring to incidents of anti-social behaviour having increased by more than 700% between 2000 and 2005.[153] The Government has set priorities on tackling the perceived 'yob culture' through the creation of the Respect Taskforce within the Home Office, accompanied by the formation of 40 Respect Action Zones on estates recording high levels of violent incidents. For young people this has created a feeling that they are 'tarred with the same brush' as a result of the actions of a minority, marginalised and excluded from mainstream society, their needs inadequately addressed or ignored. In turn this has given wider society a sense that young people are out of control, undisciplined and generally disruptive.

> "I think a lot of grown ups look down on kids. You can see it when we hang out after school. Like, there's a group of us and you can see the adults looking at us like we're gonna hit them or something. I think they don't trust us, like they think we're gonna do something bad like nick their stuff. Some teenagers are like that but I'm not and my mates aren't and we don't deserve to be made to feel like we're all bad."
> **David, 13, East Ham**

100. The public has a more pessimistic view of youth crime that is supported by official statistics, with most people being generally ill informed on the facts. A 2004 study on public attitudes to youth crime and youth justice found that whilst the number of young people coming into the attention of police fell by 9%, 75% of people polled believed it had increased, with 42% believing that half of all crimes were committed by young people, whilst statistics show that the figure is in the region of 10%-20%.[154] Studies in America and Canada, supported by research here, show evidence that the media's focus of reporting on youth and violent crime has led to the public believing that young people commit higher rates of violent crime than the figures support.[155] In the UK survey two-thirds of people believed that 40% of youth crime involved violence, whereas the figure is much lower at 20%.[156]

101. The media has a responsibility to present a more balanced view of young people, behaving more responsibly, better informing the public and avoiding distorting the picture on the facts of youth crime. Presenting young people in a negative light and misrepresenting the facts causes a negative presentation of young people today, contributing to their alienation from society and reaffirming young people's view that adults do not want to understand them or engage with them.

102. Research by the British Institute for Brain Injured Children found that 38% of Youth Offending Team officers reported that they had worked with children and young people with autism and depression.[157] This highlights the need to understand the underlying difficulties of working with some children and young people who are being served Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) who do not have the capacity to understand what is happening to them and are therefore more likely to breach the terms of them. Although ASBOs are civil orders, breaching them is a criminal

offence. This is an ineffective way of dealing with vulnerable young people; in effect, many children as young as 10 years old are being set up to fail, compounding disadvantage instead of tackling it.

> The causes of disrespectful behaviour are harder to pin down. Many people feel that broad economic and social trends have led to changes in family structures such as the extended family and 'good neighbourliness'. These may have in turn contributed to a decline in the social influence of the Church and other faith communities, trade unions and other community organisations.
> **Respect Action Plan, Home Office, 2006**

103. The Youth Justice Board estimates that half of ASBOs are breached, that many children and young people do not understand what their ASBO banned them from doing - increasing their chances of breaching it - and that for many young people an ASBO was not seen as punitive or a deterrent, but 'a badge of honour'.[158] The use of ASBOs and their impact on the lives of children and young people needs to be reviewed and understood, including who is in receipt of them, what behaviour they are intended to address, whether or not they are being effective and for whom - the individual child or young person, or in relation to the perceived and actual benefit to the community. It is not being argued that young people engaging in criminal activity do not need to be held responsible for their actions, but that that a more welfare-based approach is adopted, balancing prevention and protection with punishment.

104. Home Office figures indicate that young people make up a disproportionate number of stop and search incidents, with young people aged 11-20 making up 40% of these during 2003-04.[159] This reinforces the risk of alienation of teenagers and that of a divide opening between young people and the police.

> Police use of stop and search continues to be a contentious issue, which frequently fuels mistrust and lack of confidence in the police amongst ethnic minority young people. The over-representation of ethnic minorities in the youth justice system begins with the disproportionate number of young people stopped and searched.
> **Commission for Racial Equality**

Home Office figures also show that black teenagers are more likely as a group to come into contact with the criminal justice system, with young black people being six times as likely to be arrested as white people, and seven times more likely to serve time in prison.[160] The Youth Justice Board reports that ASBOs are being used disproportionately on young people from ethnic minority communities[161], yet a study by the Runnymeade Trust highlights that no data on ethnicity is collected.[162] Research by the Youth Justice Board found that a fifth of young people served an ASBO were black or Asian[163] - two and half times the proportion of people from ethnic minorities in England and Wales.

105. There is much debate about the success of ASBOs, with the press, politicians and some communities feeling that their core purpose is to protect the public and make communities safer. But given the high breach rate - the terms of four in ten ASBOs are broken - and the consequent criminalising effects on young people, in particular for vulnerable young people (including those with learning difficulties and mental health problems), we need to articulate the case for a more welfare, supportive and protective approach, which deals with the roots of the problem.

> *"Yeah, I've nicked a few things from shops. Got taken in by the police twice, but I got away with it all the other times. It's not my fault, my mum's dead and my dad's in and out the house. I've got mates but, like, they think it's a laugh. I don't hurt anyone, I just see some stuff I like and take it. The school's got involved but they don't care because they know I'm not gonna get 'As' in anything anyway next year."*
> ***Anonymous, 15, Wakefield***

106. In the post-9/11 era of increased cultural sensitivity to police intervention, resentment caused by young Muslims being more likely to be stopped and searched is a cause for some concern. Whilst police authorities are obliged to consult with local communities on stop and search policies, they are not required by law to consult specifically with local young people. To bridge the emerging gap that is evidenced between teenagers and the police, the formulation of plans to re-engage through interaction and consultation is important. The recent policing White Paper entitled *Building Communities, Fighting Crime* strongly advocated specific consultation with young people as a means to build their confidence, trust and cooperation with the police.

107. By international comparison, analysis of offending rates in England and Wales show cause for concern. In 2001-02 young people in Britain were more likely than in any other major European country to have been involved in a physical fight during the last 12 months, referring both to involvement as victims as well as aggressors. This was based on a figure of 44% of 15 year olds in the UK, compared to 38% in France, 28% in Germany and just 25% in Finland.[164] We need to have a greater understanding of why young people growing up in particular cultural conditions in this country have an increased risk of being involved in violent incidents.

108. Home Office figures report that nearly three-quarters of persistent offenders start offending between the ages of 13 and 15 years, with 14 years being the peak age of criminal vulnerability.[165] This suggests, and is supported by research, that serious repeat offending has its roots relatively early on in life and is linked to certain risk factors that become evident both before and during the teenage years. Analysis of these figures gives rise to the conclusion that, in the absence of positive activity and support, the teenage years are an especially vulnerable period for involvement in crime. Young people report that often this is as a result of the pressures of building an identity, experimentation, a sense of peer pressure or a symptom of what can happen when there is a lack of support, especially with a lack of positive things to do - 68% of 11-16 year olds involved in the Youth Review commented that young people in their local area are more likely to cause disruption when they are bored.

> Constructive and purposeful activities promote mutual respect. They enable children and young people to contribute to their communities and help divert them from anti-social behaviour.
> **Respect Action Plan, Home Office, 2006**

109. Research highlights that most young people who engage in crime come from complex home environments, with high levels of disadvantage, poor relationships with family and friends, poverty, poor housing, poor parenting (including neglect, abuse, harsh and inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision and marital conflict), poor school performance, as well as truanting and school exclusion. Common characteristics include high levels of impulsiveness and hyperactivity, being brought up by a criminal parent or parents, high incidence of childhood mental disorder, poor emotional literacy and vulnerability to using drugs and alcohol.[166] A more explicit understanding needs to be articulated on the links between deprivation, vulnerability and early engagement in criminal activity. Vulnerable children and young people are more likely to become criminalised, and the risk factors for predicting criminal activity are the mirrors of the risk factors predicting vulnerability.[167]

> Young people who commit offences and are in contact with the Youth Justice System are more likely to have experienced some kind of mental health difficulties. Their offending behaviour is often as damaging to themselves as it is to others around them. It is often a way of dealing with painful, fearful or angry feelings.
> **Young Minds**

CASE STUDY
Aim High Basketball Project -- Hackney

Youth For Hackney was established in 2003 in response to the high level of youth related crime in the area. It acts as a crime prevention strategy initiative offering social support services to children and young people across the London Borough of Hackney. A young people's basketball project was set up to give local children and young people throughout South Hackney an opportunity to participate in a sport and a chance to do something productive in their spare time. A second aim was to have a positive impact on their attitudes towards substance abuse. The Aim High Basketball Project combines the basketball programme with other learning. The young people have been required to attend a 30-minute workshop on a variety of topics such as drugs awareness and personal development before taking part in basketball sessions.

Many young people have volunteered in various aspects of the project implementation. This included helping to set up the sports hall and court, serving water to fellow young people and leafleting to attract more participants. The project has led to the formation

of a team that now performs at Senior Level 3. The team represents Youth for Hackney at various official and friendly competition matches. The impacts for the 65 children and young people who have participated in this project has included growing confidence and self-esteem, developing new skills and interests, gaining knowledge and understanding, developing planning and team work skills, learning how to make use of services and information, gaining control over aspects of their lives, and developing as young citizens through teamwork. Sports events have been co-led by five of the older young people, giving them responsibility and establishing them as role models for the younger children. The Breaking Barriers Sports Festival saw 150 young people get together for a day of fun and physical participation.

Children and young people as victims: the neglected story

110. Whilst the media and society at large focuses on young people as a problem, their personal safety needs as victims of crime largely go unnoticed or discussed. Yet figures highlight that young people make up the group most likely to fall victim to crime. Teenage boys are at greatest risk: young men are the single most probable group to become both victims and perpetrators of violent crime, with 16-24 year old males estimated, on the basis of 2004-05 figures, as being three times as likely to suffer an attack as men aged 25-44 and seven times more likely than men in the 45-64 years age group.[168] During this period in England and Wales nearly 400,000 young men fell victim to an attack by a stranger, whilst the 2002 British Crime Survey estimated that 15% of young men reported experiencing a violent crime during the previous year.[169] The numbers of young people of both sexes who are victims of crime, not necessarily violent, should cause greater concern that it does: figures indicate that 35% of children aged 10-15 were victims in 2003, with 19% having experienced five or more incidents throughout the year.[170] Victimisation of young people is not limited to violent crime: crime figures relating to the 16-24 year old age group record that 7.1% fell prey to burglary in 2004, compared to 3.6% of 25-44 year olds and just 1.5% of people over the retirement age.[171]

> "I've been punched and kicked by other kids, older ones doing their GCSEs. It's a gang thing. I think a lot of kids get labelled as in the 'in crowd' and the ones who don't want to be involved, who just want to do their work, get picked on. I had my iPod stolen last year and the teachers didn't care because it happened on the way home and my parents said it was my fault for flashing it around. If you're good in class you have to watch out when you're outside school."
> **Christian, 15, Doncaster**

111. These figures increase for young people living in disadvantaged communities, with a startling 59% of children from deprived areas falling victim to crime during 2004. These figures are taken from 'on track' areas designated on account of their higher than average levels of poverty, in which it was also found that 25% of teenage boys and 10% of girls had experienced physical attack at some point during the last year.[172]

> Those young people that had committed an offence themselves were more likely to be victims. Other underlying risk factors were the presence of anti-social behaviour in their local area, being male and committing anti-social behaviour.
> **The Victimisation of Young People: Findings from the Crime and Justice Survey, 2003**

112. Perception of the risks facing young people in terms of victimisation and crime has not escaped people of older generations, with polls demonstrating high levels of public recognition of the challenges facing youth and the need to provide support. The report of an ESRC study carried out amongst both adults and young people in 2002 designated strangers, drugs and the dangers of traffic as the most prominent risks to children.[173] Meanwhile, a Guardian/ICM poll published in 2000 indicated that 79% of adults agree with the proposition that life is more dangerous for children than it used to be. Rather more specifically, 57% agreed that children are more at risk from targeting by paedophiles than they used to be.[174] Young people are increasingly concerned about their personal safety and risk of becoming a victim of crime. A British Crime Survey report indicates that becoming a victim or having a high level of fear about falling victim to crime makes 20% of young people more likely to avoid certain areas they consider risky as a result of

their experience or perception.[175] The effect of this has been to create 'no go' areas for young people in communities, limiting their freedom of movement and restricting their capacity to positively engage with and learn from the communities surrounding them.

> *"I don't want to go outside after it gets dark. In summer it's OK because it's light till late. But when it gets dark early sometimes I worry even on the way home from school. Older girls are out in gangs in the night and I don't want to have to bump into them on the way home."*
> **Chantelle, 14, Wentworth**

113. Victimisation of children and young people is a home as well as a street issue, with child abuse and neglect being a significant indicator of a young person's likelihood to engage in early criminal activity. The number of children on the Child Protection Register fell from 35,000 in 1995 to 25,900 in 2005 but this excludes cases that have remained unreported to the authorities and support agencies.[176] Research published in 2000 indicated that, out of a sample of almost 3,000 young people, 16% had experienced serious maltreatment, while out of that number one-third had experienced more than one form of maltreatment.

> Organisations which support young victims need to recognise and respect the different ways in which children and young people respond and cope and make sure that their services can meet this need. It is important that services to young victims do not just replicate adult services but address the unique needs of children and young people, and consider both the type of support and the setting of the service.
> **Victim Support, Norwich**

This was accompanied by figures that suggested that a startling 38% of young people had experienced some degree of maltreatment.[177] Studies of maltreated children have found that the effects of abuse and neglect include underperformance at school, problems with self-esteem and emotional engagement.[178] Being a victim of crime inside or outside the home can perpetuate long-lasting problems, potentially leading to engaging in criminal behaviour. A report published by Refuge in 2005 indicated

that exposure to violence or trauma before the age of 5 can have the potential to alter the developing brain, which may explain in part why it is that pre-school children who are exposed to domestic violence, physical or emotional abuse have a significantly higher risk of developing emotional, behavioural, speech and language problems as they enter their teens.[179] The effect of this is to have an adverse effect on life chances, aspiration and achievement in later life.

> The age of a victim is not recorded by the police unless it has a bearing on the offence. Young people often find it difficult to convince older people of the seriousness of the incident which has occurred. or they are reluctant to talk about it with friends, parents or teachers. This is often the case with bullying.
> **Youth Information Shop**

The worrying rise of gang-related and gun crime

114. The national press over the last year has reported a dramatic increase in incidents of violent crime involving gangs and weapons, often handguns. These stories often feature a racial element, with higher levels of gun crime being reported amongst the black community. The devastating impact of gun crime on individuals, communities and society as a whole has become an increasing fear in many inner cities. Gun-related violence and the increase in gangs and territorialism are relatively new in the UK and, in instances where young people are involved, are influenced by cross-cutting issues such as race, poverty, high levels of deprivation and the need for human and capital investment.

> *"If the politicians want to put a stop to gangs and gun crime then they're gonna have to do something about it. Give kids something to do in the nights. It's not like we all want to stay at home playing computer games all the time. I think some kids get involved in gangs because it gives them something to do."*
> **Ceser, 14, Tower Hamlets**

115. The reporting of the increase in gun crime amongst teenagers has portrayed a view of teenagers as being feral

"

...despite the recent gun crime incidents and the fear that a 'gun culture' is taking over young people in our inner cities, overall the number of gun murders in England and Wales has fallen "

and out of control, further feeding a view of young people as being alien and separated from mainstream society. Yet despite the recent gun crime incidents and the fear that a 'gun culture' is taking over young people in our inner cities, overall the number of gun murders in England and Wales has fallen. According to Home Office Statistics there were 50 murders involving firearms in 2005/06, compared to 78 in 2004/05. Overall gun crime is at its lowest for 10 years[180], with overall murder rates remaining static over the past 10 years between 750 and 900, with a peak of 1,047 in 2002/03 and down to 765 in 2005/06. Firearm murders remain a small percentage of these, averaging 8% to 10%.

116. 10,990 firearms offences occur in England and Wales each year.[181] In 2005, the Head of Scotland Yard's Operation Trident claimed that one in three victims of 'black on black' gun crime are teenagers, saying also that it is the case that more and more teenagers are carrying guns.[182] In 2006, 31% of all Trident shooting victims were teenagers, with guns being labelled as an 'everyday accessory' in 2007 for many teenagers, according to the chairperson of Trident's Independent Advisory Group. But it is important to remember that overall gun crime represents just 0.2% of all crimes committed in 2005/06, equivalent to one in every 500.[183]

117. Young people's involvement in gang and gun related activity is not a feature of the majority of young people's lives in the UK today. Where it is present it exists for the most part in deprived and neglected inner city areas. It can often be linked to more serious organised crime, involving complex networks and sophisticated criminal organisations.

> One of the principal motives is fear. Research carried out... found that protection was an important reason for a young person to join a gang or carry a weapon. Fear can result from personal experience of crime, or the reported experience of friends or siblings. Victimisation and offending are strongly linked.
> **National Youth Agency (NYA)**

It is essential that we understand the difference between a gang (a group of young people) who may be involved in criminal activity and a group of young people who are not involved in anti-social behaviour. Groups of young people should not in themselves be viewed negatively. Group membership is a natural part of transition into adulthood for most young people. Consultations have revealed that young people join a gang for many reasons and usually in response to needs, including excitement, status, self-protection, family history or in response to deprived social conditions. Rather than creating a moral panic about group/gang membership, the energy and companionship amongst young people who socialise together in groups should be channelled into new opportunities for learning and leadership.

118. We need to ensure that controlling gangs is kept in proportion and that efforts are not used as a device to further demonise young people. We need to identify with these vulnerable young people as children and young people in need of investment and support, providing community solutions as well as dealing with their individual needs. Alongside talking about punishment we need to talk about understanding the context that children come from which leads to their involvement with gangs and guns. We should not see these children and young people as being different; we must not alienate them further.

CASE STUDY
Tackling Gang Culture - Waltham Forest

Since being set up just over a year ago, Defendin' Da Hood in Waltham Forest has successfully engaged and communicated with disaffected young people in the borough. Defendin' Da Hood events have attracted young people through entertainment and music, but always with the requirement that serious issues are discussed first, and that the Local Authority and its partners listen. To date the project has engaged with 1,900 hard to reach young people. By reaching out to those at most risk of becoming involved with gang culture and crime, the project has helped build understanding and reduce crime levels.

