**VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN (VOYC)**

**EVALUATIVE REPORT OF (COMMUNITY) DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEVON: AUTUMN 2015.**

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

***A****. This Report was commissioned by VOYC Trustees in July 2015. The main aim being to inform the Trustees and other interested stakeholders of the progress being made by local communities in developing provision for young people in the wake of the reduction in funding by Devon County Council (DCC) in its youth service budgets. The report also aims to disseminate good practice and to identify the support that young people and their communities want and need to support and sustain their future efforts.*

***B.*** *The Report has been produced at no cost, due to the voluntary contributions that have been made by the author and other contributors in its compilation.*

***C****. The review took place from September to November 2015 and it focused upon case studies of three projects and a ‘desk study’ of a similar report carried out by Learning South West in Somerset in 2012/2013. The desk study of the Somerset case studies was used to compare progress with the Devon case studies and to identify the issues and successes common to both.*

***D****. Evidence was obtained from three people, each of whom has a major leadership role in their project. This was supplemented by the evidence of three people who have been involved, to varying degrees in supporting these community development projects.*

***E.*** *The report attempts to provide an outline evaluation of these projects against nationally accepted definitions and models of ‘community development’ and within local and national policy contexts.*

***F.*** *The**main**conclusion is that the work currently being carried out is consistent with many accepted community development practices and principles. The main recommendations (see section 4 pages 15-19) are:*

1. *Training and ongoing support for those involved is paramount*
2. *‘Communities of Practice’ need to be set up to provide support, co- ordination and professional development.*
3. *Projects need good quality ongoing advice and guidance*
4. *Mechanisms need to be developed to facilitate partnership working between the different tiers of local government and other agencies*
5. *There is a need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation*
6. *The work of the young people and their communities engaged in this work needs to be included into the strategic role of the DCC Children, Young People and Families Alliance.*

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8. **Introduction**

**A. Purposes of Report and the Potential Audience.**

1. To inform VOYC Trustees and other stakeholders, such as town/parish and county councils, policy makers and community development practitioners, of progress being made by local communities taking responsibility for provision for young people, following the reductions in Devon County Council funding (DCC) in 2014
2. To identify and disseminate ‘good practice’ of community development approaches and strategies to developing provision for young people.
3. To inform stakeholders and policy makers of the ongoing support needed to sustain current developments
4. To provide the Open University with relevant data to inform future developments for their BA (Working with Young People) professional qualification course.

**B. Context**

As part of its governance function, VOYC Trustees are required to:

*‘Record the nature of engagement and monitor effectiveness to develop examples of practice to support communities’* (VOYC Work Plan 2015/16).

One of the national infrastructure support functions (**see Appendix 1 for all national infrastructure support functions**) is to ‘provide direct support; advice and information; facilitate learning’. VOYC does this by providing:

‘*Direct support for individuals and groups to empower them to effect change in their own communities relating to youth provision’* (VOYC Work Plan 2015/16).

Consequently, the VOYC Chief Officer and support staff have been providing advice, guidance and direct support to varying degrees to a number (12) of communities relating to provision for young people over the past two years. This report, therefore, is aimed at informing Trustees of progress and development in this important area of VOYC’s work.

**C. Local and national policy contexts**

Devon County Council (DCC) has explicit policy commitments to work more closely and collaboratively with communities, voluntary sector organisations and other stakeholders, one of the aims being to provide services to mitigate the effects of substantial reductions in public sector funding. These policy commitments are reflected in the statements on the DCC website made by the DCC Chief Executive, the Council Leader and in the DCC ‘Operating Principles’ document (also on the DCC website). This policy commitment has recently been strengthened by the work of the ‘Stronger Communities’ Task Group in its Report (CS/15/13) to the Council in June 2015. DCC also has a Children, Young People and Families Alliance (CYPFA) that has a strategic responsibility to develop and co-ordinate services as follows:

*CYPFA is a partnership of organisations that listen to and work for children, young people and families ................ with representation from Local Authority Social Care, Education, Public Health, Police, Health and Voluntary Sector.*

*(Councillor James Mc Innes, Page 3, Devon Children, Young People and Families Plan, 2015)*

National policy over the past five years has focused on local communities taking more responsibilities for services due to reductions in local authority funding and services (‘Big Society’/Localism Act 2011). In the context of informal educational (youth) work with young people, this was strongly reflected in ‘Positive for Youth’ in 2013 and onwards, which advocated much more partnership working between local authorities and voluntary youth sector providers.

