



The role of integrated provision in delivering outcomes for young people: a summary

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In 2007, Make Space commissioned a study by the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning into the effect of integrated services on the experience of young people using centres. The aim of this was to assess the impact of integrated services on the personal and social skills of young people, as well as on their access to support, guidance and positive activities. The results of this identify common opportunities and challenges in relation to the delivery of integrated services, as well as key lessons in delivering on the outcomes contained within Every Child Matters through youth settings.

Despite the present policy focus, there is a lack of empirical evidence as to what works in UK youth service provision. In a recent study, Feinstein and colleagues found that for a nationally representative cohort of children born in 1970 and attending youth clubs in 1986 at age 16, participation in 'youth clubs' was associated with a wide range of features of subsequent social exclusion, even when statistical models were used to take account of prior circumstances and development. In 1986, in general, these youth clubs were offering unstructured models of provision distinct from other forms of provision such as sports centres, church groups and uniformed provision, which were found in the same study to be associated with more positive outcomes for young people. It is likely that the youth clubs that offered structured provision were particularly associated with improved outcomes.

The well-being of young people is partly underpinned by their ongoing social and personal development. Recent evidence suggests that in addition to family background

and circumstances, personal and social skills developed in youth are a key factor in the determination of overall life chances. Such skills can be attained through participation in constructive, structured activity and have been linked to a range of positive outcomes for young people.

Research from the United States suggests that a number of out of school contexts, such as youth clubs, can provide access to activities and opportunities for young people to develop personal and social skills. Current UK policy reflects the findings from this research in its aim to offer young people access to a wide range of contexts outside of school that offer structure and positive activities in safe and secure environments. This focus was highlighted in Youth Matters: Next Steps, published in March 2006, which set out the government's vision for empowering young people and giving them 'somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to'. Youth Matters: Next Steps also stresses the importance of the 'joining-up' and creation of partnerships among agencies and organisations that work with young people and promotes taking an integrated and holistic approach to providing services to address young people's needs.

The research undertaken assessed Make Space youth centres across England employing a structured and integrated model of youth provision to learn more about how to achieve such provision, about its benefits and about how it is experienced on the ground by young people, parents, members of the local community and practitioners.

The nature of the offer to young people in the UK has never been under closer scrutiny. Widespread concern and media coverage over the negative behaviour of some young people and the welfare and life chances of others has put the support and opportunities on offer to young people firmly in the spotlight. Government's Youth Matters: Next Steps Strategy provides a positive framework for the development and delivery of services for young people with the lead of local authorities and the integration of services firmly at the fore. Yet effective models for integration are still in their infancy with few examples to learn from and little evidence yet over their effectiveness. This research aims to inform emerging thinking in this area, whilst providing important evidence at this crucial stage of development.

Anne Longfield OBE, Chief Executive, 4Children



1 The model provides a solid grounding for effective youth work that delivers on the five Every Child Matters outcomes

The findings from this research suggest that the model of integrated provision can contribute to the achievement of the government's goals for young people and successful work with young people in general. The model of integrated provision was developed around the aims of Youth Matters: Next Steps and the principles of Every Child Matters. Research found that clubs employing this model are most likely to succeed at providing young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to and sets the stage for achieving the five Every Child Matters goals.

2 Structured out of school activities promote personal development and lead to positive outcomes

The core programme of the model of integrated provision reflects findings from the UK and the US that suggest that participation in structured out of school activities is associated with positive outcomes for young people. The information resulting from this study suggests that structured activities within the integrated model of provision could lead to similar outcomes for young people. 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 structured environments including support, advice and guidance.

3 More integrated clubs were able to offer longer opening hours and a more holistic service for young people, including support services and menus of positive activities

The more integrated clubs included in the study were better able to offer opening hours on every day of the week and had more comprehensive programmes of activity and links to support services. Young people demand that clubs open after school, on weekends and during school holidays.

4 High quality youth work and working towards integrated services are closely linked

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 clubs emphasised the value of training by offering it as part of contracts or a natural part of their role in the youth club.

5 The full impact of integrated services is contingent on leadership and investment in creating joined-up work between youth professionals

Clubs that had 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.

Future funding and support for the integration of youth clubs could usefully 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 clubs that were better able to 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.

what we learnt

factors contributing to the success of the integrated model

Clubs closer to achieving full integration offered more options, opportunities and benefits to young people than appeared to be offered in less integrated clubs. Observations from these clubs demonstrate what can be achieved when the model of integrated provision is closely adhered to.