Following the initiative's first event the level of violent crime dropped by 40%. This demonstrates how local initiatives backed up with resources can far exceed government expectations. Professional expertise, organisational drive, good community work and teamwork have contributed to the success of this project. It has already had a high impact and created measurable improvements to the quality of life for people in the area. Waltham Forest has some of the most deprived areas in the country. It is ranked 11th out of the 33 London boroughs, and 25th out of the 354 English boroughs in terms of deprivation. Defendin' Da Hood has built up a database of 950 young people, previously involved in or on the edge of gang culture, who want to improve their life chances.

Disconnection between adults and young people

119. There is little doubt that there has been a negative effect on young people from being labelled as problems, 'yobs' and 'hoodies', caused by the challenging minority being taken to represent all young people. This has caused a decline in relations within communities, with 73% of those involved in the Youth Review believing that adults distrust teenagers as a result of the actions of the isolated few. Almost eight out of ten adults surveyed in 2004 complained of a lack of discipline amongst teenagers as the root cause of anti-social behaviour, with particularly high levels of agreement amongst elderly people.[184] Young people involved in the Youth Review felt that police need to be supported in identifying those who do misbehave, whilst adults should take more care to credit those young people who make positive contributions to the local community. This is reinforced by separate surveys of teenagers: 81% of young people agreed with the statement that the police are very important in helping children lead safe and secure lives.[185] However, young people do not believe that restrictions on teenagers as a whole are the answer to the problem of anti-social behaviour, with 70% of young people agreeing that the police should not be given the power to move them on from public spaces if they have not done anything wrong. Further, an overwhelming 80% of 16-24 year olds agree that curfews are not the answer, with responses from involved in the Youth Review instead advocating support for tackling the root causes of misbehaviour amongst those who do cause trouble, combined with safe spaces in communities for young people over which they can assume a sense of ownership.186

Tackling crime and social exclusion

120. Adopting an approach that addresses the social conditions which give rise to crime, as well as tackling their effects, is critical for children and young people as well as for broader society. With a cost of £50,800 a year per offender, and with re-offending rates running at 82%, present policies are just not working.[187] We are neither preventing nor effectively dealing with cause or effect. By subordinating prevention and welfare needs to punishment and the media fuelled concerns on tough action on dealing with crime, we are developing harder, tougher young criminals more disengaged than ever from society. The

earlier children engage with criminal institutions, the longer they remain engaged with criminal activity. The youth justice system can contribute to the cycle of reoffending which repeat offenders often become trapped into.

121. We have a confused approach to vulnerable children, with a child of 10 years old being deemed wholly responsible for committing a criminal act.

> The English legal system reflects our ambivalence towards young people. At the age of ten, children are not yet deemed responsible enough to own a pet, and yet a ten year old will be held criminally responsible for his or her actions.
> **The Children's Society**

The abolition of the *doli incapax*[188] presumption in 1998 to children aged between 10 and 14 was a significant change in the law towards children. The Government argued that children and childhood had changed, with children growing up more quickly, mentally and physically, so therefore having the ability to know right from wrong. This has forced children to take moral responsibility earlier, removing the protective element from the full scale of the criminal law proceedings. Children aged 10 and over are now being convicted of criminal offences at an earlier age. At 10 years old a child may not be considered capable of making a medical decision on his or her own behalf but can be held criminally responsible. This highlights our inconsistent approach and lack of understanding of child and adolescent development. This is a harsh and punitive approach which fails to acknowledge children's age as a stage of development, their vulnerability by virtue of their age and the reality that at this age (between 10 and 14 years) children are still very much the product of their home, family environment and peer influences. We need to take their welfare needs into account and acknowledge the effects of disadvantage. Holding children as young as 10 years old to be criminally responsible for their actions reflects a negative and unsupportive attitude to a vulnerable group within our society. Our civil law has a paternalistic and protective approach to children's competence, whilst our criminal law has a much more punitive approach that takes less regard of developmental abilities or maturity.

122. We need to shape policy by having a better understanding of the factors relating to an individual's transition into adolescence and adulthood. These factors

include age and stage of development, intellectual and emotional maturity, family circumstances, cognitive and societal skills. This should be linked to a greater emphasis on keeping young offenders out of the adult criminal justice system and confining the majority of cases to the youth courts. In 2002, the Scottish Executive suggested easing the transition between the youth and adult justice systems by indicating a wish to include young adults in the purview of the youth courts up to the age of 21. This has been reinforced by calls in England and Wales for the remit of Youth Justice Boards to be extended to those up to the age of 24.[189] The effect of this would be to mark a departure from strict age-based categorisation in favour of a developmental approach that takes account of individual maturity and circumstances - insulating many young people from the experience of the full-blown criminal justice process.

123. This principle extends into decisions on sentencing: young adults are sentenced as adults in a way that treats them as fully mature when, in fact, in many cases they are not. While crimes may be based on youthful irresponsibility, this can result in custodial sentences that serve only to harden offenders and hamper development even further. Approximately 9,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 21 are currently serving prison sentences in England and Wales.[190] There is a range of evidence to suggest that offending rates peak in the middle to late teenage years, whilst offending rates for non-violent crime peak earlier at 16-17 years and the probability of involvement in violent crime peaks between 18-20 years. Home Office crime statistics indicate that 42% of all first-time offenders are between 18 and 20 years of age.[191] Offending rates decline rapidly as young adults commit to families, buy homes and immerse themselves in life as an adult, as well commitments arising from jobs and careers. While instances of non-violent crime amongst young people halve by the early twenties, the probability of involvement in violent crime also consistently declines. This all suggests that intervention by way of support that is tailored to the young person's individual development, provided through local youth services, has greater potential for reducing re-offending than a strict approach of criminal responsibility based on age.[192]

> *"They say women and men mature differently, like men at 23 and women at 18. There's got to be a certain age to say you are an adult. So they just class it as 18. When you're young and you're in court, it's not so bad. All your mates are there and you're having a laugh and a joke. When you go to an adult court, it's different. You realise you could be walking in here then walking out to prison, instead of just joking round then going off."*
> **Anonymous, 23, Cardiff**

124. The characteristics of large numbers of offenders remanded in custody reinforce the conclusion that poverty, inequality and social conditions are the root cause of criminal behaviour amongst teenagers. This clearly suggests that early identification and intervention to provide support to those at risk of offending is the key to reducing crime through tackling social exclusion. Figures from the Office for National Statistics released in 1997 indicate that 27% of young women in custody had received mental health treatment during the 12 months leading up to their imprisonment, whilst 84% of those remanded and 88% of those sentenced young male prisoners had been diagnosed with anti-social or paranoid personality disorders. Further ONS data reported that nearly 90% of 18-21 year olds in custody had at least one form of mental illness, ranging from severe psychosis at the most extreme end down to depression.[193]

125. The links between criminal offending and risky behaviour are demonstrated by the fact that 70% of sentenced young men and 51% of young women showed signs of very high alcohol consumption. Further, 96% of young men and 84% of young women sentenced admitted to having tried at least one illegal drug.[194] The Office for National Statistics estimated that between 25% and 40% of young people with learning difficulties experienced risk factors associated with mental health problems.[195] Perhaps most strikingly of all, 49% of those young people in custody arrive there from a background of having been looked after in care.[196] Whilst homelessness is a common predicate to both offending and reoffending, up to a third of prisoners lose their housing during their period of custody as a result of withdrawal of Housing Benefit and a breakdown in relations with the providers of accommodation.[197]

126. Criminality and custody also demonstrate links with underachievement in education and unemployment, as

well as other indicators of social exclusion. 72% of young people in custody have been excluded from school at some point in their educational career, whilst 25% of them had left full time education altogether upon reaching the age of 14. A majority of offenders were unemployed at the point at their life at which they committed the crime, with 63% being out of work at the point of arrest.[198] For many young people, the imposition of custody can often have the effect of exacerbating social exclusion, with nearly all prisoners losing their jobs as a result of imprisonment. Overall unemployment figures demonstrate that 67% of prisoners are unemployed in the four weeks leading up to imprisonment, compared to just 5% of the general population.[199]

127. There is further evidence that lifestyle problems have an effect in promoting reoffending as well as first-time offending, with young men in prison reporting that they are more likely to reoffend as a result of alcohol misuse (52%) and drug misuse (43%).[200] Indeed, the two are often linked, with nearly half of those who linked their offending to alcohol misuse also identifying drug abuse as an additional problem. However, use of drugs is often secondary when compared with ingrained lifestyle habits and attitudes to the acceptability of anti-social behaviour, with nearly 90% of those in custody commenting that violence and involvement in fighting had grown over time to become an everyday part of their lives.[201]

128. A strict approach of punishment or imprisonment often fails to address the conditions that caused the teenager to offend.

> Mental and physical health problems may be made worse by imprisonment unless dealt with. Inadequately treated, they will make it more difficult for prisoners to make the best use of opportunities such as education and training which can reduce re-offending.
> **Social Exclusion Unit**

The dangers of a punitive approach that fails to address the root causes of offending - whether born out of social conditions or a need for personal support - are demonstrated by reconviction rates. Nearly 70% of 18-20 year olds who are sentenced to custody either in a Young Offenders' Institution or prison are reconvicted within two years of release.[202]

129. The 2002 report of the Social Exclusion Unit, looking into routes to reducing offending, commented that the prison system is currently unable to deal effectively with issues concerning mental health in relation to young adult prisoners.[203] This demonstrates the importance of providing support before cases come to court and prior to offences being committed, whilst providing supportive environments and contact with adults who can assist before outcomes become irreversible. The Government review of the justice system that gave rise to the creation of the National Offender Management Service concluded that 'the increased use of prison and probation has had only a limited impact on crime, sentencing is often poorly targeted and there is little evidence that increasing the severity of punishment is a significant deterrent to crime'.[204] The Social Exclusion Unit report of 2002 went one step further than this by concluding that prison sentences are failing to turn the majority of offenders away from crime. To fail to identify and tackle the root causes of reoffending is to sustain a situation in which rates of reconviction are costing the British taxpayer over £11 billion per year - a figure that excludes the human cost to offenders themselves, victims, their families and surrounding communities.[205]

Pre-court interventions: a welfare based approach

130. The youth justice system has the potential to operate on the same set of principles as all other agencies working with children and young people, recognising their welfare and protective needs as set out in the Every Child Matters agenda. Greater involvement of families and communities in the youth justice system - in particular family led decision making through Family Group Conferencing (FGC) - has achieved considerable success in Ireland, New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In Ireland FGC is being used in child welfare and youth justice systems and is enshrined in law.

131. Families are often the last to be involved in finding solutions. The benefits of Family Group Conferencing are to be found in its ability to engage the whole family, including extended family and the range of stakeholders in a child's or young person's life - assisting them in decision making and exploring the options available to prevent formal custodial sanctions. It provides a restorative justice element, involving the victim. It builds on the strengths of families and

communities, keeping the child or young person connected, building a partnership approach between families and the state in helping to exercise joint responsibility for vulnerable children and young people, safeguarding and promoting their welfare as well as benefiting wider society. The key strength of Family Group Conferencing lies in enabling the family to make a plan for a child or young person. The young person has the opportunity to have their voice heard; with their participation in the conference process being essential to achieving a successful outcome for them.

132. For FGC to work in the youth justice context the young person has to accept accountability for their actions and be part of deciding what needs to be done for a positive change to happen in their lives. An action plan is created to prevent a reoccurrence of the offending behaviour. The state would not take over the responsibility for decision making unless plans were inappropriate to the offence, contained elements of risk or would fail to keep the child or young person safe. In New Zealand this conferencing system has led a reduction in children being looked after and reduced the custody rate for young offenders.[206] In Ireland it has been seen to be a successful diversionary tool, its success being in its voluntary nature - it is the young person's choice to attend, but the consequence of not attending may well result in a formal sanction. It is in this that its real prevention and diversion strength lies.

133. The advent of Youth Offenders Panels, involving a Youth Justice Board representative and community volunteers in dealing with cases outside of the formal criminal justice system, has marked a positive step in responding to conduct problems amongst teenagers. These Panels provide for the drawing up of contracts outside of the courtroom between young people, victims and support services. The Panel will meet with the young person and their parents or guardians to talk about the reasons for the offending behaviour and to discuss a way forward. The victim is encouraged to attend the meeting to tell the young person how the crime affected them. Intervention by way of Youth Offenders Panels comes as a result of a Referral Order, which is given to most 10 to 17 year olds pleading guilty and convicted for the first time in court, unless the charge is serious enough to warrant custody. The order will last between 3 to 12 months depending on the seriousness of the offence. After appearing in court, the young person will be referred to the Youth Offender Panel who will then consider the most appropriate course of action in the light of support available and the balancing of needs of all parties

in the case. Early results show that a young offender and a victim meeting face-to-face can be a powerful and positive experience for both.

The impact of integrated and preventative policy

134. Stronger integration of youth justice and family policy has the best potential to create a framework for tackling youth crime, by providing an integrated and truly preventative and focused early intervention infrastructure. As well as identifying risk factors, protective factors need to be identified and built into policy and programmes.

135. Greater investment and focus should go on primary prevention - a universally based programme, linked to children's centres, extended schools, youth hubs - available to every parent, child and young person in their local communities. This should be presented as a community safety initiative, but sustained over a longer period of time, with the emphasis being placed on strengthening protective factors in individuals, families and communities. Targeted risk focused prevention and support should be available to those identified at risk as a secondary measure, but linked to universal services. Youth Justice Teams should merge within Children's and Young People's Service Departments, with youth justice responsibilities in the Home Office being transferred into the DfES, to reflect a more preventative welfare based approach.

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **A new victim support scheme for young people who have been victims of crime**

  35% of 10-15 year olds have become victims of crime in the last year. A new support scheme would offer advice, guidance and a confidential service providing someone to talk to for victims of crime.

- **A consensus to redouble efforts and eradicate bullying**

  A commitment from schools and other services aimed at young people can create a concerted national effort reduce bullying, recognising that this is the number one concern for children and young people.

- **Align the underpinning principles of the Criminal and Civil Law**

  This should be a priority, recognising the inherent vulnerability of children between 10 and 14 years. Steps should be taken to strengthen the Criminal Law to reflect a child's and young person's evolving capacities, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

- **A new community 'Turn Around' programme for young offenders to replace imprisonment for less serious crimes**

  A strong statutory presumption against the imprisonment of young offenders, reserving prison for only the most serious violent offences, can ensure that young people who offend are not hardened through the experience of imprisonment. 'Turn Around' programmes will not be soft options; rather, a mix of challenge, contribution to the community and a process of identifying and reaching personal goals. Further, Youth Offenders Panels are having a positive effect on the balancing of needs in respect of offenders and victims. A national campaign for volunteers in communities to sit on Panels, supported by high-quality training and preparation, can have a positive effect in widening their scope.

- **Specific strategies for young people with mental health needs**

  Each Primary Care Trust should have a strategy for young adults with mental health care needs, including those within the criminal justice system. The National Offender Management Service with the Department of Health should consider how young adults with mental health problems can be identified and diverted away from custody where possible. Greater investment in Children and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) services should be backed by specific training for youth workers and teachers on dealing with the needs of emotionally vulnerable young people, with recognition of the differing needs of boys and girls.

- **Rapid Intervention Teams in areas of trouble**

  Rapid Intervention Teams should be established to provide speedy interventions in areas of disruption, whilst protecting the safety of the community at large and specific groups of young people.

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Chapter 6

Education, Development, Skills and Employment

Summary

There can be little doubt that young people's transitions into adulthood are more complicated and diverse than ever before. The breaking of traditional career paths has opened new opportunities but also provides a bewildering array of life-determining options to teenagers at an early age. Yet such opportunity can also lead to confusion and disillusionment, with many young people finding it difficult to navigate their way through their transition to adulthood. For some, TV and the media can make the draw of fame, wealth and celebrity seem almost real, with the bite of reality felt deeply when life as it actually is kicks in. The reality for many poor young people is that aspirations and expectations continue to be depressingly low. Young people from low-income backgrounds continue to be most likely to be excluded from, or play truant from, school - leading to a greater probability of unemployment, poor life changes and involvement in crime in later life. Indicators demonstrate that social mobility is declining, with too many futures being decided on the basis of the economic circumstances of the family and too few young people getting the break they need.

All evidence shows that education and training are the main drivers of social mobility. Inequality and poverty have a hugely detrimental effect on the life chances of young people - on their health, job market prospects and social inclusion. Poverty is clearly visible in many areas, with inner city urban areas being particular pressure points. A quarter of children and young people in Inner London live in workless households. This substantially increases the probability that these teenagers will grow into adults who are not in education, employment or training, creating a cost to the UK economy, the wasted opportunity to realise their own potential and also a cost to social cohesion. We know that unemployment is linked to crime and gives rise to cycles of deprivation as these young adults themselves grow to have children who develop in the same conditions. Shattering this cycle of deprivation has to be a key priority - education and the development of skills that can promote employability, raise aspirations, change attitudes and increase life chances are essential to achieving this.

The impact of education needs to be understood in its broadest sense. The Government has placed a massive strategic priority on investment in education, particularly in early education. The elimination of class sizes over 30 and investment in the infrastructure of schools, in their buildings and resources has been a factor in the increasing quality of GCSE and A-level results. An emphasis on widening access to higher education amongst applicants from non-traditional, low-income families has been accompanied by the expansion of more versatile means of further learning, including vocational courses, training courses and adult learning.

However, education is more than just formal learning. Experts have highlighted important skills in confidence, assertiveness, control and self-presentation that have as heavy an impact on life chances as formal skills in maths and reading. It is often young people from low-aspirational backgrounds who have the weakest of these personal and social skills, whilst ironically being in most need of their effect. Non-cognitive skills in expression, confidence and self-esteem are essential in living an independent life, in making job applications, in attending interviews and in being effective socially. Whilst private schooling often places an emphasis on the cultivation of these personal skills as a key element of raising aspirations, it is often those young people from low-income backgrounds who lack opportunities to develop them. Yet it is for these young people that the development of these skills and personality attributes can have the most powerful effect in raising life chances and reducing inequalities. Whilst schools place their traditional emphasis on academic skills, there is a need to find new and inventive ways to build young people's soft skills outside the class room. This is an essential ingredient in the breaking of cycles of low aspiration and in raising aspiration.

Young people and social mobility

136. A key aim for those concerned with the achievements of young people should be to provide pathways out of poverty for families. Social mobility, away from poverty, is contingent on the skills base and achievements of young people as they become adults. Data collected by IPPR demonstrates that social mobility in this country lags behind those of other major European countries, with levels in the UK for the 1970s cohort lagging 14% behind counterparts living in West Germany, 17% lower than those in Finland and 18% lower than those living in Canada.[207] Whilst those teenagers born in the 1970s now make up the bulk of the current labour force, the skills base of the future working population is dependent on the achievements of today's young people through their transitions.