1. **Methodology**

Evidence to inform this review has been obtained from a key participant in each of three case studies in Devon during autumn 2015 and a ‘desk study’ analysis of a review of similar projects undertaken in Somerset in 2012/2103. This evidence is complemented by the evidence of three ‘stakeholders’: an independent trainer/consultant who has worked with a number of projects in Devon (not just the case study projects); a DCC youth service officer with responsibility for supporting voluntary sector organisations; and the chief officer of VOYC, who has been involved, to varying degrees, in supporting the three case study projects in Devon. The evidence supplied from the above has been checked by them for accuracy and relevance.

The evidence has been obtained through feedback, principally from individual structured interviews (four face to face and two by telephone), lasting on average 90 minutes, using Schon’s (1983) ‘reflection on action’ model. Schon’s model is now widely used as ‘reflective practice’ in many professions such as: teaching; youth and community work and social work. It is also a fundamental approach to work based learning on university professional training courses. **(See Appendix 2 for the Reflection Note pro forma used to gather evidence).**

Day (2000) has described reflective practice as a way in which practitioners revisit and review their own commitments, qualities and skills. It is also the capacity to think about things that we have experienced and how we evaluate those experiences and learn from them. By carrying out regular, critical analyses of our skills and knowledge, we can improve professional practice. This has been the main approach in reviewing and evaluating these community development projects.

**E. Limitations of this Review**

1. Due to time constraints, it is restricted to relatively few of the many projects currently underway.
2. For each of the Devon case study projects, only one perspective was obtained, albeit from the ‘key’ participant, who in two cases also checked the draft reports for accuracy and relevance with others involved in their projects.
3. Full, corroborative evidence has not been obtained from the Devon projects, especially from the young people and other volunteers and stakeholders who were involved.
4. In only one case was it possible to peruse documentation such as meeting notes/minutes.
5. A full evaluation of each of the Devon projects was therefore not possible
6. It follows, therefore, that this is a relatively brief and superficial initial study.

**2. Community Development models and principles**

**What is community development?**

The Case Studies in this review will be analysed within the context of the following community development models and principles. Firstly, the principles and approaches as defined by the Community Development Foundation. **(Edited version of a Community Development Foundation (CDF) website presentation -** [**http://www.cdf.org.uk/content/about-cdf/about-community-development-2/?nav=1)**](http://www.cdf.org.uk/content/about-cdf/about-community-development-2/?nav=1))**)**

Community development is a set of approaches undertaken by individuals, informal groups and organisations. It can be practised by all sectors, whether public, private or voluntary. It can be paid or unpaid, qualified or simply experienced.

The role of community development is to support people and community groups to identify and articulate their needs, and to take practical, collective action to address them.

It works with communities of place (geographic location, neighbourhood, street), interest (in sports, politics, activity groups, clubs and so on) and identity (culture, religion, ethnicity, and age groups), helping diverse and competing community voices to be heard. By addressing issues of power, inequality and social justice, it aims to bring about change that is empowering, fair and inclusive. Individuals, informal groups and organisations can all practise community development.

Those who practise community development come from a range of backgrounds and gain their skills and knowledge both from formal qualifications and through practice and support.

**Why do we need community development?**

Expectations are increasing for communities to take on roles in service design and delivery, planning and budgets for their local neighbourhoods. Accounting for differing and minority voices in the process will be a challenge for diverse and rapidly changing communities. This includes the voice and needs of young people.