Some of the youth clubs were able to offer a more holistic service for young people, in line with the principles of the model of integrated provision. More integrated clubs are resourced to allow for access between four and six days a week and are staffed by trained, paid youth workers. This allows for the opportunity and expertise for these clubs to create and maintain partnerships with other agencies, to offer on-site services to young people, and provide a wide range of structured and semi-structured activities for young people. Thus these clubs more closely approached integration than the other clubs in the study. For these clubs, working together with other agencies to offer services that reflect the needs of young people in the community was a priority that appeared to guide the design, management and development of the club.

Five of the clubs in the study adapted the integrated model to suit the needs of their specific communities. Staff in 80 per cent of clubs emphasised aspects of the model that they felt met demand and were appropriate for the population served by the club. The ability of youth workers to keep informed about the needs of the young people in the community, and thus create opportunities to intervene, partly rested upon them building trusted relationships.



Involving young people in all aspects of the youth club

The information collected from young people and youth workers suggests that all of the clubs made an effort to include young people in the decisions taken about the activities and projects developed at the club. Most clubs solicited young people for their wishes for projects and activities through youth forums, suggestion boxes or through informal methods. With the exception of one club, however, fewer than 50 per cent of the young people who completed the questionnaires reported helping to plan activities or events in their club and few also reported being in charge or the leader of a group or helping other young people.

From the information collected, it seems that young people's participation in the development and management of activities taking place in the club is mixed. Young people appear to be comfortable with minimal participation and can be more reluctant to become part of formal groups to take decisions about the club. This suggests that youth workers need to find creative ways of learning what young people want to do without over-soliciting them or limiting their participation.

Access, opening times and membership

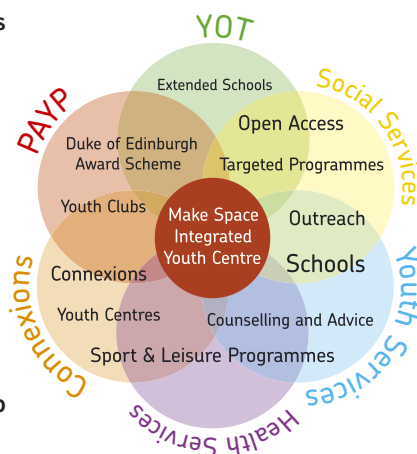
Over 95 per cent of the young people who completed the questionnaires found it easy to travel to the youth club. Four of the seven clubs, the least integrated, included in the study were only open two days a week. A couple of the clubs were also closed during half-term and holidays. Interviews with young people in these four clubs suggested that they would prefer if the clubs were open longer or more frequently. In the clubs that were open more frequently, the young people interviewed appeared to be satisfied with the opening times.



"The most important tool that we have available is ourselves, as youth workers, and the relationships that we have with young people, and it's through that – through those relationships and the discussions that young people bring to us their needs, we can explore that..." Youth worker

THE INTEGRATED 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 person at the centre of a set of agencies that join-up or work together to meet their needs.



What are your favourite activities? **"Play station"** "Just talking"

Club spaces and environment

A common observation across the clubs was the importance of allowing young people to have a sense of ownership over the space. Most clubs achieved this by allowing young people to take part in designing the club layout or decoration. In two clubs, this was difficult to achieve as they shared their spaces with other groups and organisations. However, staff in more independent environments described how their current location was an improvement on the space they were using previously.

“[The club environment] really works. The social space of the bar area is designed by young people from our previous project, so we got young people involved in designing how that would look and feel. We wanted it to be a cybercafé type environment so the young people came up with the designs of the coffee bar and the colour schemes in the rooms that we use.” Youth worker

In the opinion of some youth workers, building a sense of ownership and inclusiveness may be more likely in environments not linked, or perceived to be linked, to schools. This contrasts with information from a recent survey of young people that found that 68 per cent said they would be happy to attend activities offered on school grounds as long as it did not simply constitute an extension of the school day. This highlights an important debate about the personalisation of services for young people and the need to offer activities in diverse contexts. It also highlights the importance of the school environment if activities are to be based there.

Providing positive programmes and activities

Through offering a range of new experiences, these youth clubs provided many of the young people in this study with experiences they previously had been unable to obtain. The information collected also suggests that young people learn practical and social skills through interactions in the club, semi-structured activities and informal direction from members of staff. Young people attending these clubs indicated how these activities have improved their confidence and offered opportunities to gain competencies, reflecting previously noted findings from the US.

“Before I’d only talk to people that I directly knew but now I’m just chatting to everyone.” Young person

Across all the clubs the primary reason (87 per cent) for visiting was ‘it’s a place to hang out with friends’. In fact, over 75 per cent of young people who completed questionnaires agreed that they felt comfortable and safe at the club. An opportunity to meet and talk with friends also emerged as reason for membership in all of the interviews with young people. Additionally, however, over 60 per cent of the young people who completed the questionnaire reported games, activities, trips and outings offered at the club as important reasons for becoming members. The range of activities that took place emerged through conversations with young people.