137. Young people's transition into adulthood is determined by a number of factors, a key element of which is their development of knowledge and skills through education. Measured by an increasing range of qualifications, including traditional GCSEs and A-levels as well as a growing number of forms of vocational accreditation, these skills have a significant impact on job prospects and labour market outcomes.

> Overall, transitions have become extraordinarily complex; over time, people move through many, fast-changing positions in relation to training, education and work. The post-school 'careers' that young people follow can be unpredictable, insecure and significant numbers end up lacking in regular employment.
> **Demos**

Whilst the experience of teaching and learning in school, college and university focuses predominantly on cognitive skills, there has been an increasing emphasis on 'soft skills' in the development of young people into employable and socially included adults.

138. Transitions into adulthood have become more diverse with young people's paths into jobs and careers taking an increasing number of forms. In the past it was routine for school to be followed by predictable, and normally gender-defined, career paths. The loosening of gender roles, increases in the number of vocational training courses and a growth in adult learning has resulted in new opportunities for teenagers and young adults. This has been accompanied by an expansion in higher education that has provided more extended routes through education for many young people, as well as the opportunity to develop new skills. Many teenagers are for the first time free from career paths pre-determined by old fashioned and traditional influences. It is for these reasons that young people have more choices before them than ever before. However, accounts heard from those involved in the Youth Review suggest that many young people feel that they need support in making difficult and life-determining choices at such an early age. Evidence suggests that personality attributes and personal skills can help in navigating the range of options available, as well as in planning and maintaining a sense of control and self-reliance.

> *"I feel like there's a lot of choice out there but I'm worried about what I should do. No one in my family's gone to uni before and I think the fees will be too high. But I'm not sure whether I want to go into some job and start at the bottom of the ladder. I might take a year out to think about it more though I don't fancy doing bar work for a whole year either. I'd like to go travelling but I don't think I have the money yet."*
> ***Kelly, 17, Bristol***

139. Analysis of research conducted in 2000 assessed the importance of 'soft skills' - or personal and social skills - in determining outcomes for young people. These skills are those concerned with confidence-building and self esteem-raising. They include the ability to work in a team, to be socially effectively, to be resilient and to maintain a sense of control. Feinstein conducted research during 2000 into the impact of these skills on the prospects of young people through tracking the outcomes of a cohort of young people born in 1970 and monitoring their transitions into adulthood.[208] Analysis conducted by IPPR measured the impact of these skills on earnings potential, concluding that social skills and personality attributes are equally important to cognitive abilities - including linguistic and mathematical skills. Importantly, the analysis found that the development of advanced personal and social skills has a disproportionately strong effect on the outcomes of children from lower income backgrounds, with young people from such backgrounds with well-developed non-cognitive skills having a 10% higher chance of becoming 'well off' by the age of 30. This demonstrates a clear link between the development of these skills during the teenage years and

achievement amongst young adults. These softer skills in expression and self-reliance are an important part of the package of 'education', whether delivered through state or fee-paying (which generally tend to place greater emphasis on these attributes) schools or at a more advanced level through higher education.[209]

140. Studies conducted in the US and analysed by IPPR indicate that the beneficial effects of personal and social skills can be felt also in terms of avoiding dangerous and anti-social behaviour.[210] Research conducted by Feinstein in this country indicates that young people with good communication skills and positive relationship-building abilities were four percentage points less likely to smoke, three percentage points less likely to offend, one percentage point less likely to become a teenage parent and three percentage points more likely to have voted in the 1997 General Election.[211]

141. This analysis also demonstrates that the importance of personal and social skills in determining outcomes for young people is on the increase, with the strength of the link between non-cognitions and earning potential having increased by 25% between the 1958 and 1970 cohorts of young people.[212]

> Importantly, personal and social skills and personality attributes are linked not just to achievement but also to the kind of behavioural outcomes the public and Government are most concerned with in the debate about social and moral decline. In understanding why some young people deviate towards anti social behaviour, promiscuity and drug and alcohol use, the role of personal and social skills is key.
> **IPPR**

Potential reasons for this include a new prominence of service-orientated jobs in the economy, with these jobs typically placing considerable emphasis on effective interpersonal skills. A recent survey of 75,000 companies found that 40% of UK employers reported shortages of customer-handling skills, whilst 35% complained of shortages of team-working and oral communication skills.[213]

142. Well-developed personal and social skills have become increasingly important in situations that require effective expression and presentation, such as competitive job interviews and training applications. As transitions have become more complicated, the ability to navigate through the range of choices available to young people requires self-control, confidence, determination and articulation. Decision-making skills are more important than ever before as life has become more complex, with exciting opportunities accompanied by difficult choices: should a pupil stay in school or go straight into the workplace? Should he or she study a vocational qualification or a traditional academic course? Should he or she study at a nearby university or study away from home? Should he or she take a gap year? For some the complexity of these choices is prohibitive. Some young people, normally those who receive less encouragement and motivation from parents, often take the easy answers and leave school and take the first suitable job rather than engaging in strategic career planning at an early age. Low expectations and aspirations often lead to young people taking the path of least resistance rather than one that is suited to their long-term development - underlining the fact that teenagers need encouragement, inspiration and motivation.

143. As the Government incorporates into schools and hospitals an agenda of 'choice' and personalisation, the importance of decision-making skills becomes even greater in terms of the delivery of public services. Traditionally, young people with well-developed personal and social skills have been those from more affluent families. Yet this is a key area of intervention which can have a strong and powerful impact on breaking the cycle of norms and deprivation, whilst promoting social mobility. The cultivation of cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills can have a significant impact on raising both aspirations and prospects.

144. Adulthood itself involves difficult choices, including self-organisation and the management of personal finances which young people need to be equipped to handle. In 2002, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) reported dealing with £1.2 billion worth of new cases of problem debt amongst adults per year. Debts ranged from student loans to mortgage shortfalls, but NACAB revealed that over 70% of the cases dealt with involved debt on bank loans, credit and store cards, catalogue purchases and hire purchase. The findings also revealed that debt was affecting many people on low incomes, with evidence that the stress of personal debt had an adverse effect on the careers and relationships of many young adults. Findings indicated that whereas the average UK debt per household was £10,700 per year, the average household income was only £800 a month.[214]

145. More than half of all schoolchildren have been in debt by the time they reached 17, according to an education charity.[215] There is also evidence that dangerous attitudes to personal debt set in early, with research from the Personal Finance Education Group conducted in 2004 finding a 'worryingly laid-back' attitude towards debt and spending amongst teenagers. Over 90% of respondents said they worried about money, but tended to think of overdrafts and credit cards as easy ways to spend more than they earn, whilst 1 in 20 respondents thought that credit card debt did not have to be paid back at all. Almost two-thirds said that they would like to learn more about investing, while more than half were interested in learning about how to save and control their spending. The provision of support in cultivating skills in self-management can enable young people to avoid the behavioural and motivational problems that can result from financial stress. The extent of increasing pressures on the British economy resulting from debt also underlines the importance of finding new ways to cultivate these skills amongst young people.

The influence of parents

146. Ask about something that happened in the past and men and, particularly, women date it by their family events. They might say, "It was after our David was born", "It was after your dad died", or "It was when Nick was still with Fiona". Most of what we become starts in the home: our values and much of our knowledge are learned from our parents, our spouse or partner, from brother or sisters, or from our children. The family, put simply, is the framework of our lives. It is everything for children and young people, and as we age it once again increases in importance. Parent support in equipping parents to motivate and inspire their children is essential. Family policy as a whole is key to achieving aims of reducing inequalities and universalising opportunity.

147. Studies demonstrate that, above all other factors, parental interest in a child's education and development has the biggest positive influence on that young person's self-esteem and control, whilst parental hostility has the most adverse effect.[216] Meanwhile, research has shown that it is generally more affluent parents who spend the most time informally supporting young people's education in the home.[217] Parental background can predict capabilities, including labour market outcomes, health and social inclusion. However, in 2006 IPPR concluded that socialising factors such as the influence of adults and peers in the local community become more important during the

teenage years as young people spend more time away from their parents. Community influences and the impact of positive activities in cultivating attitudes, aspirations and abilities become more significant than ever before. Poverty within disadvantaged neighbourhoods can create limits on the opportunities available to young people, with greater pressure for access to information, support and connections than for those living in more affluent areas.[218]

Educational achievement of young people

148. Over the last two decades the divide in life chances between those with and those without formal school qualifications has widened. The Government elected in 1997 famously made education its top priority, resulting in increased investment in the infrastructure of school buildings, the teaching profession and learning materials. In the mid to late 1990s class sizes were a major political issue, with half a million children being taught in classes of over 30 during 1998. By 2001 this was virtually eliminated, with teacher-pupil ratios being fixed to facilitate smaller class sizes and more concentrated teaching. The minimum standard of five good GCSEs - meaning grades between A* and C - provides the conventional measure of academic attainment during secondary school. Whilst in 1989 30% of 16 year olds achieved 5 or more good GCSEs, this figure had climbed to 44.5% in 1995.[219] Further increases have seen the proportion of those school-leavers with five good GCSEs rise to 49% in 2000 and 57.1% by 2005.[220] However, there is evidence that disproportionately low rises have occurred in more disadvantaged areas, with Nelson ward in Portsmouth recording less than 10% of pupils gaining five good GCSEs, compared to 22.7% ten years ago. In Halewood East ward in Knowsley, almost 50% of pupils left school without any GCSEs. This suggests that there remain pockets of deprivation in which educational attainment is out of step with trends nationally.

149. Between 1995 and 2005 the proportion of 16 year olds leaving school or entering further education had risen from 86% to 90%.[221] This was accompanied by a reduction in young people leaving school without any form of qualification, this number having fallen from 45,000 in 1997 to 33,000 by 2001. Figures relating to those who achieve a post-16 qualification offer less cause for encouragement. Increases in the availability and form of post-compulsory education and training between 1950 and 1993 saw dramatic rises in the number of young people taking up

post-16 education, but numbers peaked during the mid 1990s and the UK has experienced a flatlining effect since that period. International studies have demonstrated that numbers entering further education and training remain lower in the UK than in other major industrialised countries, with a quarter of 19 year olds failing to achieve any form of post-GCSE qualification. IPPR has highlighted a relationship between the likelihood of continuing in education and parental background, with young people whose parents are higher professionals being nearly 50% more likely to be in full-time post-compulsory education than the children of those who are in routine occupations, and more than twice as likely to be studying for academic qualifications such as A-levels.[222]

150. One of the measurements of accessibility of academic study has been university entry. In 1970, 416,000 men and 205,000 women entered higher education, figures that increased to just over 1 million men and 1.4 million women by 2003-04.[223] This closing of the gender gap relating to university offers encouragement to those who have sought to widen access to higher education, with rises also occurring in the proportion of minority ethnic applicants to universities. In 1999 just over 41% of those studying A-levels applied through UCAS to go to university, a figure that had risen slightly by 2005 to 42%.[224] In its 2002 White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, the Government unveiled a target of 50% of school leavers going to university.[225] This is a figure that has provoked controversy between those who fear a recruitment crisis in other areas of the economy and those who believe that this will extend the opportunity to study to a higher level to young people from lower-income families.

> "I think the careers advice in school is OK but we only see an advisor once every few months. To be honest, my ideas about what I want to do change all the time, although I'm pretty sure I want to go to university. It'd be good to have some help when I'm filling in my application forms and getting ready for the interviews though. I don't feel we get enough coaching and I know friends in private schools get special classes on preparing for these things so I feel like they have an advantage."
> **Lucinda, 18, Carlisle**

151. The value of work experience during the school years has been found to increase both career prospects and the earning potential of young people, with a report by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) finding that young people with relevant work experience have the potential to earn £1,050 a year more than those without any such experience. The research, conducted in 2006 amongst more than 400 major UK employers, found that nine out of ten felt work experience was important for CVs and more than half suggested that those young people without it would find it more difficult to find a job. The accompanying analysis by the LSC suggested that businesses in local communities should do more to create aspirational work placements and examine methods of sharing opportunities for skills development with local teenagers. The survey also found that about a third of employers offered paid work placements, whilst over 45% provided unpaid placements.[226] Nationally, during 2007, in an attempt to highlight the benefits of work experience for employers and employees alike, the National Council for Work Experience undertook a programme involving a series of awards for work experience providers. The awards were designed to recognise the efforts of businesses and charities offering fulfilling work placements that assisted students to develop employability and skills.

Missing out on school

152. Achievement at school is linked to behaviour and conduct inside the classroom, with a clear relationship between those pupils who are excluded from school and those who enter adulthood with a lack of qualifications. During 2006, over 1,000 pupils were permanently excluded from primary school, whilst the figure for secondary schools stood at over 8,000.[227] A report published in 2001 by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders indicated substantial rises in the overall numbers of children excluded from school, with figures reporting a rise from 3,000 in 1990 to 12,300 in 2001.[228] There is evidence that the number of exclusions continues to rise, with a report by the Department of Education and Skills, released in 2006, suggesting that between 2003 and 2005 the overall number of fixed period exclusions rose by 13% to 390,000.[229] The Government has pioneered Pupil Referral Units for those children and young people who are permanently excluded from mainstream education, with an emphasis on providing support with special needs alongside measures to assist pupils to overcome behavioural problems. However, there is evidence that these

units are failing to offer support to the degree required for standard qualifications, with figures from the Department for Education and Skills indicating that only 0.4% of pupils in Pupil Referral Units gain five good GCSEs. In the worst cases, these pupils go on to become socially excluded adults with a greater likelihood of engagement with the criminal justice system. According to a Prison Inspectorate Report, 83% of boys in Young Offenders Institutions had been permanently excluded from school.[230] A recent MORI poll for the Youth Justice Board indicated that 72% of children excluded from school had offended in the previous year, compared with 28% of those who attended school regularly.[231]

153. The 2001 study undertaken by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders also reported that each year at least one million children and young people truant from school.[232]

> "I skive off school whenever I can, especially when we're meant to be doing PSE or RE or something like that. I can't take this whole morning and afternoon registration thing... it means we have to go in twice in the day so they can check we're still there. When I skive I go down the shops or hang around a mate's house because his parents won't tell mine. I don't miss the subjects that I'm taking GCSEs in, just the extra ones."
> **Nicholas, 15, Rotherham**

Figures from the Home Office suggest that truants are three times more likely to commit crime than non-truants; with research findings from the Metropolitan Police suggesting that 40% of all robberies, 25% of burglaries and 20% of thefts in London are committed by children aged 12-16 during school hours.[233]

154. The impetus of the education and skills agenda has been to promote the life chances of young people through offering opportunities to develop skills, experience and knowledge. Young people who grow up with poor basic skills are up to five times more likely to be unemployed and significantly more likely to make a living from low-paid and low-skilled jobs than their counterparts with better levels of reading and writing skills.[234] This has been linked to the pursuit of Government policy in other areas, with the Social Exclusion Unit estimating in 2002 that being in employment can reduce the risk of criminal offending by between 33% and 50%.[235] A Home Office study released in 2004

reinforced this, whilst pointing out that it is not just any job that reduces the chance of young adults falling into criminal behaviour, but rather those jobs that offer stable and high quality employment, coupled with opportunities for self-development and progression.[236]

> Given the disproportionate exclusion rates for some ethnic groups, it follows that some ethnic minority young people may be more at risk of becoming involved in crime. The fact that some ethnic minority groups are also at greater risk of becoming homeless, fare less well in the labour market, and are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion often results in those at risk of offending having multiple and complex needs.
> **Commission for Racial Equality**

155. The number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) continues to linger at around 8.5% according to data gathered by the Connexions service, with significant variations across Local Authority areas. Whilst areas with higher average annual incomes such as Kingston upon Thames and Rutland report NEET levels of 3.9% and 0.9% respectively, areas associated with higher levels of poverty experience much more substantial levels of worklessness, with Hackney and Middlesborough reporting 16.1% and 15.7% levels of NEET respectively.[237] There is evidence that likelihood of unemployment is higher for those under the age of 24, with young adults being twice as likely to be out of work according to the Barrow Cadbury Commission.[238] Unemployment in early adulthood is clearly linked to failure to achieve qualifications whilst at school, with 21% of 25-29 year olds who are unemployed having no qualifications.

> We believe that every young person has potential and that the job of our education system is to develop that potential, so that all young people have opportunities through effort and application to qualify themselves for further learning and work.
> **14-19 Agenda for Education and Skills, DfES**

The cost of high proportions of workless young people is measured not just in terms of crime and a higher likelihood of poverty, but also in respect of economic performance across the board: the cost to society of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 in the NEET category is £15.1 billion according to figures released by the Department for Education and Skills.[239]

CASE STUDY
GCSE Success for Excluded Pupils
- Ealing

Ealing identified a need to provide more versatile forms of education for excluded pupils and to extend the range of provision available to those pupils who could not attend the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Using the Standards Fund Grant 210: Vulnerable Children, a distance learning programme was established. It aimed to provide over 20 hours of education to enable pupils to sit their GCSEs and to support pupils' personal development. Youth workers were integrated into the scheme to support the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and to provide opportunities for a wider curriculum. Health consultants and staff associated with local arts projects were encouraged to get involved to ensure that the young people were given the support to succeed.

Five year 11 students formed a consultation group that worked at a youth services premises to inform the project. Each student was provided with a laptop, and a broadband connection was installed in each household. The programme coordinator visited each student weekly, supported the completion of coursework, liaised with the PRU and generally kept the programme on track. Results show that young people who have failed to manage to learn in a 'real' classroom can progress significantly online. All students gained at least two GCSE passes and one gained four. Only one student was not in employment, education or training in the following September.

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **All secondary schools to become learning centres**

  Raising expectation and aspiration is a key goal to enable young people to fulfil their potential. Many secondary schools are redefining themselves as Learning Centres to reflect the wider range of activities and services now located around the school. This would be extended and formalised. Reframing the formal school around the wider context would be particularly important in motivating and involving disengaged young people. Closer connections between formal and non-formal programmes of learning should be established.

- **A national mentoring scheme to motivate and support, backed up by learning and careers coaches**

  Often teenagers lack real-life role models and advisors linked to their interests and chosen professions. All secondary schools should take part in a Government-promoted National Mentoring Scheme. Young people need to have greater opportunities for support with the increasing number of choices available to them regarding jobs and careers.