The Localism Act (2011) and greater community control will see local people dealing directly with statutory authorities, developers and others to negotiate financial benefits and management or ownership of assets. Reduced spending in the public sector brings dangers that deprived communities (including young people as a community of ‘identity’ – see above) will decline further, while prosperous communities may tip into deprivation or experience widening inequalities. This can lead to tension and unrest.

Community development can address issues of power and inequality, and can help competing community voices to be heard. It can also create communities that are more resilient to stress, who are proactive and creative thus preventing tensions from spilling into unrest.

**Models**

In addition to the CDF principles and approaches above, the community development models that will be used to inform this Report are: Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation; and Julian Dobson’s Six Aspects of Community Development – **full details shown in Appendix 4.1 and 4.2**

**3**. **Case Studies**

**Case Study A:** Axminster Youth Project: ‘People Led’

Axminster Youth Club is a part time facility for young people at the Pippins Centre. Until July 2014 it was the responsibility of the Devon County Council Youth Service.

When it was announced that the centre was to be closed, the local part time worker, the young people and parents campaigned for it to continue. A meeting was organised and the town council and mayor were approached.

This resulted in the town council agreeing to take responsibility for the Pippins Centre from Devon County Council and a local steering group consisting of parents, young people and the former youth worker was set up to determine ways of continuing the provision for young people.

The steering group met on a number of occasions to determine what sort of youth club they wanted to provide. Resulting from this, posts were filled such as safeguarding officer, fundraisers, Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. A constitution was obtained from the internet and the steering group became the management committee.

Initial issues that the committee faced centred on the type of provision that was to be provided and the values that would be promoted. There was a difference in philosophy and opinion between the new volunteers to the committee and the former youth workers. The views of the new volunteers prevailed and the club was established based on the values of respect, structure, personal responsibility, codes of behaviour, rules and safety. The club now operates two nights a week: juniors (11-13), 6.30-8.30 and seniors (14+) 6.45-8.45. There is a group of 11 volunteer workers led by a community mental health nurse. Volunteers include parents and a teaching assistant from a local secondary school. There is a minimum of three volunteers on duty each evening.

The club is equipped with table football, a coffee bar, outside playing space, pool table and art and music rooms. Currently, there are 150 members, of which around 70% are juniors.

The success of this project over the past year has been founded on:

1. The initial determination and resolve of young people (strongly supported by their parents and the wider community) not to let the provision founder
2. The strong support of the town council in taking responsibility from Devon County Council for the Pippins Centre
3. Strong leadership from the community health nurse: some of her professional skills and knowledge have been ‘transferable’ to the youth work context
4. A strong, active and properly constituted management committee who take responsibility for the full range of functions required to run a youth club, such as:
	1. Raising funds
	2. Programme management and development
	3. Health, safety and safeguarding
	4. Public relations and maintaining community support
	5. Staffing the provision
	6. General governance
5. Good links with and support from other community groups such as the local secondary school (information sharing); local businesses who donate materials/equipment (e.g. the Co Op provide food and drink for the coffee bar); the local police (the PCSO officers visit in a supportive role on a regular basis); Rotary Club (fundraising)

Some of the issues/problems encountered have been:

1. The initial ‘discord’ referred to above, i.e. the varying views about the type of provision to be run and its value base.
2. Challenging behaviour of some young people, especially older ones, with associated issues concerning drugs
3. Obtaining clear pathways to advice and information regarding how to set up a youth club and what initial and ongoing support would be available
4. Lack of expertise in how to engage with young people in this context
5. Lack of initial training and support for the volunteers, particularly as follows
	1. Youth worker induction training
	2. Methods of engaging with young people in this context
	3. Developing relationships with young people
	4. Communication skills with young people
	5. Young people and motivational skills so that young people can participate fully in the project
	6. Leadership skills
	7. Delegation skills
	8. Programme and project development

With regard to the issue of training and support, the view of the project leader is that training and support should have been established in the early stages of the project. Currently all 11 volunteers are undertaking basic training in working with young people via an independent youth work trainer. It is also suggested that other forms of support for the volunteers could include: mentoring: being linked to other projects to share expertise; support; inter project/club activities.