Information, advice, support and guidance to aid social and personal development

A key element of the model of integrated provision is that clubs make available an up-to-date range of information, advice and guidance for young people on personal, social, careers and health issues. Some of the staff in the clubs observed that young people were currently facing issues in their lives that potentially compromised their health. Where information, advice and guidance were provided through on-site services, young people were aware of its existence and as such could, notionally, be more likely to access such resources when needed.

Providing an opportunity to develop relationships with trusted adults and offering ‘someone to talk to’ is an important element of good youth work emphasised in Youth Matters. All of the clubs were perceived to be providing this to the young people attending their club. Through the interviews with young people in all case study clubs, the ability to foster relationships with adults other than their parents surfaced as an important feature of their participation in the club and a unique aspect of their general experience.

“Sometimes you don’t want to talk to teachers or parents, and other people, but here you feel like [you can tell them] what you need to ...” Young person

From this, it appears that youth clubs, such as the ones included in this research, are for some young people one of a few places outside of families where young people were able to develop supportive and informal relationships with trusted adults.

Volunteering in the community

In nearly all of the clubs, the staff found it easier to inspire voluntary work inside the club than outside of it.

“One person said the other day: ‘I’m bored at home. I’ve finished school and I’m waiting to go into the Army. Can I come up and help with the younger ones?’” Club Manager

For the young people who later took on more responsibility through volunteering or working at the club, there were also opportunities for skill development.



“Games” “Baking and making stuff” “We had a tea party”

how the integrated model can be developed for wider rollout

Investment

Integration appears to be firstly facilitated or limited by funding. Staff in each of the clubs included in this study raised lack of funding as a barrier to achieving the full model of integrated provision in their interviews. Clubs 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. Clubs that were largely staffed by volunteers or part-time workers experienced the most difficulty, as the amount of their free time that they were able and willing to commit to the club was limited.

Workforce support and knowledge

Staff understanding of and commitment to the model is another important facilitator of integration. Interviews with members of youth club staff and reviews of literature produced by the clubs about their aims and objectives indicated that each club had distinct reasons for starting up and different goals for young people attending their clubs. These goals may or may not be in line with the principles of the integrated model of provision. Where clubs inherently shared ideologies with the model there was increased staff interest in the youth club becoming joined-up with other agencies in their local communities and making resources available to young people directly, in their clubs, and indirectly, through referral.

Awareness of the offer

It appears that another important factor for achieving integration is creating awareness of the services available and empowering young people to access them. However, this appears to rely upon on the intentions of youth club staff. Although all clubs were at some level linked to other agencies in their communities, young people in more fully integrated centres were more aware of opportunities and resources available to them than young people in clubs that were less integrated or that made providing direct or indirect access to services through their club less of a priority. This was reflected in young people's knowledge of where such information was available in the club and whether it was appropriate for them to perceive the club as a source for such information.

Access to good accommodation

In some clubs, residence groups and others controlling the use of space limited the activities that could take place in the buildings used for the club. This created some structural barriers to offering young people the full range of services indicated in the integrated model of provision and occasionally created difficulties for youth workers trying to access young people in the community they were aiming to serve. Clubs experiencing fewer of these limitations were better able to provide access to services, directly or indirectly, for young people in their communities to address their needs and concerns.

High quality workforce

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 clubs emphasised the value of training by offering it as part of contracts or a natural part of their role in the youth club.

how integrated youth clubs are viewed by others

Parents asked about how the club benefits their children said that it provided them with a safe place to go and an opportunity to take part in activities and sport. One hundred per cent of these parents felt that their child's involvement in the club benefited them by keeping their children safe and active.

The main observation from members of the community was that the youth club provided young people in the community with positive activities and a safe place to spend time when they were not in school. There was a belief that the existence of such opportunities may reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.



"Lots of troubled young people now have somewhere to go and the club has given them something constructive to do and an opportunity to have contact with a youth worker." Police Community Support Officer

case study design

The case study approach allowed for observation of the many interactions and relationships that occur in the youth club environment and provided more in-depth information than would be gained through only using structured surveys. To understand how the integrated model of provision influences the perceptions of stakeholders, we collected information from clubs reaching different levels of success at achieving the full model and considered the attitudes of young people, youth club staff, parents and members of the local community across these clubs. This design allowed for observation of different levels of integration at work and the ability to determine the context and situations under which integration is most likely to work and to understand the barriers to integration among clubs that have not achieved full integration.