- **A new 'Young People in Work' programme**

  Work experience in the community is an essential part of raising aspirations, alongside formal learning. Despite examples of positive opportunities through organisations including Young Enterprise and Education Business Partnerships, some schools find it difficult to provide meaningful placements. A Government-sponsored programme that links local employers to pupils in schools and further education colleges is recommended. The Department for Work and Pensions should lengthen the time that young adults can spend on unpaid work experience to six weeks before they lose benefits.

- **A review of support for young people excluded from school**

  An inspirational programme to engage and re-motivate excluded and truanting young people should be launched. As a key element, a reshaping of the teaching and learning experience within Pupil Referral Units should take place, linked to proposed 14-19 curriculum changes, recognising that disengagement peaks during Key Stage 4 and is expressed through truancy, exclusion and misbehaviour.

- **Parents and teachers online**

  A new 'School/Parent Partner' programme, providing weekly online updates for parents and text communication, would support parents to keep in contact with progress and issues at school.

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Access to Local Services

Summary

The overwhelming complaint from the thousands of young people taking part in the Youth Review was of a lack of places for them and of things to do in their community.

Despite the major revolution in leisure and media choices, most young people believe that they are not well represented in their local community. Despite the soaring popularity of online social networking and computer games, social contact with peers in the community is at an all-time low. And despite a growing affluence and increases in levels of disposable income, young people still have difficulty in gaining access to opportunities - often because of a lack of information or co-ordination, poor transport, high costs or parental restrictions. Whilst the sophistication of choices and opportunities has rocketed, young people's major priorities remain unmet with the traditional interests and gains of leisure, active engagement and time with friends being increasingly limited as a result.

The perception that there is a lack of activities for young people is shared by adults, with many parents expressing concern that their children have few safe places to go in the evening. Extended schools, though they embody the potential to offer a wide range of out of school services around schools, are not yet a reality in most areas and may not always be the natural choice for more disengaged young people. At the same time, most young people do not have access to a youth centre in their area at the times they need or that offers the range of contemporary activities they want to see made available.

The choice for parents is therefore in itself a stark one - put safety first and keep young people indoors after school but risk limiting their development and opportunities, or allow teenagers to spend time roaming the streets because they do not have a space that they can call their own.

Whilst hanging around on the streets with friends was the most common activity reported by almost all young people, they themselves also complained about the lack of options and alternatives, with many in particular citing a 'time lag' after school when their parents are still at work, and during which they can either return home to an empty house or wander the streets with friends for amusement. Many young people told us how boring this time of day is, with a real feeling that once the school day ends they are unchallenged and unmotivated. Many also recognise that it is such boredom that can lead young people into trouble or fuel the interest in searching for excitement and activity through risky and more rebellious behaviour. Others told us it simply makes them feel that adults care little for them and their place in their local community.

Delivery of services for young people

156. Traditionally the range of services for young people in a local area have been delivered by a variety of public, voluntary and private providers, including leisure centres, faith or uniformed groups and youth clubs. Specialist support is also provided through support agencies, youth offending programmes for young people at risk of offending and Connexions for skills development, employment and career support. The majority of public funding for mainstream support for young people is delivered through traditional Local Authority 'Youth Services' but coverage is patchy and the offer both limited and inconsistent. Whilst Government has set a framework for improvement and extension to joined up provision through *Youth Matters,* change is in its relative infancy in many Local Authorities with many authorities still striving to get the right structures in place before wider integration of both funding and the offer to young people can become tangible. In the meantime, the overriding impression of young people is of a range of disparate and disjointed services which are often based on short to medium-term projects. Young people have spoken of their disappointment when innovative new ventures end after just a summer or when projects are cancelled because staff members have left or when funding dries up. Increased investment as a catalyst and a lever for a more integrated offer and approach is a common call from Local Authorities, whilst providers demand more coordinated application processes for funds that are predictable, consistent and can enable better planning.

157. In all areas the Youth Review visited there was an overwhelming feeling that adults needed to do more and offer more to young people, including safe places to go with transport to get them home safely, better facilities that have more impressive buildings and furnishings and a place to meet that can act as a base for a wide range of contemporary activities, including classes, clubs, specialist sports and arts. Whilst the majority of young people said they spent their social time 'hanging around', there was a clear desire to be somewhere else if it was available and offered something better. Young people said they wanted contemporary places designed for them in the community - somewhere that was visibly theirs and known. Early and regular opening times were a particular concern for younger children and teenagers, yet provision also needs to take account of the hours and relative independence of the older teens. Young people pointed to many examples of existing buildings in communities that were shut down or closed early and asked why they couldn't have their own space through the use of these buildings in the evening.

158. Workers, too, were seen to be essential in ensuring an effective, inspiring and inclusive environment for all. Bringing to life exciting programmes of activity and support that offer fun and challenging experiences in music, art and sport was seen to be crucial. Ensuring that those individuals are able to focus on the broad range of needs of young people as individuals to help navigate and support access to services was felt to be crucial. Young people said that they wanted to be involved in the development of those activities, to have their say in decision-making and delivery and to have a voice in the running of spaces designed for them.

159. Finally, young people sent a clear message about their need for support, with an overriding view that help is difficult to find with no guidance on what might be available and appropriate. A clear majority agreed that they would be more likely to visit a 'one stop shop' for support services, from which they could be directed or referred to the right agency whatever their issue or concern. Even larger numbers of young people told us that they would be more likely to access support if it were offered at the same place as wider activities and clubs.

160. Young people give a clear impression of the type of youth space that they want to see, demanding contemporary activities that are fun, challenging, well-supervised, structured and involve a sense of teamwork and shared goals. Young people talked of the range of activities - music, dance, creative arts, specialist sports and discos - that they would like to see, as well as volunteering and community activities. Such activities can play a crucial role in building confidence, self esteem and the softer communication and interpersonal skills which are increasingly recognised as crucial. These, complemented by wider specialist support and information, are key components of any contemporary joined up offer to young people and are increasingly being worked towards in some of the more progressive Local Authority areas.

161. Whilst Government has provided a framework for the development of a broad, integrated and joined up offer for young people through *Youth Matters,* evidence suggests that this is not yet the experience of most young people. Further leadership and investment is likely to be needed if young people, parents and wider communities are to experience the radical change they say they want to see.

Sidley Young People's Club

This multi-purpose club is open to young people aged 11 to 19 four nights per week and is run by two full-time youth workers and a part-time snack bar worker. A full-time worker is also employed to support young people on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. The club has links with many organisations through the larger community association the club is part of, including: County Council, District Council, the local Sure Start, Early Years service, Youth Offending Team, the local police and safer Rother partnership. The club is a Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme Open Centre and an Open Centre for Junior Sport Leaders Award. It also holds a Kite Mark from Community Legal Services for information to young people.

As part of the curriculum, the club offers a number of trips and external outings during the year. These have included outings to a football match, horse riding, fly fishing, canoeing, climbing, ice skating, dry slope skiing and mountain biking. During the summer programmes, the young people took part in 11 external activities: bowling, ice skating, a Thorpe Park visit, junior team tasks, a visit to Howletts Zoo, mountain biking, laser quest, a cinema visit, paintballing, a barbeque to which parents were invited and a night hike.

Staff at the club frequently offer information and advice on sexual health, including supplying condoms and making referrals to GUM clinics. In addition, they offer onsite services regarding sexual health, such as free pregnancy testing and chlamydia testing. The club demonstrates the synergy between activity and support.

Young people out of school

162. Government policy since 1997 has placed considerable emphasis on the early years, investing significantly in programmes such as Sure Start, children's centres and new benefits and tax incentives for parents with young children. The programmes have the dual aim of improving outcomes for children whilst also supporting parents to work or study and so reducing poverty.

163. However, whilst there is widespread recognition of the importance of early intervention of this kind, there has been less focus or debate about the need for continued intervention and investment in similar support for older children and young people. Yet evidence increasingly suggest that investment in the early years, whilst supporting measurable outcomes for children - especially disadvantaged children - as they prepare and enter school, are not strong enough in themselves to see children through childhood. Support in the early years is not an inoculation for life, with increasing recognition that ongoing support on a continuum throughout childhood is needed if early gains are not to fall away.

164. Yet similar levels of spending have been denied for older children and the proportion of total public spending on children and young people, despite increases, still lags behind that for older generations. Indeed, public spending per capita is much higher for those older than working age than those below it: in 2005/06 £15,024 was spent on the average pensioner, whilst only £9,454 was targeted at the average child.[240]

165. Youth services and wider opportunities for young people provide direct means of tackling many of the challenges faced by young people, with activities and support providing opportunities to create positive interventions to raise outcomes for teenagers. Government has acknowledged the beneficial effect of youth services in promoting social inclusion and raising levels of engagement in communities. The former Prime Minister Tony Blair commented in 2002 that *"providing young people with a safe place to go after school, and providing them real opportunities to engage in sports, the arts, volunteering and wider activities is a major priority for Government"*.[241] Further, the Every Child Matters Paper said this in 2003 about the value of facilities and space for young people: *"A consistent theme of consultations with children and young people is the importance of having communities where there is somewhere to go and something to do...the Government intends to widen access to a range of structured and unstructured, supervised and unsupervised, activities"*.[242] This is reinforced by a key element of a report issued by the National Assembly for Wales, which said that *"young adults who are well equipped for their personal, occupational*

and civic lives have invariably had access to a range of opportunities in their childhood and youth".

166. But the reality, according to parents and young people who took part in the Youth Review, is a very different story, with a lack of places to go and things to do being a key concern for many teenagers and their families. 70% of young people say they are bored and do not have enough safe places to go after school, in the evenings or during the holidays. This reinforces findings from 2002 that indicated that six out of ten teenagers and eight out of ten parents feel that there is not enough for teenagers to do in the area in which they live.[243] 80% of 15-16 year olds commenting in 2002 also that they felt that outdoor facilities in their area were of unsatisfactory quality.[244] Local services for young people, specifically designed to meet their needs, reflect the value we put on them but in the majority of communities this important sense is lacking. The Good Childhood Enquiry found that over 80% of young people surveyed felt that that their local area did not care about its young people.[245]

The impact of boredom and unsupervised time

167. Young people were overwhelming in presenting the view that they often feel bored and that inactivity is part of the reason for this. Focus groups indicated that teenagers feel the sharpest effects of boredom in the hours directly after the end of the school day, with 34% of 11-16 year olds reporting that they regularly return home to an empty house, usually as their parents were at work. Young people talked of a period of after-school 'down-time', which many teenagers filled by wandering between school and the park until their parents return home. Research from Make Space in 2002 suggested that one in four young people hang around with nothing to do when they are not in school, whilst eight out of ten teenagers report being bored at some point during the average day.[246]

168. Time spent during this period is often unstructured and can sometimes result in anti-social behaviour which older people in particular report as being of concern - even if it is only that there is a perceived risk of bad behaviour from teenagers 'hanging around' in groups. For many older people, the sight of a group of teenagers 'loitering' is extremely off-putting, with reports from elderly people indicating that this can be intimidating. This is borne out by figures relating to public perception of crime, with a 60%

rise between 1992 and 2006 in complaints about teenagers hanging around.[247] Parents and young people themselves perceive a strong link between boredom and involvement in anti-social behaviour, with around seven out of ten parents and their teenagers agreeing that young people commit crimes because there is not enough for them to do.

> *"When school's over there's nothing to do because they closed off the park for younger kids. Usually I stay out with mates and we hang out by the off-licence until it gets late. There's about 8 of us. We're a bit loud and lairy but we don't want to cause trouble. We just have to make our own fun. If we make noise it's because we're just doing our thing, y'know?"*
> **Ben, 16, Wakefield**

169. Whilst the majority of teenagers will not get into trouble, spending significant amounts of time wandering the streets does provoke important safety concerns. During this time young people are often out of touch with their parents and almost invariably unsupervised. Research shows that at any one point in time half of parents do not know exactly where their teenagers are, whom they are with or what they are doing when they are not in school - a figure that increases to 60% of parents of 15-16 year olds.[248] This means that should those young people get into trouble there is little support that parents can themselves immediately offer to their children.

> *"The kids are both out in the evenings several times a week. Ben's 12 and Natasha's a bit older, 15. I have to admit I don't know where they are all the time because they're often out and about or at a friend's house. There's no specific place for them to go that's near enough to home so I would really welcome knowing they're safe somewhere rather than being left alone to walk the streets at night. A youth club or some centre would be excellent but it mustn't be too far away."*
> **Parent, 49, Bristol**

The risk of getting into dangerous situations can be measured by the perceptions of young people themselves about their personal safety: MORI reported in 2002 that 43% of young people do not feel safe after dark and

> "Evidence shows that many gangs 'adopt' a public place as their own, with 43% of gang members reporting that their gang meets in a park or recreation ground and 39% saying it met on a street corner or square"

38% think that it is not safe for them to do what they want nowadays outside school.[249] Analysis of these figures demonstrated that it is girls and younger children that are likely to feel the least safe.

170. One of the symptoms of teenagers spending large amounts of time hanging around has been a rise in what IPPR has called 'unmediated interaction'.[250] This refers to time spent chaotically interacting with peers in an unsupervised environment. Analysis of the effects of this environment is contrasted with the influence of parents and communities as 'socialising' influences for young people. In other words, chaotic interactions amongst peers outside a controlled environment can often lead to negative outcomes.

171. One of those results of the increasing amount of unsupervised time has been a rise in the number of gangs, estimated during 2006 to involve 6% of 10-19 year olds and 12% of 14-16 year olds.[251] Qualitative analysis of these figures suggested that the young people most likely to seek to be involved in a gang are those who get on badly with parents, those who spend little or no time with them and those who live in areas with high levels of local disorder. IPPR reached the conclusion that one of the major drivers for young people that acts in favour of seeking to join a gang is a lack of things to do and places to go in the local community.252

172. This conclusion is reinforced by reports from young people during the Youth Review in which participants suggested that many teenagers join gangs to gain a sense of identity and security in their lives, with many feeling that membership offers protection from unsafe communities and a sense of belonging. Evidence shows that many gangs 'adopt' a public place as their own, with 43% of gang members reporting that their gang meets in a park or recreation ground and 39% saying it met on a street corner or square.[253] Clearly, the 'taking over' of public spaces by gangs of young people is a concern, and is one that is driven by a feeling amongst young people that a lack of places of their own can only be dealt with through adopting outdoor spaces.

173. Research carried out in 2004 suggested that teenagers in the UK are much more likely to spend time 'with friends' on four or more evenings a week than those in other countries: 45% of boys and 34% of girls in England said they did this in 2001-02, compared to 37% of boys and 31% of girls in the US, 31% of boys and 21% of girls in Sweden and just 17% of boys and 10% of girls in France.[254] This gives us an indication of the amount of time that young people spend in peer groups and reinforces that need to ensure that activity during these periods is safe, fun and positive.

174. The reality and experience of young people's out of school habits contribute to the demand for action to resolve the situation from the wider community. There is evidence of considerable concern amongst adults over levels of investment in services and opportunities for young people in their community, with research commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister reporting in 2003 that more things for young people to do topped a list of improvements sought by adults for their local area.[255] This level of public support for action is reinforced by the findings of a MORI/Audit Commission survey of over 2000 adults carried out in the same year - this found that 'activities for teenagers' came top of the list of service wishes amongst adults in communities. Not surprisingly, the same survey cites a sense amongst many parents and adults in general that the lack of activities for teenagers has a direct impact on rising crime.[256]

175. It is further possible to have a sense of how public support for opportunities for young people, as identified by MORI, stands as compared to other areas of investment. Services for teenagers were chosen by 43% of respondents, compared to 16% for health services, 7% for education services with other less popular responses being made up of policing, road and pavement repairs and public transport investment. In the public perception at the very least, findings such as this suggest investment in youth opportunities is a key public priority.

CASE STUDY
Reducing anti-social behaviour - Silsden

Silsden Youth Council identified a lack of positive activities for local youth. Following consultation with members, they contacted Bradford Council Parks and Landscape Service to engage their help and support to develop a skate park. In partnership with the town council, the youth council consulted with the wider community on the design and location of the new park. With a design agreed and a cost in mind the youth council addressed the issue of securing the funding. Whilst the Parks and Landscape Service project managed the scheme, the young people were involved at every stage - they visited the quarry to select the materials and precisely positioned the skate equipment and rocks. The young people of Silsden needed the support of the local community and the town council from the outset of this project. They needed to show they were committed to the project and did so by beginning a process of fund raising.

The young people in this deprived area proved that they were capable of planning and delivering a large project in a 'professional' manner at the youth council, meeting with funders and other partners. The location of the new skate park was a sensitive issue, especially for the properties adjacent to the park. The youth council addressed this situation by talking with the residents face-to-face in the presence of a town councilor. The young people themselves took it upon themselves to purchase cleaning equipment to clean the skate ramps if necessary and to address any vandalism problems. One member of the youth council was awarded a local community award for his contribution to this project. The local community and police have noticed a significant reduction in incidents of anti social behaviour in the wake of the opening of the project in the town centre.

Limitations of the current offer to young people

176. All evidence suggests that the demand for positive activities and a 'space' for young people is dramatically unmet by supply, demonstrating that the perceptions of parents and teenagers themselves are grounded in reality.

177. In measuring supply, an important element to consider is the number of youth centres or clubs provided within communities, offering activities, support and supervision and leadership by youth workers. Currently, there are just over 11,000 youth clubs in England providing for 1.2 million 11-16 year olds.[257] This compares to a total number of over 4.5 million teenagers within this age group across the country, meaning that around only one in four has access to a youth club. Even where they do exist, young people were clear in their view that the offer from most youth clubs in terms of both opening times and range of activities and services on offer did not meet their needs.

"There's a youth club here but it's pretty whack. It's just got some pool tables and a dart board and that's alright for a one-off but we don't want to go there all the time. We go to the chippy instead, just hang around and talk. There's not much else to do around here. We'll be in a group but we don't cause trouble - even if some adults think we do."
Matthew, 15, Bristol

"Modern youth spaces that combine activity with support and advice are in short supply. No national strategy is in place to revive the often tired and out of date centres that are currently available and in use. There is a need for modern, social and friendly spaces that young people want."
Laura Edwards and Becky Hatch, IPPR

178. Investment in youth clubs has been intermittent, with the last major Government investment in them coming as a result of the Abermarle Report of the 1960s, and only incremental investment in the infrastructure since then. As a result much youth provision has struggled to update and extend their services in response to changing demand. Limited funding can often result in both limited

opening times and restricted services, often with a reliance on sessional and volunteer staff. Moreover, the quality and accessibility of facilities and buildings is often inconsistent, with youth workers themselves calling for extra investment to upgrade youth centres and offer a fuller range of activities to meet the different needs of all young people.

> *"My parents work till about 8.00 in the evening in the city centre so it takes them a while to get back. I'm home from school at 4.00 because we live pretty close. I don't have any brothers or sisters so I'd be alone at home so I go out with mates instead. I wish there was more to do around here 'cause at the moment there's nothing. It's a pretty small place and there's just not much here. I can't afford to get the bus into town every day though so I'm stuck with it."*
>
> *Claire, 15, Carlisle*

179. Figures released by 4Children in 2006 reported findings that the average cost of setting up a youth centre is in the region of £200,000, with sustainability requiring between £50,000 and £100,000 per year.[258] At the same time, figures released jointly by 4Children and the National Youth Agency reported an average spend across Local Authorities of just £98 per year per 13-19 year old in 2006-07 on their core youth services.[259] Whilst this is often complemented by additional funding through packages including the Youth Capital Fund and the Youth Opportunities Fund, core funding is the only assured level of investment, and as such it is only this spending can ensure long-term strategic planning and delivery.

180. *Youth Matters* proposes a greater integration of funding for young people of both internal and external funds such as neighbourhood renewal, Youth Justice, play and leisure, Positive Futures or Positive Activities for Young People and the National Lottery. However, the process of integration of funds can be complex and can often only be achieved once integrated structures and political backing locally are in place.

181. As a result the process of balancing applications to these various sources can be highly complex and bureaucratic, with each attempt often involving different application processes, deadlines and criteria for eligibility. The impact of this is that often activities can often feel 'one-off' or time sensitive. Even at their best, such activities

are no substitute for a consistent supply of opportunities, offering only a 'stop and start' service. Summer schemes that stop after summer, trips to paint-balling or go-karting which leave young people wanting more but which require further funding applications to repeat, often raise expectations only for them then to be dashed. Such a disjointed approach can result in a never-ending search for funds for 'new projects', limiting both learning and consolidation of programmes as well as confusion and uncertainty for users. Furthermore, such funding is unlikely to stretch far enough to accommodate large-scale projects, pay youth workers to run them over a significant period or upgrade buildings to a decent state.

182. Securing the loyalty of young people as users is a key factor in the sustainability of services. When funding runs out, important relationships are often interrupted or broken altogether. There is also a sense amongst those providing youth services on the ground that they can only do so much with limited funding, leading to opening hours often being limited to only a few evenings per week and an inability to recruit and train full-time staff rather than volunteers who are often themselves transient. This concern over limited opening hours is often particularly true for weekends.

Services and disabled young people

183. Too often services are developed without consulting with disabled young people, thus resulting in opportunities which are inaccessible to disabled young people and a huge shortfall of places and activities for them to participate in, leading to isolation and social exclusion. Opportunities to provide support to parents of disabled children are also being missed. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 places new duties on public buildings with respect to accessibility for those with physical impairments, with some progress having been made in ensuring that upgrading and modification work is carried out to buildings at delivery points for services. Further to this, the DDA 2005 places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to promoting disability equality in the delivery of their functions and to involve disabled people in the development of their Disability Equality Scheme and associated action plan, which they are required to produce.

184. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires Local Authorities to provide sufficient leisure activities for all young people with learning difficulties. They must be involved in the consultation and planning of

these activities, whilst the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to ensure there is sufficient childcare provision for disabled young people up to the age of 18. However, often the needs of parents and young people with disabilities run deeper. A consultation carried out by the charity Contact a Family in 2006 amongst parents of teenagers with disabilities gives a sense of the degree and nature of need. Parents complained both of a lack of actual services (43%) and a lack of information about what is available (51%). Parents suggested that the best way to improve outdoor play would be to provide supervised play areas such as adventure playgrounds (45%), supervised play areas (45%) and cleaner parks (44%). The type of play and leisure they most wanted for their children was a range of specialist and inclusive mainstream provision such as family events (60%), specialist holiday clubs (48%), swimming clubs (40%), mainstream holiday clubs (40%) and inclusive holiday clubs (35%). Parents want a range of specialist and mainstream activities and opportunities for their children but even then information on what exists is cited as a vital and unmet need. For their children parents mainly want opportunities to make new friends (67%), accessible information (51%) and one-to-one support (45%).[260]

185. For parents themselves, the consultation highlighted a demand for information and support through a number of ways, as well as breaks from the demands of caring. Further detail was provided on the most relevant form of information, including a drop in desk for information (49%), a local directory of services (48%), regular breaks (43%), opportunities to meet other parents (41%) and one-to-one support (38%). This highlights the potential synergies between opportunities to socialise for young people and delivery points for parent support for the parents of disabled young people. Training of all health and social care, education and leisure staff in understanding families' information and support needs was cited as essential. Further, it was felt that a drop-in service offers opportunities to provide childcare for older children and develop a guide to break services that shows families how to find existing services and how to use them. The research called for a directory of mainstream and special needs sports facilities that can include and welcome young people with disabilities, as well as providing information on trips and visits.[261]

Funding and investment in services

186. Estimated figures relating to 2006 spending levels, released by 4Children and the National Youth Agency, showed that just £98 was spent on each young person per year on youth services. These were accompanied by a demand that investment be increased to £350 (less than £1 per day for each teenager) to improve the youth offer and provide access to out of school services for all. The estimated cost of such an investment would be in the region of £1.5 billion, which remains modest in comparison to £2.9 billion invested in early years services during 2005-06, with an additional £1.4 billion in 2006-07 to support younger children through funding for Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools.[262]

187. However, spending on youth opportunities can deliver a substantial return, with research suggesting that 'front-end' spending on prevention of poor outcomes can save money on health services, welfare and benefits, as well as on the cost of crime and policing. Evidence from the United States indicates that the provision of positive activities for young people can create a net saving through reduced spending on the effects of social exclusion, with every £1 spent on prevention saving £7 on the cost of poor outcomes.[263]

188. Even when services do exist they do not always meet the needs of young people in the community. Evidence suggests that teenagers in many cases do not feel able to make the most of what facilities are currently on offer, with a strong sense from those involved in the Youth Review that young people feel that there is not only a lack of services in most areas but also that the services that do exist are out of reach. One of the main reasons for this was a feeling that transport links were inadequate, with particularly high levels of complaint about the cost and availability of public transport - this was found to be of particular importance for teenagers living in rural areas. In many communities there was a feeling that, whilst services existed in bigger towns or conurbations, the requirements for transport in accessing those services made them inaccessible for many young people.

CASE STUDY
London Transport - London-wide

Some 385,000 young Londoners currently benefit from free travel on the buses. Free travel is far more than a scheme to help the under-18s to get to and from school. The concession is valid seven days a week and during school breaks, reducing the cost of travel all year round and opening up new opportunities to access services and activities. The introduction of free travel for the under-18s allows families to enjoy the capital's theatres, museums, galleries and parks. Free travel also assists those who take part in evening and weekend activities, both in the classroom and on the sports field. It cushions the costs of travel, saving families hundreds of pounds. Families in London are saving £350 per child every year.

A year after free travel was introduced, surveys showed that 68% said they used buses more to see family and friends, 63% said they used buses more to go to sport and nearly half said they travel more regularly to and from school by buses. Creating a public transport culture is key to getting on top of the problems of air quality and climate change, whilst free travel for the youngest and oldest in our society contributes significantly to that aim. The wider community is supportive of the scheme, with polls showing 80% in favour of the concession.

189. Information about services, opening times and programmes was also raised as essential to ensure that young people get the best out of existing provision. Many teenagers complained of a lack of knowledge of what was on offer, when and at what time. These issues are reflected in reports from a consultation held by the Prince's Trust in 2004, which outlined the following barriers to service provision for 16-24 year olds: lack of access or knowledge of services, lack of appropriate and tailored services, transience and vulnerability of groups of young people, young people being more or less reliant on their families for access to services, and large-scale gaps in data collected by Local Authorities needed to provide adequate services.[264]

190. One of the key limitations of current youth clubs was identified during consultations held through the Youth Review as being an element of 'territorialism' over clubs. Young people reported a sense that too often the space is 'taken over' by a certain group of young people. When asked what could be done to address this, young people asked for better levels of supervision and support through adults working in centres to ensure that all visitors have a stake in the club and that it is not dominated by one or more groups. In addition to this, young people suggested a system of guaranteed activities, including sport, games and music that can appeal to different tastes and involve a wide variety of teenagers. Often the sense that one group of teenagers takes over a youth space is derived from an outdated understanding of what a youth club should provide - one in which pool tables, arcade machines and a refreshments stall provides the sum total of activity, leading to young people milling around indoors in a very similarly uncontrolled way to how they would act outdoors. Calls made by young people during the Youth Review for a space that acted as a 'hub' for diverse activities that appealed to a broad spectrum of tastes would end the days of youth clubs offering a base for atomised groups to co-exist, and replace this with genuine positive interaction and convergence around shared interests and activities.

A new type of youth space

191. Young people need a local service that is accessible by foot or by affordable and reliable transport. Many of the young people consulted through the Youth Review complained of existing youth clubs that were inconsistent in their organisation, often with activities that did not take place as scheduled or events that were called off, sometimes due to staffing shortages or low level organisation. Despite many examples of excellent youth provision, the Youth Review heard evidence of wildly varying standards of service, often with under-investment in facilities limiting the quality of the experience for young people. Teenagers have called for activities that are reliable and consistent, providing access to positive opportunities after school and through the weekends and holidays. These might be programmes of art, games, sports or music sessions, with specialist classes organised by inspirational adults.

> *"If I could build a place in the local area for kids it would have cool things to do and give us the chance to do things we can't do at home. I like art so some the chance to do art or sports would be good. A building that kids can socialise in would be wicked because we don't have any of that when school closes. Also some adults that are interested in us and can sort out trips or drama stuff or something like that. I think overall kids just want somewhere to safely hang out and a place they can rely on to be open."*
> ***Natalie, 17, Tower Hamlets***

As well as contributing to combating or forestalling some of the more negative aspects of vulnerable youth transitions, informal work with young people also contributes to such issues as personal responsibility, active citizenship and community involvement - all on top of preparation for the labour market.
National Youth Agency

192. Whilst schemes such as Positive Activities for Young People have had a positive effect in providing opportunities for those at risk of offending, evidence from Local Authorities suggests that potential problems include a lack of overall coherence. Whilst new programmes are launched and old ones repackaged, the result may be a lack of overall strategic effect in bringing about meaningful long-term change for communities.

193. Young people want to see fun, engaging programmes of activity that allow them to interact with each other in a safe environment that they can call their own. Research by Leon Feinstein and colleagues gives a sense of the type of youth environment that is best placed to bring about positive outcomes for young people. An analysis of this data released by IPPR in 2006 suggests a link between activities associated with positive outcomes in later life and those that improve 'non cognitions' - or personal and social skills - between the ages of 10 and 16. Feinstein's research tracked the outcomes in later life of a cohort of teenagers born in 1970 who took part in a range of extra-curricular activity during the 1980s. This included attending youth clubs, participating in school clubs, attending church and taking part in uniformed activities. The link between the effect of these activities and the strength of personal and social skills - themselves having an impact on earning potential and labour market effectiveness in later life - demonstrates that an important part of measuring the effectiveness of extra-curricular activity is its effect on the quality of the personal and social skills of participants.[265]

194. The research, examining outcomes amongst the 1970s cohort of young people, concluded that old-style youth clubs had a negative effect on non-cognitive skills, whilst taking part in music, drama and uniformed activities improved personal and social effectiveness.[266] Analysis of this data suggests that it is those activities that take part in a group setting, that have clear and well-defined aims that have a team dimension and follow set goals that are best placed to have a positive effect on the personal and social skills of participants. These conclusions are reinforced by more recent analysis by Leon Feinstein that suggests, rather than youth clubs being negative in themselves, it is participation in unstructured and unmediated activity that has the impact of undermining personal and social development - itself leading to worsened outcomes in later life.[267]

195. Far from weakening the case for youth centre provision, this offers a sense of the type and ethos of service that is best placed to support young people. During the 1980s, the period during which the cohort took part in the extra-curricular activity that has been assessed, it could be argued that youth clubs sometimes provided limited services, often without sufficient levels of leadership and supervision by adults. In the light of this research the conclusion can be drawn that programmes of activity that ought to be offered should involve clear structure and direction, challenge, encouragement for young people to work together and opportunities to socialise in a positive environment. Moreover, leadership from inspirational and supportive adults is an essential component.

196. Feedback from young people involved in the Youth Review suggests that replacing 'hanging out' with an intensely structured curriculum may not appeal to many teenagers as it will simply mimic school. However, semi-structured and supervised activities, of a form that is both fun and engaging, can replicate the core qualities of those activities that the cohort analysis cited as being most

beneficial in terms of bringing about positive outcomes in later life - including structure, teamwork and a sense of working towards shared goals. The analysis released by IPPR of the features of youth service models that promote positive development included physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships with youth workers and peers, opportunities for belonging, positive social norms, support for a sense of 'mattering', opportunities for skill building and the integration of the family, school and the wider community in delivery.268 This latter provides a sense of the importance of coordinating youth services in a way that involves the school, parents and the community.

The youth offer in the community

197. Whilst young people are often blamed for problems in the local environment such as graffiti and vandalism, those involved in the Youth Review drew attention to high levels of concern amongst teenagers over the state of local areas. Litter, graffiti and the poor state of many local buildings were complaints raised by young people. Boarded up buildings - closed to public use - and neglected flats, particularly in urban and inner city areas, were cited as having an effect in making young people feel depressed, whilst affecting their sense of pride in the local area. Many spoke of a feeling widespread amongst young people that the existence of so many disused and neglected buildings creates no excuse for adults to refuse teenagers their own space in communities. This ties in with the concerns raised by many young people over the state of existing youth clubs, with tired buildings and facilities undermining attractiveness.

198. The Youth Review encountered examples of existing community buildings that could be upgraded to support an improved youth offer with minimal capital investment. These included children's centres already offering integrated services for children, leisure centres and community centres - many of which closed late in the afternoon or early in the evening and could remain open for longer in order to support youth provision 0-19. Innovative Youth Services have developed models of service that have a strong emphasis on outreach programmes and mobile youth work schemes alongside their central services. These are to be welcomed in reaching more vulnerable teenagers but the sense from those involved in the Youth Review was that of an importance to young people of having their own space and a 'physicality' to the service. When asked about the ideal form of youth service provision, 92% of those consulted said it was 'important' or 'very important' that it involved a space that young people could call their own.

CASE STUDY
Carousel Children's Centre - Braintree, Essex

The Carousel Centre opened in April 2006, and its high-quality refurbished school building offers services to children and parents from before birth to 19 years of age and up to 25 years with some young people. It offers an example of the successful co-location of children's and youth services in one building, whilst demonstrating the potential for an after-school youth service to be provided through an existing children's centre.

Half of the building houses the Children's Centre, with its nursery and child care provision, including holiday and after school clubs for 5-11 year-olds run by 4Children. This part of the building also provides office space and consulting rooms for Mid-Essex Primary Care Trust (PCT) staff, including a Community Paediatrician, Speech and Language Therapists and an Ophthalmologist. Additional health workers also deliver services in the centre, and a Health Visitor is permanently based there. 4Children has secured agreements to provide office space for PCT professionals, ensuring that there is continuity of care for children in their community as they move on from the early years provision within the centre and securing sustainability for the future.

The centre provides accommodation for Home Start activities and for the Adult Community College and Jobcentre Plus. There is a training kitchen on the premises that prepares food for the nursery and trains local people with learning disabilities and prepares them for employment. Future plans include a discrete Mother and Toddler Group for Traveller families, which will be run in partnership with the Traveller Education Service.

The Youth Centre located on the Carousel Centre site has been created using the Make Space model and comprises a social space, a cyber-café, a separate information point (providing access to information on health issues, Connexions and other advice and guidance leaflets), an arts and craft room, meeting/ activity space, a quiet area and office space. There is also a large playing field and multi-sports area and

further accommodation behind the main centre, 'The Den', comprising a self-contained portacabin suitable for small groups or meetings. The centre hosts an alternative education programme for excluded pupils from a wide catchment area and a complementary education programme for year 9 and 10 pupils who are at risk of exclusion. There is a daily drop in for young people aged 13-25 from 4.30-10.00pm, offering a range of activities, workshops, advice and support to over 200 young people.

199. School venues can form an important element of youth service delivery. The Government strategy to enable all secondary schools to offer access to extended services by 2010 is likely to mean that providing after-school services in or around school sites will become the norm. Investment in school buildings, much of which will seek to incorporate more community based services, will also provide a positive basis for an enhanced youth offer.

200. Furthermore, secondary school populations are currently peaking - meaning that there is likely to be surplus accommodation in schools that can be used to provide community facilities, the most obvious being the provision of services to young people and their parents. IT, sports and art facilities within schools provide the opportunity for joint use of resources with the ambition being for schools to offer a range of integrated provision, including a varied menu of activities, health and social care, lifelong learning opportunities, family learning and parenting support.

201. When asked whether they would be likely to use youth services offered through school buildings, 68% of the young people involved in the Youth Review indicated that they would welcome such provision. Important caveats were that such activities should be inspirational, not constitute just 'an extension of the school day' and that coordination should be carried out by youth workers instead of teachers. This will be essential if extended schools are able to effectively support those young people who are disengaged with school.

Wider services and addressing support needs

202. A key element of the youth offer is the provision of support. The support needs of teenagers are varied and diverse - from specialist help to tackle risky behaviour such as drinking and drug taking, to support for mental health, combating bullying, diet and eating. For others it may be around career advice, training or employment options.

203. In all these areas the provision of specialist support for young people is an important element of the youth offer. Whether linked in to a universal service or through more high-level and targeted intervention, it is crucial that support services are provided in a way that is accessible to young people and respond in a timely way to their needs. Central to this is the need to provide support to the young person as a whole, with clear linkages, through referrals or paths to specialists, to more targeted interventions. Such an approach is central to the *Every Child Matters* ambition and is also at the core of *Youth Matters*. However progress is in most areas incremental, with a wide variety of agencies and organisations - often with little cross-over and processes for information sharing - being involved.