Data collection instruments were designed to gather information in two main areas: the overall level of integration of the club and the core programme offered. For this, information was collected from the seven clubs resulting in: 114 questionnaires collected from young people; 25 completed parent questionnaires; 1–2 day observations conducted at each of the seven clubs; 18 interviews or focus groups with members of club staff; 14 interviews or focus groups with young people between the ages of 10 and 19; 7 interviews with members of the local community, such as police community support officers, and a review of youth club documentation including opening hours and planned activities.

In considering these findings, it is important to bear in mind that the data collected for this research is not representative of young people attending the clubs or all youth clubs in general and therefore the results are not a generalisation of wider populations. This is just one example of how youth services may be arranged. However, the Make Space model is in line with the government's goals for young people, achieves the aims of Youth Matters and provides opportunities for the achievement of the five Every Child Matters goals.

case study youth clubs

Club A is located in a church in Bromley, London on Monday evenings from 3.30–6pm and Tuesday evenings from 8.30–10pm. Membership currently stands at 500 and there are generally about 50 young people in attendance on club nights.

Club B is located in Kent, in a mixed socio-economic area. It has been in existence for five years and is run by regular volunteers and occasionally by the parents of young people attending. It is open on Tuesday evenings from 6.30–8pm for 11–13 year olds and on Thursdays from 6.45–9pm for 13–16 year olds. The club has a membership list of about 35 young people, but about 25 attend on the evenings the club is open.

Club C is based in a coastal town in the South East. It is housed in a community centre in an area of high child poverty which contrasts with the relatively affluent surrounding area. The club is run by two full-time youth workers. They currently have 96 members on their database and, including drop-ins, have about 150 young people visiting regularly. Club C is open from Monday–Wednesday and Friday from 4–5.30pm for 11–13 year olds and 7.30–9.30pm for 14–19 year olds.

Club D is in Yorkshire and is located in the smallest ward, by population, in the study. The club is situated in an affluent neighbourhood. The club is open every day except weekends, with a drop-in on Mondays and structured activities on the other evenings. These sessions generally run from 7–9pm, though some structured sessions are scheduled for earlier in the evening or during school hours, and are open to young people ages 11–19. Between 20 and 40 young people attend the drop-in evening on Mondays and approximately 8–15 attend the more structured sessions offered during the week. Club D was set up by the youth service



over 20 years ago and is attached to the local school.

Club E is housed in a former flat on a large estate in Cheshire. The area is one of the least affluent when compared with

the surrounding areas of the other clubs included in this study and has one of the smallest populations. Club E has been under the current management since 2001. The club is open two nights a week from 5.30–8.30pm on Tuesday and 5–7.30pm on Thursday for structured sessions. It is managed by a staff of eight rotating adult volunteers. The club averages about 40 young people a night aged 10 and older.

Club F is a girls' group, catering to Asian, but particularly Muslim, young women aged 9–25. The club is housed within a larger community youth centre where other activities for all youth are ongoing. There are three part-time paid members of staff and a rotating number of volunteers. It is located in Tower Hamlets, London. The Multiple Deprivation index places Tower Hamlets as number one in deprivation. The club is open twice a week; Tuesday evenings from 5–7.30pm and Saturday afternoons from 11–3pm.

Club G, located in Essex, is a new club housed in an old school building converted into a contemporary community centre serving 0–19 year olds. It is run by the Youth Service in partnership with others. Set over several rooms, it includes modern equipment, an internet café, an information point, large activity space with stage in the rear, meeting space, arts and crafts room and chill out room. The club has 9 paid workers and 3 volunteers and is open 6–9.30pm Monday to Friday and Saturdays 11am–2pm and 5–9.30pm.



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for young people

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Written by Annik Sorhaindo and Leon Feinstein
Full report available to download from
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the Make Space model

The model provides the following core programme:

- A service that is based on the active and continuous involvement of young people in all aspects of their centre
- An out of school hours facility for 11–16 year olds operating before/after school on a regular basis that is safe, welcoming, accessible, dynamic and contemporary
- A dedicated 'chill-out' space where young people can relax, meet their friends and enjoy their leisure time in comfortable surroundings
- A quiet space where young people can access computers and the internet, study or read
- Activity space(s) or access to local facilities, providing young people with a range of sports, arts and other opportunities
- An up-to-date range of information, advice and guidance for young people on personal, social, careers and health issues
- Opportunities for young people to volunteer in the community
- Participation in decision-making to enable young people to take ownership
- Access to specialist services as required
- A service that is sustainable but affordable to all young people