204. Young people with particular needs can still often find themselves overwhelmed by different interventions, with Connexions, social services, Youth Offending Teams and Positive Activities for Young People sometimes appear to be battling to offer advice and support. Too often, support services that target issues such as drug and alcohol use, teenage pregnancy and criminal behaviour are also perceived to be on the periphery of mainstream youth provision and are insufficiently linked into universal services.

205. Early identification and subsequent intervention can be made much more difficult as a result, with services still only really kicking into action once a particular problem has become entrenched. Research carried out at the end of 2004 found that Youth Services work with a staggering 17 partners to deliver their youth offer on any one day. Synthesis and coordination of services to provide a more effective and prompt response to emerging problems for individual young people is essential if a scattergun approach is to be avoided.[269]

206. For many, the Connexions service was built to deliver such a framework, but its focus has often been primarily on education and employment for young people. Whilst there are many examples of a holistic service, in some areas the core focus of Connexions advisors has been on education, training and work. The effect of this has been less emphasis on effectively tackling social and emotional problems - many of which are tied into the conditions that make training and work much more difficult in the first place. Moreover, early

intervention to prevent these problems from becoming embedded, rather than mitigating their effect, is often a challenge for the current framework of support services. In a survey carried out in 2003, less than 12% of young people had talked to a Connexions personal advisor about stress, alcohol, drugs, housing or bullying. Onward referrals from Connexions were found to be almost exclusively to work or education-related organisations such as the Job Centre or the local Further Education College.[270]

207. However, there is clearly a demand for career advice, with 81% of young people involved in the Youth Review saying that they do not receive enough advice on work, training and career planning. Such an approach must focus on involving the most socially excluded teenagers who are likely to have a much wider set of needs. This is likely to involve additional training for careers advice staff, for example in the particular barriers to work that disabled young people may face, in terms of both practical accessibility and the attitudes of potential employers. Education and training are essential drivers in the battle against poverty but consultations with hard-to-engage young people indicate that is often more important to tackle barriers to learning, such as drug use, low self-esteem and poor social skills, as a predicate to engaging in career planning.

208. What emerges as clear is the immense potential for delivery points for positive activities to be combined with support services. This would enable young people to access the whole range of youth services in a 'one stop shop'. 84% of young people consulted through the Youth Review indicated that they would be more likely to access support services if they are offered in the same place as fun, exciting programmes of activity, including music, gaming and sport. This universal service can provide ongoing sources of advice and support that can cater for a range of needs either directly or through referrals - either through lower-level support or more sustained guidance that stops short of the more serious and involved process of referral to social services.

Young people's workforce

209. The importance of highly trained young people's workers in creating and sustaining the youth offer is unsurprisingly seen as paramount. Young people involved in the Youth Review said that the qualities of adults who work effectively with young people should include empathy,

leadership and an ability to inspire and excite teenagers, whilst offering a sense of security and someone to talk to. Whilst having encountered many examples of excellent youth work, evidence provided to the Youth Review by Local Authorities indicates a range of challenges in recruiting and retaining talented youth workers. The job of a youth worker is a difficult one, involving the need to strike a balance between engaging young people in a way that builds their trust and confidence, whilst providing access to meaningful opportunities that meets young people's developmental and support needs. A recruitment shortage of well-qualified staff and the challenge of retaining and developing existing staff create barriers for many Youth Services in providing adults who are able to bring services to life for young people. Young people clearly wanted more from many of their workers. The importance of the role of youth workers in supervising, mediating and inspiring the environment of youth activities, underlined by the Feinstein research[271], demonstrates that workforce is a key priority in the development of the youth offer.

210. An essential element of addressing the young people's workforce is reforming the culture of delivery. In many youth services adults working with teenagers have acted in isolation and often operated only within their own sphere of influence. Information sharing and referrals between support agencies can facilitate a joined up approach, but a culture of collaboration and coordination between adults who work with young people is crucial to its achievement. Ensuring that workers are able to lead, manage and support a wide range of inspirational, joined up opportunities and support for young people as well as forming powerful and positive relationships with individual children and teenagers will be key.

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **Create 2,000 Young People's Hubs**

  The creation of 2,000 new Young People's Hubs - targeted in the 20% most disadvantaged wards - can offer fun, structured activities, social space and support after school, on weekends and during school holidays for all young people. Hubs would also provide a focus for coordinated support and referrals for young people in difficulty, as well as wider services for young people. Hubs may be based in schools, youth centres or other community buildings and would provide a focus and coordination point for wider support.

- **A new young people's workforce**

  An additional 4,000 Young People's Workers, led by 2,000 Young People's Champions (youth workers who have demonstrated exceptional skills and experience in respect of working with teenagers) would be recruited to lead and coordinate the offer to young people around the new Young People's Hubs. A wider workforce development programme should be rolled out to transform the youth worker profession.

- **Entitlement to a recognised and inspirational Young Person's Curriculum**

  The curriculum would guarantee an offer to young people of wide ranging and high-quality activities in their area. The core areas of skill, knowledge and understanding would be emotional literacy, creativity and enterprise, health and well-being, and active citizenship. The framework would enable young people's organisations to focus their work and develop good practice.

- **Free public transport for all young people under 18**

  Free transport supported by local authorities for young people under 18 and a review of young people's transport needs in every area would ensure that support and activities are never out of reach for teenagers. Good and affordable transport is essential in enabling children and young people to access the services they need, whether they are living in inner city, urban or rural communities.

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Chapter 8

Young People, Government and Citizenship

Summary

Young people should feel confident in having a say in the world around them. They should feel respected and that their voice is listened to - indeed, this is central to making them feel confident enough to play a proper role in communities and in society as a whole. Throughout the Youth Review we have heard consistent complaints that young people are not consulted, with many describing the world around them as having been moulded by adults who are out of touch. Despite new requirements for consultation and new representation emerging, the perception for most young people remains that no one is listening. As a result of this it is commonly the case that their world and community are not perceived to be 'theirs', with statistics showing dangerous rises in the feeling of alienation and apathy towards what goes on in the community

Such perceived apathy is also reflected in the formal democratic process, with dramatically low turnouts in formal elections and a perceived lack of interest in politics fuelling the idea that teenagers are not interested in contributing. But this is a misreading: whilst it is true that the word 'politics' does little to inspire young people, there is no shortage of enthusiasm about influencing and changing the world around them. The groundswell of young people involved in campaign movements including Make Poverty History and Live 8 illustrate that young people are political, even if they profess to have little interest in politics. Meanwhile, the growth of single-issue pressure groups, as well as youth membership wings, demonstrate that teenagers care much about the world around them. It is the language of involvement that must change, combined with finding new ways to create interest. Political processes and even the word 'politics' does little to excite young people, whilst recasting 'politics' as 'changing the world', or 'having a say' or 'not letting adults make all the decisions' can do much more to capture the imagination of youth. Whilst visiting an MP's surgery may not be high on the agenda of a 17 year old, signing an online petition or going to see a charity concert concerned with third world debt does much more to inspire. For young people such involvement is the new politics of the era.

The challenge for decision-makers is therefore to re-imagine political processes to appeal more to young people. If Local Government and serviceproviders genuinely want to incorporate the views of teenagers they must find new ways to empower young people. School Councils and Youth Councils in local communities are patchy in their spread and effectiveness, whilst innovative examples of consultation and involvement demonstrate that the key to inspiring young people is to give them real influence. This can be through the spending of youth budgets, decisive power over the form of local services or some say over designated facilities in communities that they can call their own.

Evidence demonstrates that parental and family education background, as well as income, is linked to the level of empowerment of young people. It is those teenagers whose parents are less educated or in lower income bands that demonstrate the least confidence about having a say in the world around them. These are the groups that we need to empower most urgently, before disinterested teenagers become disaffected adults, with adverse consequences for the health of our democracy and for levels of inclusion within communities.

Evidence from young people themselves offers guidance on how to achieve this. Former US Speaker Tip O'Neill famously declared that "all politics is local". The attitudes of young people demonstrate the truth of this in the starkest way of all, with larger numbers of young people already feeling empowered and enthusiastic about influencing services that are close to home. They already feel that they have a right to determine matters concerned with services and facilities that they use. Young people consistently told the Youth Review that they want their voices to be heard, to be consulted and to be involved. By taking radical steps to build their voice into planning processes, delivery issues and all the steps in between in providing services we will be better able to build a socially equipped and participatory generation of teenagers - the result of this will be better-used facilities, services that are more in touch with teenagers and better engage with young people's needs and ambitions.

Young people and formal politics

211. The health of democracy and the legitimacy of political processes depend on people voting, taking part and feeling represented. Our system of Government is built on this foundation. It is often suggested that engagement with, and interest in, politics is declining amongst all age groups, but particularly so in relation to young voters. This is not without some justification, with evidence of growing disaffection from the formal political process evidenced by the fact that only 39% of 18-24 year olds voted in the 2001 General Election.[272] This trend is not new, with trends throughout the last decade demonstrating that young people are less likely to appear on the electoral register and to vote. According to M-Power, 20% of 18-25s were not even registered to vote in 1995.[273] The General Election that followed it, in 1997, saw the lowest turnout of any post-war General Election, at 71.6%, whilst analysis of the 1997 British Election survey data indicates that 40% of 18-24 year olds failed to turn out.[274] Studies produced on the 2005 election indicated a range of variables that are strongly associated with non-voting, with age ranking near the top when income, educational and class differences were controlled.[275] In that election, only 37% of eligible 18-24 year olds voted, representing a 2-point drop from 2001 and a 23-point drop from 1997.[276]

212. Voting at the ballot box is perhaps the most mainstream form of political participation. Some go on to join or become active in a political party. Here, too, numbers of young people participating are very low.

"I don't know much about politics so I don't feel I could vote - how would I know who to vote for? You see it on TV, and it sounds like they're talking in a different language. Politics is for adults. I might feel differently when I'm 18 but for now, they can keep it..."
Chris, 16, Wentworth

Findings from a MORI poll carried out at the end of the 1990s indicated that just 1 in 20 members of political parties is under the age of 25.[277] More recent studies suggest that 8% of Labour Party members and 12% of Conservative Party members are aged under 35.[278] Until the 1997 election the average age of Labour Party members was 42, and 62 for Conservative Party members[279], whilst by 2005 this had become 59 and 54 respectively.[280] The number of young people who said that they care which party wins the next election fell from 68% in 1994 to 39% in 2003.[281] Surveys also reveal that, compared with older people, young people are even less likely to engage in political activities which involve significant informational or other costs, for example attending meetings, lobbying or standing for office.[282] Of course, age is not alone as an indicator of likelihood to vote, with low family income and educational achievement also linked to a probability of non-voting.[283]

213. This gives rise to concerning conclusions - chief amongst them that being born into a lower-income family makes a young person significantly less likely to take part in electing law-makers. Social and demographic factors have a significant impact on voting, meaning that for young people growing up in low-income families political disengagement becomes much more of a dangerous likelihood.

Whereas in the past, young people were more likely to accept that they had formal civic duties, such as voting, we are now living in a more selective culture in which people are reflexive about their identities as citizens and consumerist in making choices about how to use their time.
The Carnegie Trust

214. In the past, voting was regarded as a civic duty. However, there is evidence that this perception is declining amongst young people, with the number of people agreeing that voting is a duty falling from 36% in 1998 to 31% in 2003. This has been accompanied by a rise in the number of young people who believe that it is not worth voting because 'nothing will change', with proportions increasing from 7% to 10% over the same period. Analysis of results of research indicated that young people from poorer households were much likelier to agree that voting is not worth making the effort, with teenagers from households with a below £15,000 income quartile having been found to be 11 percentage points more likely to abstain than those with an income quartile of above £50,000.[284]

215. It should be of concern to policy-makers that whilst there has been a decrease in young people's overall level of interest in politics, according to data, there is no evidence of a corresponding decline in adults' overall level of interest - suggesting that disengagement from the processes and issues of politics is a concern specific to young people.

216. A MORI Omnibus survey working with over 1,000 adults studied political behaviour over the previous two years by assigning a rating for demonstrations of political engagement, including presenting views to a councillor or MP, urging someone outside the family to vote, urging others to get in touch with a local councillor or MP, and taking an active part in a political campaign. Findings revealed a clear link between age and voting, with young people (and to a lesser extent the elderly) being far less politically active than respondents in the 31-59 age group. Whilst 22% of those aged 46-59 reported participation in two or more activities, just 5% of 15-21 year olds did so. Whilst income and class factors produced an additional inclination to abstain, the researchers isolated evidence of youth as an independent factor in and of itself in leading to non-voting - reinforcing that the reasons for poor turnout amongst young people go beyond social exclusion-related issues and are likely owed to a phenomenon more or less specific to youth.[285]

217. Another symptom of disengagement from formal politics has been a decline in party identification amongst young people, meaning an 'emotional' attachment or loyalty to a particular political party. Many theorists have suggested that party identification is passed on from adults to young people and that the patterns of loyalty of young voters closely resemble and develop alongside those of parents. Because of this it is not surprising that levels of party identification are lower amongst children than adults. However, there is evidence that what levels there are of party identification are declining markedly. In 2003, only 8% of young people described themselves as supporting a particular party, while a further 13% described themselves as feeling closer to one party than another. Overall over 78% of young people indicated that they were neither a supporter of one particular party, nor felt any closer to one than another - a substantial increase from results of a similar survey held in 1994 that identified 56% of young voters having no particular political alignments.[286] Interestingly, amongst the 18-24 age group, between 2002 and 2004 there was a rise in the number of young people who felt no identification with any political party from 26% to 40% - suggesting that the events during that period had

a disproportionate effect on young people.[287] Whilst a rise in the number of potential 'floating voters' might not seem to provoke concern in itself, the fact that political parties provide the main vehicles for political debate in this country provokes concern in the light of substantially decreasing appeal to young people.

218. There is evidence that part of the reason for this disengagement is owed to disillusionment with formal politics - meaning the politics of the ballot box, the House of Commons and political parties. The results of a survey carried out in 2005 suggest that only 27% of 18-24 year olds are satisfied with their MP, compared with 55% of over 55s.[288] Levels of trust in politicians amongst young people below the voting age were examined by the Home Office Citizenship Survey of 2003. A key finding was that trust in politicians was greatest amongst those aged 11-13 years old, after which point it markedly decreased.[289] The sense amongst young people involved in the Youth Review was that politicians had failed to find appropriate ways to engage with them, with 86% favouring specific 'Youth Manifestos' in constituencies.

219. A report by the Youth Voting Network, released in 2005, attempted to rate the popularity of various common methods of engaging with young people amongst MPs. The most popular means of communication included visits to schools (70%), visits to youth groups (63%) and the sending of an 18th birthday card (35%). Relatively few MPs, as a proportion, offered special youth surgeries that were concerned with specific issues of relevance to young people (15%), few carried out special mailings to teenagers (22%), and only 3% of all MPs offered a specific section of their website for the use of young people.[290] Research analysed in 2004 indicated that six out of ten young voters consider that political parties need to do more to engage young people, with 26% asking for more direct contact, 21% asking MPs to do more to listen to young people, 10% suggesting clearer and more youth-specific information about policies and platforms, and 5% asking politicians to engage with them by speaking the 'language' of young people more effectively.[291]

220. Changes in attitudes to formal politics and voting have demonstrated increasing disengagement, with polling suggesting that the term and implication of the word 'politics' has an extremely off-putting effect for young people. Research carried out in 2003 found that less than a third of teenagers said they had even some interest in

the subject, with over a third commenting that they had no interest whatsoever. Comparing these results to similar research carried out in 1994 suggests a decline in interest in politics, which was already regarded as being low during that period, with 38% indicating that they had at least some interest in political issues. Over the same period the proportion expressing no interest at all grew from just over a quarter to just over a third of young people. Variations between groups of respondents gives us a sense of the difference in perception of formal politics between groups of young people, with those aged between 16 and 19 tending to be more interested in the issues than those between the ages of 12 and 15. In 2003, 12% of 16-19 year olds had 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of interest in politics, compared to only 6% of 12-15 year olds. Just under a third, 32%, had no interest at all in political issues, compared with 39% of 12-15 year olds.[292]

221. Interestingly, the most dramatic variations in young people's political interest related more to the characteristics of their household than their own personal characteristics. In particular, young people from richer households, and households where the adult had a higher education qualification, were markedly more interested in politics on average. Evidence demonstrated that around a quarter of young people living in homes where the adult British Social Attitudes respondent had a degree or similar level qualification had no interest in politics, compared to nearly half of young people living in households where the adult respondent had no education qualifications. Correlations were identified both between adult interest, parental education background and the interest of the child in politics.[293]

222. To take an inference from this evidence that young people are somehow naturally 'apolitical' would be a misreading. There is evidence to demonstrate that young people's involvement in 'informal' politics is actually very high. Moreover, polling indicates that there is no suggestion amongst young people that they do not care about issues that affect them and the world in which they live. A survey held by the New Politics Network in 2000 amongst 705 teenagers suggested that 54% considered that they would discuss the news with their friends and family in the future. Variations in levels of interest in topical news issues were noted in accordance both with education level and schooling status, with 47% of those still in full-time education saying they were either 'very' or 'somewhat' interested in the news, compared to 34% of those who left education at the statutory school leaving age. Those with either educational

" *...according to a survey of 16-20 year olds carried out in 2005 on behalf of the Electoral Commission, 90% said they have no involvement in politics but 60% commented that they would like to have far more of a say in the running of the country* "

or work-related qualifications were far more likely to be interested in the news (44% somewhat or very interested) compared to those who lacked such qualifications (12%). Variations were observed by gender and ethnicity, with young men displaying more interest than young women, and those respondents who classified themselves as white displaying lower levels of interest than their ethnic minority counterparts. Interestingly, regional variations were also noted, with young people living in London showing higher levels of interest (51%) than those living in Wales (32%) and Scotland (33%).[294]

223. Perhaps more strikingly, according to an ICM survey of 16-20 year olds carried out in 2005 on behalf of the Electoral Commission, 90% said they have no involvement in politics but 60% commented that they would like to have far more of a say in the running of the country.[295] This indicates greater enthusiasm when the word 'politics' is eschewed in favour of a phrase that suggests autonomy and having a say in the running of affairs concerned with the lives of young people. When attempting to identify which issues surrounding the running of the country appeared most important to the sample of young people, respondents' choices indicated similarities with older people's political priorities: health appeared to be the most important political issue (28%), followed by education (14%) and transport (4%).[296]

224. IPPR has sought to demonstrate that young people, far from becoming apolitical, have symbolised a shift in political expression itself through a move away from formal political parties and towards pressure groups and single-issue campaigns. The Institute highlights the large proportion of young people involved in the 2003 march convened against going to war in the Gulf and in the Make Poverty History campaign, in which over eight million people in the UK wore a white wristband to illustrate their support for political action to relieve Third World debt.[297] This may be perceived as a preference amongst young people for involvement in broader political movements over formal processes such as contacting MPs. IPPR highlights a fall in membership of unions amongst young people and contrasts this with increases amongst membership bases of charities and organisations including English Heritage.[298]

225. In 2005 the British Attitudes Survey attempted to identify the degree to which young people would like to be involved in the making of decisions that have an impact on their lives. This was done by taking two issues - one

national, relating to the introduction of compulsory ID cards, and one local, relating to the closure of a local sports centre - and assessing how much say teenagers believed that they should have in the making of each decision. In both cases, clear majorities felt that they should have at least 'some of the say' in the decision, with over three-quarters believing this in respect of the sports centre shut-down and two-thirds in relation to the ID cards debate. This suggests a healthy level of interest in taking part in decision-making both on a local and a national scale - with a clear lead for having some involvement in more local issues that affect the lives of young people on a more day-to-day level. Interestingly, it was found to be the local leisure centre closure in relation to which young people believed that adults should have less say, with only 58% agreeing that older people should have 'quite a bit' of influence over the decision. One notable result of the research was a finding that, generally speaking, teenagers from households in which the adult has a higher educational background were markedly less deferential towards adults exercising the majority of influence over decision-making, preferring in greater numbers to have their voice heard.[299]

"I'm definitely up for making a difference if I think it's something I can affect. I think young people feel a lot more able to change things in their local area than big international issues or things in other parts of the country they haven't even been to. I think a big appeal of Make Poverty History for young people was the fact that it came across as a music thing instead of a politics thing. That's why a lot of people got involved. But I think while we all hoped to make a difference there, I believe we can make more of a difference on issues that are closer to us. Older people just need to give us the chance to have a go."
Charlotte, 21, Slough

226. The conclusion that teenagers are more likely to feel able to influence decisions on a local scale and on lower levels is reinforced by findings from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: 92% believed they could influence decisions affecting their family and home life and 64% felt they could influence decisions affecting their school, whilst fewer young people felt that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (33%) and the whole country (15%). Interesting variations according to age were noted, with older respondents being more likely to feel able to influence decisions at home and younger respondents

feeling a greater capacity to bring about change more widely - suggesting that a feeling of powerlessness begins to set in during the later teens. Almost half of 14 and 15 year olds felt that their opinions were taken into account by their family, compared with about a third of 11 and 12 year olds. Meanwhile, in terms of influencing decisions in the local area, 38% of 11 year olds felt empowered enough to take action, whilst the corresponding figure for 15 year olds was just 28%. The figures in relation to changing issues affecting the whole country were 19% and 11% respectively.[300]

227. Further research attempted to measure actual engagement in what might very loosely be described as 'politics', but perhaps better as 'expressing views'. This was conducted through taking indications of the likelihood for young people to respond to an unfair decision having been made in the local area through taking various actions, including writing a letter of complaint (47%), asking their parents to write a letter of complaint (33%), starting or signing a petition (29%), contacting radio, TV or a newspaper (12%), contacting their MP (12%), contacting a Government department (11%) and going on a protest or demonstration (13%). The research also identified actual levels of involvement in these forms of political expression, finding that amongst those young people who said they have 'some' interest in politics over half had participated in some form of action such as these, compared with only one in four of those who said that they had no political interest at all. Interestingly, from the entire sample, across all variations of degree of political interest, there appears to be a gap between actions that young people would take and those that they have taken, perhaps in part owing to the respondents being so young that they have not yet had cause or perhaps owing to action not measuring to intentions. Whilst 86% said that they would take at least one form of action to express dissatisfaction, when reporting actions that they had taken over eight in ten reported that they had taken none. This points at least to a capacity amongst young people for political expression, even if that potential is, in the case of many, not fully realised.[301]

228. Indications from young people involved in the Youth Review suggest that a perceived lack of knowledge amongst young people about formal political issues inhibits their enthusiasm to engage. This is reinforced by research from the New Politics Network that found that 53% of young people felt that they did not know enough about political issues to comment on them, whilst the same proportion reported that they felt that they were not sufficiently well-informed to confidently vote. Over half complained that they found it difficult to understand what goes on in Government and in the world of politics.[302]

229. Teenagers' usage of news media demonstrates an interest in current affairs and developing stories across the world. The 2005 findings from the NFER survey on citizenship education found that most young people between the ages of 14 and 17 watch one to two hours of television per day. Of the 16-17 year olds surveyed, over 80% reported that they either sometimes or always watched television news. Around half of teenagers (48%) report at least one form of interactive engagement with a website, suggesting a high level of interest and motivation amongst young people to be active online. This could involve sending an email or text message to a website, contributing to a message board, offering advice to others, filling in a form or signing an online petition.[303]

230. When it comes to actively seeking out information about political, environmental, human rights or other participatory issues, 54% of 12-19 year olds who go online at least once per week have visited at least one such website. 27% have visited a charity website, 22% an environmental site, 21% a government site, 18% a site concerned with human/gay/children's rights and 14% a site concerned with improving conditions with school and work. There is evidence that online media appeals more to older children, with 31% of 16-19 year olds regularly logging on, compared with 21% of 12-15 year olds.[304]

231. A conclusion that may be drawn from this is that the closer the teenager gets to adulthood, and the right to vote, the more relevant as a means of communications online material becomes to them. A similar proportion, 26% of 12-19 year olds, go online at least once per week to read the news, with more boys (29% versus 22% of girls), more middle class children (28% versus 22% of working class) and older teenagers (37% of 16-19 year olds compared to 17% of 12-15 year olds) doing so. The results of an exercise in adding together the different types of civic sites in general demonstrates similar results, with boys, middle class and older teenagers tending to visit a broader range of civic or political sites. On average, however, only one of these sites out of a possible five variants is visited by each individual, suggesting that, in overall web activity, visiting civic websites is low on young people's list of priorities for spending their time, with only 31% of girls and 23% of boys having visited two or more different kinds of these sites.[305]

CASE STUDY
Youth Parliament - Wirral

In 2006 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council decided to move away from discussion and look at ways through which its young people could influence policy, decision making and planning. This is an area of contrasts: the highest levels of youth poverty in Europe and the most millionaires per square mile outside London. The Youth Parliament has taken young people's involvement in decision-making to a whole new level. All schools were involved and nobody was excluded. Representatives from grammar, secondary and special schools and referral units took part. Hard-to-reach groups were targeted to ensure that even young people who had disengaged from school took part in the consultation. Youth clubs, area youth forums and outreach services were invited to send delegates.

A decision was taken at the beginning of the project to treat all the young representatives with as much care and respect as the elected councillors and the CEOs of service providers. If the head of Wirral transport services was going to meetings with tablecloths, refreshments and flower arrangements then so would the children. The initial conference discussed each of the issues of concern to the children and young people and in the evening convened the Wirral's first formal Youth Parliament. Workshops were used to allow the young people to put their concerns and ideas to councillors and service heads. The lead member for each of the 'problem' services engaged with the young people on the issues raised.

Young people and having a say in services

232. It is widely recognised that the relevance, suitability and quality of services for young people can be promoted through involvement of young people in their design. However, evidence of the degree and effectiveness of steps taken by strategic developers and service providers to listen to the voice of young people whilst planning and delivering services is mixed. A survey of Local Authorities found that over three-quarters were working with young people to involve them in decision-making, with seven out of ten reporting that they felt that young people had some influence over decisions made within the Local Authority. Almost 90% said that they involved young people in identifying problems and areas of concern within the community services, not necessarily specific to youth services, and almost three-quarters said they involved young people in developing ideas on new policies and services.[306]

233. However, an example of a less optimistic perspective on involvement of young people can be found in a 1999 study that concluded that young people had at best a 'minor' impact on regeneration initiatives, and that what involvement there is was limited to "youth specific issues rather than matters affecting the community as a whole".[307] In a survey carried out amongst Local Authorities over 90% of respondents indicated that young people were involved in youth work, and around three-quarters said that they were involved in education, leisure and community safety.[308] The conclusions of research amongst Local Authorities in England found that in only two of the twelve Local Authorities studied had young people succeeded in changing the focus at strategic level, with involvement largely being limited to fine-tuning or advising on the presentation of pre-designed ideas for services.[309]

234. A core aim of the *Youth Matters* framework is to involve young people more directly in the delivery and running of youth services. Whilst there is little doubt that the culture of involvement has changed dramatically with representation from young people in all aspects of service development becoming increasingly prevalent, the depth and sophistication of that involvement is not yet coming through.

235. Despite some examples of innovative and dynamic ways of involving young people in centres and through Local Authority consultation schemes, there is some evidence that many youth workers are finding it challenging to build the views of young people themselves into their service in such a direct way. Research carried out at the end of 2004 by Make Space amongst 132 Local Authorities (88% of the total number) suggested that only 27% of Local Authority Youth Services had consulted with young people as part of the provision of an integrated service, whilst only 20% saw consultation with young people as part of the development of national services for young people.[310] On a youth worker level, research carried out by the Carnegie Trust attempted to quantify the proportion of time spent by youth workers

on involving young people directly and supporting young people's participation in decision-making. Only 18% responded that 100% of their time was allocated to involving teenagers in decisions being taken in their centre, whilst 17% said it was '50% and over' and 15% said it was '75% and over'. This gives cause for encouragement on a local level but this is tempered by the fact that 25% indicated that 'less than a quarter', and 20% responded that 'between a quarter and a half', of their time was spent in this way.[311] This suggests a more positive outlook for youth worker engagement with young people on decision-making than that in respect of Local Authority work. However, this picture of rates of youth worker engagement can only realistically be described as presenting a very mixed bag.

236. Further evidence from the Carnegie Trust gives us a sense of the type of involvement taken by young people in decisions affecting their club or local service. Respondents to a survey in 2001 were asked to choose from a range of answers detailing how young people are involved in public decision-making. The top five ways of involving young people, according to the results of that research, were asking them for ideas about changing existing policies and services (83%), asking them to comment on proposed new policies and services (73%), involving them in researching services and policies (58%), involving them in planning (56%), involving them in direct service delivery (38%) and, to a much lesser extent, involving young people in the management of services (28%).[312] Results consistently suggested that services run through the local voluntary sector were more effective than in the national sector and, particularly, the Local Authority at involving young people directly in decision-making.

> "I think if parts of the local area are there for us, like leisure centres or the youth club, then we should have some say in what they're like. Sometimes you get the feeling that things have been designed to be like what adults want rather than what would be appealing to young people. Some councillor might as well be designing it for what kids back in his day would have gone for. I think if you let teenagers have a go at designing things then what you'll end up with in the end will be a lot more interesting to us. That's because we know what we like and what we'd use."
> **James, 18, Slough**

237. Enthusiasm amongst young people to get involved in community decision-making is generally high, but there is evidence of variations by sex and age in levels of interest. A national survey carried out in 2001 asked young people and adults how important it is for adults to listen to children and young people. Results found that females of all ages tend to believe that listening is more important than males, with 72% of young girls and 55% of young boys saying that they regard it as 'very important'. Feedback from parents indicated that 88% of women and 78% of men were keen to see more involvement of young people in decisions relating to services.[313] Local Authorities tend to involve older teenagers in participation activities, with 93% of those who could demonstrate involvement being most likely to consult 14-16 year olds, 86% working with young people aged 17-18, and only 66% focusing on 10-13 year olds.[314]

238. Consultations carried out as part of the Youth Review found that young people do not necessarily expect the final say on public decisions, but they do want to 'have some say' and have their views taken into account, particularly when they are affected by the relevant service. Popular responses for the reasons that young people get involved in public decision-making in local areas included to have a voice, to create change to services and policies, to change adults' attitudes to young people, a result of boredom and wanting to do something, to make friends and meet new people and for education and self-development. A separate study carried out amongst young people who involved themselves in environmental regeneration projects in disadvantaged areas with little or no youth facilities found that 68% of participants got involved because they were interested in having fun and make an impact, whilst just over a third wanted to help improve the environment.[315] Studies focusing on the most popular 'arenas' in which young people wanted to create change and have their voice heard rated improvement of schools (73%), how to have more fun as a family (63%), improving local services through the council (62%), treatment of young people by the police (61%) and improving home life for teenagers (56%) as the most popular responses. Whilst younger children aged 5-8 were more interested in talking about themselves and their home life, young people aged 11-16 were more interested in having an impact on societal or community-based issues.[316]

239. Consultation of young people can often be carried out through formal structures for representation, including Youth Parliaments and local Youth Council bodies. However, there is some evidence of cynicism amongst a minority of young people over their effectiveness, with around a quarter

of young people on four different city councils feeling that 'good ideas are never carried out' and that Youth Councils are 'token gestures'. The Young Mayor of Lewisham scheme offers an example of a successful model that owes much of its popularity to the budget-spending powers afforded to the Mayor and his Advisors. In 2005, over 8,000 young people voted for their Young Mayor, through schools and youth groups, reaching a turnout of 42%, a total that rose to 46% in 2006 and considerably outstripped turnout amongst teenagers in formal elections.317 Knowledge of, and support for, the role of the Mayor in distributing a £25,000 budget on services aimed at teenagers has been cited as key to the popularity of the scheme and in facilitating high levels of involvement, ranging from candidature to simply turning out to vote.

> *"The best things so far about being Young Mayor are the opportunities to meet so many different people, from famous politicians to people on the street. I am backed up by Young Advisors and together we make sure the voice of young people in Lewisham is genuinely heard by adults. Now I want to concentrate on what I want to achieve over the year. I especially want to look at young people who leave home early, and how to help them."*
> **Siobhan Bell, Young Mayor of Lewisham**

CASE STUDY
Young Mayor of Lewisham

The Young Mayor has responsibilities as well as status. The office has a budget of at least £25,000 to spend on projects which young people feel to be important to young people in Lewisham. The Young Mayor has high levels of access to the Lewisham Mayor and to senior council officers to advise him or her on the concerns of young people.

Throughout the year, the Young Mayor will attend community events and will talk to the media in his or her own right or as the council's representative. The Young Mayor is supported by a dedicated Young Advisory Group. Members are drawn from a variety of community and young people's groups. All have a chance to influence and advise the adult Mayor and Cabinet.

Any person between the age of 11 and 17 who lives, works or studies in the borough of Lewisham can stand as a candidate for Young Mayor and any person aged between 11 and 18 can vote. The turnout in the 2006 election for the Young Mayor of Lewisham was almost double that of the 18-21 year old group in the 2001 General Election.

240. Participation amongst young people in decisions affecting the community around them need not be limited to formal structures, with evidence of positive reflections amongst young people on the effectiveness of one-off 'Youth Events'. Amongst those who participated directly, 71% of attendees of one-day consultations reported that they found it 'useful' or 'very useful', primarily because it made them consider important issues affecting the community and allowed them to learn new things.318 This suggests that the challenge is in engaging large numbers of young people directly in participation exercises locally, whilst convincing them that there is a genuine ability to create change - perhaps through providing a budget and reporting back on the effect of decisions taken. In one study of young people's participation in local consultation events, 28% of young people said that it made them 'a lot' more interested in the world around them, with 52% saying that it made them 'quite a lot' more interested.[319]

Stopping 16 and 17 year olds from voting and having the chance to be heard sends a signal to them and to society, especially politicians, that their views aren't valid and that they aren't real citizens. At a time when people feel that politics isn't relevant to them, young people need to be encouraged to take part in democracy, not kept out from it.
Votes at 16 Campaign

" A point made very clearly by young people was that they expect to receive feedback on any consultation undertaken that involved them, with many teenagers placing a strong emphasis on the need to highlight real action that had resulted from the exercise, as opposed to it having been 'all talk' "

CASE STUDY
Young people and spending - West Sussex

West Sussex has handed the responsibility for spending £1.4 million to young people. The money, from the Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund, has allowed the children to 'put money where their mouths are'. A community-wide panel of young people and local youth forums in each of the 24 localities are considering funding allocations. The young people decide the criteria by which projects should be judged, act as administrators and project managers and take final responsibility for how the money was spent. There is no restriction on the range of initiatives,

Skills and involvement

241. The number of young people who feel that they have developed new transferable skills as a result of involvement in participation activities varies across projects, most likely as a result of variations in quality and organisation. Only a quarter of young people involved in a study of four Youth Councils said that they had developed new skills[320], whilst separate research indicated that the majority of young people involved in participatory activities (91%) organised by one Local Authority said that their involvement had helped them to express themselves more clearly.[321]

242. One of the criticisms of youth involvement projects has been the notion that large swathes of, particularly hard-to-engage, young people are less likely to get involved than more articulate, often middle class, young people. In a local survey of young people carried out by peer researchers in a deprived area of London, 53% said they did not want to get involved in decisions about what happens in their area.[322] It is true also that there is an element of cynicism concerning consultation exercises, with only 47% of respondents to a national survey of young people reporting that they believed that adults listen to young people and act on what they are told by them. Whilst 89% of young people rated friends and 87% rated teachers as good listeners, fewer rated doctors (67%) and teachers (58%) highly and less than a third thought that local or national

Government are good at listening.[323] The Youth Review found that those who had negative experiences of consultations in the past were significantly less likely to get involved again, with particularly high levels of disenchantment from those who had been consulted through what they perceived to be a tokenistic exercise or as part of a gesture for young people. This strongly suggests that consultation done badly can be counter-productive to meeting the challenge of engaging larger numbers of young people. This highlights the importance of ensuring that efforts are meaningful, well-organised and can bring about change. A point made very clearly by young people was that they expect to receive feedback on any consultation undertaken that involved them, with many teenagers placing a strong emphasis on the need to highlight real action that had resulted from the exercise, as opposed to it having been 'all talk'.

Young people having their say in school

243. One of the strongest drivers for processes designed to hear the voice of young people has been the inception of School Councils. The Citizenship Order in English secondary schools provided a new impetus for Headteachers to step up participation structures within schools. Although the Order does not statutorily require schools to set up student councils, it nonetheless encourages them to do so and this 'encouragement' is reinforced through Ofsted's 'Inspecting Citizenship 1-16' inspection element. Of course, School Councils are not a new concept, with many schools operating consultation structures throughout the 1990s. However, studies carried out at the end of that decade found that the number of schools providing the service lingered at around one in two, with additional research indicating that the proportion of councils regarded as being effective by the student body was just 20%.[324]

Children's participation in decisions affecting them at school is vital if they are to feel valued and respected and learn the skills they need to become active citizens.
Save the Children

244. There is some evidence that the combination of the Citizenship Order and the regulation provided by the Ofsted Inspection guidelines have had a significant effect in raising the number of schools providing councils. *The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study: First Cross-Sectional Survey*

2001-2 indicated that as many as 94% of a randomly elected sample of 200 secondary schools operated structures for student representation, although this is tinged slightly by the fact that only 64% of students were found to feel that they had any opportunity to be involved in the running of their school through a student council and only one in three indicated that they had voted in any election for councillors. The study focused on the last academic year, during which only 9% of Year 8 pupils and 11% of Year 10 pupils indicated that they had had any involvement in a process of student consultation.[325]

245. In order to motivate involvement and support amongst pupils, School Councils need to demonstrate a real ability to create change and exercise meaningful power. There is evidence that in many schools pupils do not have a sense of this, with one large-scale survey of schools finding that only 28% of young people thought that their council was 'good at sorting out problems' and only slightly more (39%) felt that it helped to 'make the school a better place to be'.[326] However, the prize of providing generally meaningful participatory structures and activities in schools is increased and more positive engagement gained between students and teachers, with 82% of students who have got involved in participatory work reporting that they felt that it 'helped them to get on better with teachers'.[327] Further studies have suggested that young people who are satisfied with their School Council, including those who feel that it makes their school a better place to be, are most likely to feel that their teachers listen to them, believe what they say and respect their rights as members of a school community.[328] Perhaps even more significantly on a skills level, there is some evidence that participatory structures inside or outside of school helped a large majority of students (84%) feel more confident in school.[329] In a separate sample of over 200 students, 94% said that participatory activities had made them feel that they are able to 'improve things', 97% felt better able to feel proud of their achievements and 98% reported feeling 'more independent, trusted and responsible'.[330]

246. One particularly effective way for young people to become involved in the running of their school is through becoming a school governor, with a UK minimum age of 18 for full participation as a governor (this compares to 21 years of age for local councillors). This in itself provides a bar to participation as 18 year olds are mostly in their last year as a member of the school, with pupils in schools that do not offer a sixth form generally not supporting students over the age of 16, and will be facing academic pressure through final exams. From September 2003, however, as part of an initiative designed to promote student consultation, school governing bodies were allowed to include young people aged under 18 years old as Associate Members. Although these members do not serve as formal governors and do not have voting rights they provide a means for the voice of pupils to be heard, with Associate Members having rights to sit on committees of the governing body.

247. The degree to which the full board of governors can relate to the school experience of teenagers is linked not just to young people's representation on boards themselves but also to that of 'younger people' who act as full Governors. Evidence suggests that younger people as a whole are under-represented on British school governing bodies, with research suggesting that 80% of chairs and 57% of governors were over 45 years old, with just 3% of governors and 0.4% of chairs being under the age of 30 years old. Similarly, in Northern Ireland it was found that 90% of school governors were aged over 40. The results of a national scheme to recruit business leaders as school governors suggested that the model age for new business governors was 30-39 years old, suggesting a role for targeted campaigns in encouraging younger people to get involved in the running of services for teenagers through schools.[331]

Recommendations and Priorities for Action

- **Young People Impact Assessment to be required in all public policy decision making by law**

  Involvement of young people in shaping design of policy and the local environment should be backed up by an impact assessment on all local decision making and on new public buildings and plans.

- **The right to vote from 16**

  At the age of 16 a young person can choose to finish education, leave home, join the armed forces, have sex, and start a family. If a young person is earning enough they can even pay tax - and yet they do not have the right to vote or to have a role in deciding who will make law and govern the country. In order to raise participation and promote involvement, teenagers should be given the right to vote from their 16th birthday.

- **A Youth Mayor in every area**

  Every area should have a Youth Mayor post, backed up by an elected Youth Parliament, as a way of giving young people a say over their area as well as experience of voting and decision-making. Budget-spending powers should be made available to these elected representatives, with decisions publicised through schools and youth groups.

- **A Youth Fund for every area**

  Every area should have its own youth fund. The Funds will offer young people the opportunity to shape and influence contributions to the communities around them. These funds should be increased and automatically renewed each year, whilst guaranteeing the sustainability of existing projects.

- **Youth Manifestos**

  Candidates for political office should be encouraged to produce Youth Manifestos to be distributed through schools and local youth groups. These will have a specific youth focus and will recast the platform of the candidate in the language of young people and in a way that is relevant to the issues that concern teenagers.

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Delivering the New Youth Offer

248. A changed machinery of government is needed to deliver a high profile coordinated rollout of a new youth offer with a local focus. Marking a very visible change at the heart of Government would be the first step in ensuring this.

249. Bringing together policies relating to young people and families, including youth justice, play and children's health into one department would be an essential move to avoid the limitations of the current disparate offer. The newly established Department for Children, Schools and Families has the potential to achieve this with the new post of Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families responsible for coordinating policy across Government. Branding of the new youth offer will be essential in demonstrating ownership and the extent of the new offer.

The Sure Start model demonstrates how to realise integrated services for young people

250. The Youth Review has identified a need for Government to lead a major step change in thinking and integrated practice in relation to the offer for young people. To achieve this, a level of investment on the scale of the Sure Start programme is needed to galvanise and support change to increase life chances and reduce inequalities for the most vulnerable young people in the country. In practice, much is already allocated to supporting young people, although much of this is spent on disparate initiatives and remedial costs when things go wrong, leaving the vast majority of young people with nothing on offer. A step change in funding to deliver a universal new youth offer is essential.

251. A new universal offer to young people is capable of offering both positive activities and preventative support but also targeted and specialist support if needed. This could be realised through:

- A commitment to provide places to go and things to do for all young people
- Volunteering opportunities and involvement in the community
- Participation and involvement of young people in shaping their space within local areas

252. This would bring clear benefits across Government departments as better equipped young people cost the state less in benefits, and in tackling negative outcomes through spending on the Criminal Justice System, youth offending teams, the courts, the NHS and the Prison Service - all of which are experiencing capacity problems that can be eased through early intervention.

253. Meanwhile, the opportunity to provide informal learning opportunities for personal and social skills can support a number of positive objectives including reduction of poverty, employability and economic competitiveness. Such a programme of provision would also provide a continuum from the gains made through Sure Start from birth through to 19 and into adulthood, whilst providing opportunities to support the wider family through parent support and childcare for older children.

Youth Matters sets a positive course for services aimed at young people

254. *Youth Matters* encourages Local Authorities to map youth services and coordinate the offer of positive activities and support services aimed at teenagers.

255. As a result, Local Authorities, the more progressive authorities in particular, are already working towards a more integrated approach to services for young people in their area. The Education Act also places a responsibility on Local Authorities to provide youth services to meet the needs of young people in their area. However, progress is slow in

many areas with few getting beyond the initial review and restructure stage so far. Current services aimed at young people therefore remain patchy and inconsistent in their reach and quality.

256. Investment in upgrading the service, facilities and the activities on offer - combined with leadership from central Government in helping Local Authorities to shape a universal service - will be essential in bringing this approach to life.

Local Authorities as leaders in transforming the youth offer

257. Local Authorities are best able to respond to local needs, whilst also being best placed to assess the extent of need and to map out the gaps in activities and support under the current offer. There is a clear potential for the rollout of an integrated youth offer based on a Sure Start approach, building on the framework of *Youth Matters* to give the strategic lead and responsibility to Local Authorities.

258. A new local structure of a Young People's Unit, backed up by a local Strategic Board, would be an effective way to move thinking, planning and delivery beyond a narrow youth services approach and into the scope of a broader youth offer. A Strategic Board would play a crucial role in consulting and planning across sectors.

Creating Youth Hubs

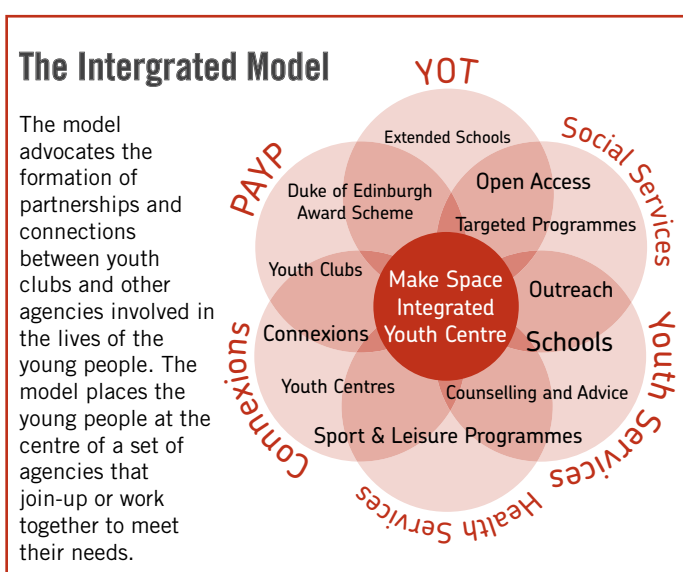### Integrated Youth Hubs for the 20% most disadvantaged wards

259. The Youth Review is recommending the establishment of Youth Hubs in every community as a central element of any youth offer.

260. Youth Hubs can coordinate services on offer both within the centre and in the local area, providing direct support and space for young people and a positive springboard and focus for wider agencies.

261. Such centres will provide a crucial focus for young people with access to:

- Inspirational, positive, challenging and fun activities

- Opportunities to build personal and social skills through activities, whilst promoting social inclusion
- Spaces to meet and socialise
- Inspirational, skilled and trusted adults
- Effective mainstream support services to tackle inequalities and support needs, with links to specialists
- Built-in consultation mechanisms that give young people a say over services

The Intergrated Model

The model advocates the formation of partnerships and connections between youth clubs and other agencies involved in the lives of the young people. The model places the young people at the centre of a set of agencies that join-up or work together to meet their needs.

YOT — PAYP — Social Services — Extended Schools — Open Access — Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme — Targeted Programmes — Youth Clubs — Make Space Integrated Youth Centre — Outreach — Connexions — Schools — Youth Services — Youth Centres — Counselling and Advice — Sport & Leisure Programmes — Connexions — Health Services

262. Delivered by providers in the public, voluntary and private sectors, access for young people aged between 11 and 19 would be made available at times that are needed, specifically from 4pm on weekdays, during weekends and school holidays. This will enable young people to have a place to meet and socialise in a safe and fun environment, over which they have a real sense of ownership.

263. The activities and positive contact with adults will contribute to meeting the demands of young people that are not fully met by formal systems such as in school. Activities would be structured and supervised, wherever possible incorporating an element of team-play and cooperation towards shared goals. This will provide opportunities to develop personal and social skills in a positive, challenging and attractive environment. Young people would take a role in setting the 'rules' and menus of activities, involving sports, specialist classes, art and trips, appealing to a wide variety of tastes and which would be updated regularly to be fresh and inviting. Updates to the menus of activity should involve young people directly.

264. The Youth Hub, or centre, would provide a focus for a wide range of activities and services for young people in an area, including those with specific needs.

265. Integrated support services would be available through the Youth Hub, allowing for access to a wide range of advice, guidance and information. Not all of this need be offered directly on site, but links between services through referrals and signposting will enable young people to access a 'one stop shop' for support through the Youth Hub. Innovative support such as a 24 hour helpline with referral advice and information on common health and well-being issues should be encouraged. Quality will be assessed not only through facilities and services in themselves but also through access in respect of transport, physical access, equality and diversity.

266. On a structural level, coordination of support by the Local Authority would enable services to quickly exchange and share information, cross-refer in tackling the needs of the 'whole' young person and have the ability to liaise with schools, social services and more specialist support.

267. Evidence from Feinstein and Sorhaindo[332] gives a sense of the benefits of highly integrated services on the experience of young people, concluding that *"Integrated centres provide a solid grounding for excellent youth work and for realising the outcomes contained within Every Child Matters."* Considering the impact of integrated support services and structured activities within integrated youth centres it was concluded that:

Whilst previous research has highlighted an adverse effect on the development of personal and social skills through unstructured youth environments, more integrated clubs were able to offer supervised and structured environments that promoted personal development. Integrated support services were found to provide more numerous ways to access support, advice and guidance.

268. Links were identified between high quality youth work and working towards integration of services:

Where there were no competing objectives, integration and offering a holistic and joined-up service seemed to be perceived by youth workers with more qualifications and experience as a central and necessary component of their work with young people. More integrated centres emphasised the value of training by offering it as part of

contracts or a natural part of their role in the youth club.

269. When considering the challenges to providing integrated services in youth hubs, the report concluded that increases in core youth service funding available to Local Authorities was a key need:

Centres that seemed to have more funding and more consistent and reliable funding were better able to pay for staff to have the club open more often, maintain links with community agencies, do detached or outreach work, organise accreditation activities and pay for sessional workers to visit the club, and offer up-to-date information and advice to young people.

270. Future funding and support for the integration of youth centres can focus on providing guidance and training for youth club staff to allow them to better engage with the concept of integration and to support youth workers financially and professionally to make connections throughout their communities. Further, the centres that were better able offer the services outlined in the model were typically more consistently funded and supported and thus able to hire qualified, paid staff and stay open more regularly. The results here illustrate the benefits of such support and highlight areas where further funding and support may offer advantages to a wider range of young people.

How can the Hubs be established?

271. Youth Hubs offer places and spaces for young people and can be established and delivered in a number of locations, many of them where activities for young people are already in existence.

272. Allowing Local Authorities flexibility in determining delivery points in response to local need will be important, with decisions taken through consultation with young people themselves. Planning should also take account of important elements such as transport, links to schools and affordability for families. Youth Hubs tie together disparate services into a strategic and high-quality local offer - and build on existing services.

273. A Hub provides an important 'physicality' to services, activities and support. But this does not mean that the new services have to be built from scratch. There are many buildings in local communities that can enhance their services and offer for young people. These include schools,

existing youth clubs, leisure centres and children's centres. '0-19' children's centres are an example of multi-purpose buildings that in many communities already provide services for children in the day, complemented by youth services in the evening. It will be important that premises are high quality and perceived as attractive to a range of young people of with different backgrounds and expectations.

274. Transformation Grants for Local Authorities to upgrade existing buildings to support an enhanced youth offer can achieve this with minimal capital investment. The use of existing facilities within extended schools can also integrate school-based activity and bring the cost of development down in areas of existing provision.

275. The reallocation of some existing funds from wider budgets can facilitate local partnerships in meeting targets by 2010 - the same period during which the programme of infrastructure improvement via extended schools and children's centre rollouts will be completed.

Quality

276. A Young Person's Curriculum is advocated which would act as a vehicle for achieving the objectives outlined in the relevant Children and Young People's Plan. Whilst avoiding turning into an academic curriculum, the framework should focus on outlining the core offer for young people out of school and ensuring high quality positive activities and learning opportunities. It will be capable of measuring and providing guidance on:

- An offer which promotes young people's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development
- A wide range of leisure, learning, arts, cultural, sporting and other enriching experiences that provide enjoyment and lead to achievement
- Activities to promote the development of personal and social skills
- Opportunities to volunteer and participate in projects and initiatives in the community
- Encouragement and support for young people in their studies, and for their hopes and plans for further study and/or the transition to employment
- The active involvement and participation of young people as appropriate
- Encouraging respect for other people, their way of life and their values

A Workforce Development Programme for Young People's Workers

277. A Workforce Transformation Programme for all those wishing to work with young people can establish a common core of competencies for working with teenagers. This can be complemented by a new integrated young people training and qualification framework.

278. Young People's Champions will be youth workers who have demonstrated exceptional levels of skill and competence in providing services for young people. These new Champions should be backed by a qualification framework, with an alternative of another new young people's professional role with qualifications. A Youth Champion would manage the Youth Hub to ensure delivery of the integrated youth offer, whilst providing support to young people's workers and collaborating with service providers locally. An access and accreditation programme for those who wish to work with young people on a sessional basis can ensure that youth workers on all levels of skilled and qualified.

279. A new Head of Youth Offer in every Local Authority can broaden the Head of Youth Services role into a wider offer, whilst facilitating across all sectors the involvement of agencies providing activities and support to young people.

Coordinating and Integrating Local Services

280. The processes involved in providing fully integrated services are sometimes challenging, as securing universal access to a wide range of existing services requires considerable change management and leadership. The benefits of integration are to be found in the increased take-up of supportive services and an increase in the quality of provision within centres. However, factors influencing the development of a universal integrated offer within local areas include the quality of relationships, leadership and vision, the right funding arrangements and an ethic that appreciates the worth of joint working and cross-communication between a multitude of important agencies. The following represent 10 key steps in achieving this:

1. Commitment and leadership at high level are required to drive through change and draw together a disparate array of services.

2. In order to tackle the old culture of dedicated services existing in a vacuum, action needs to be taken at central and local government level to facilitate referrals, signposting, open access and cooperation between services.

3. On a local level, an audit of local services, overlaps and duplications, as well as gaps in provision and the potential for beneficial synergies, should be undertaken in a way that pays regard to both local strengths and local needs.

4. The integrated model provides an important blueprint for change and development. However, local needs and conditions influence the degree to which that model can be imported. The building in of flexibility in meeting these needs is an important step towards promoting the value of the model as a toolkit for change.

5. Understanding of an integrated model of delivery should be communicated from strategic officers to heads of agencies and those individual officers on the ground within delivery points.

6. The restructuring of departments and services within Local Authorities, whilst taking a robust audit of roles and lines of responsibility, can assist with this.

7. Budgetary restructuring can follow this. The agreement of common needs assessment frameworks in relation to the development and improvement of existing services within wards is an important step towards beginning the process of delivery.

8. Joint commissioning arrangements that build in local service providers from all sectors can provide an effective mechanism for maintaining involvement in the integration process.

9. Throughout this change management process Local Authorities must take the lead in communicating the approach to all partners, including those in the private and voluntary sectors, in a way that promote a sense of ownership, involvement and shared ethics amongst all agents delivering services.

10. Oversight and ongoing support arrangements are essential in ensuring that the integrated vision at high level is translated to the experience on the ground. This means that youth centre staff are managed and supported in bringing the new linkages and synergies between providers to life in a way that can be clearly felt by young people using services.

[332] Feinstein L and Sorhaindo A (2007) *The Role of Integrated Provision in Delivering Outcomes for Young People*, Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning, Institute of Education