This project has clearly been successful in preserving its youth provision, one year after the withdrawal of DCC youth service funding. This has been due to the determination of young people, with excellent support from other sectors of the community and the commitment of, and the leadership skills within, the team of volunteers.

To sustain this provision, it appears that training and support for the existing and future management committee and the volunteer workers will be important. The ongoing commitment of the town council and various community groups will also be important.

Case study B: Voluntary sector ‘Provider Led’ project

The ‘provider’ in this case is the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), an international practitioner of youth and community services with a long and distinguished history.

As part of its youth work strategy, the Exeter YMCA had taken over, following a request from the parish council, the running of one small village (Rockbeare) youth club in 2013, following which it added another DCC youth service run provision in a nearby village (Broadclyst) in 2014 when the budget reductions were underway. Another larger, former DCC youth club in South Molton was added and then Cullompton Town Council awarded the YMCA the contract to run its youth provision, following a tendering process that involved another major voluntary sector youth provider in Devon. Thus, the YMCA has a number of working (some contractual) relationships with a variety of parish and town councils to run provision for young people, ranging from one night a week to three nights a week.

The YMCA full time youth worker is responsible for managing this portfolio. Much of her time is spent in face to face work with young people and in leading the teams of volunteer staff at these venues. She is supported by her colleagues at the Exeter YMCA, namely: volunteers recruitment officer, fundraising officer; public relations; administrative support. Other functions such as local fundraising, management of coffee bar are shared with local town/parish councils. Management of buildings is the responsibility of local councils.

In addition to the strong working relationships between the YMCA and local councils, there are also good links with schools, especially with regard to ‘at risk students’ who are also known to attend the local youth club. The YMCA youth worker has been approached to run a number of ‘inclusion’ courses at local secondary schools, both in Exeter and outside the city and this work is ongoing and developing.

It appears that the success of these projects is founded on the strong links and working relationships that have been established between the YMCA and local councils. A good example of this is of two councils combining to raise money (partly through raising precepts) to fund a ‘life skills’ course that was organised by the YMCA for the young people of each parish to attend. This led to a nationally recognised qualification.

As part of this partnership, the YMCA provides professional youth work, volunteer recruitment and fundraising expertise; local councils provide and manage buildings; some equipment and funding, and local people to support the YMCA worker. ‘Governance’ of each project appears to be informal but ultimately the YMCA is responsible to each local council for the management/delivery of the work.

To sustain these arrangements, the following issues were raised;

1. Clear, co-ordinated initial and ongoing training and support for volunteers. The YMCA worker does this ‘in house’ but it is time consuming and she would prefer access to cost effective training arranged on a county basis that meets the national youth work occupational standards – NOS - (**see Appendix 3**).
2. Stronger, local arrangements for governance (steering/management committees, greater involvement/participation of young people, increased local recruitment).
3. Greater local control and responsibility would ‘free up’ the YMCA worker to develop youth provision elsewhere (currently much of her time is spent running these projects). This is very important if a ‘community development’ approach, as defined earlier in this report, is to be sustained.
4. Access to shared resources, based upon the idea of a ‘Bank’ of resources previously managed by the DCC youth service such as: music rooms; various (e.g. sports) equipment.

It appears that this ‘voluntary sector provider’ led approach, with the strong input from local councils, who were committed to keeping its provision for young people, has been successful.

**Case Study C:** A ‘town council’ led project.

Having considered projects led by local people and a major voluntary sector organisation, we now turn to a project led principally by a town council, albeit with strong support from: local people; local organisations and, very importantly, young people themselves.

When Crediton Town Council learned of the closure of their local authority youth centre, they made an immediate, proactive response. A meeting was convened to consider the issue, which was very well attended, including young people. Firstly, they felt that they were unable to respond to the invitation from DCC to make a bid to take responsibility for the existing youth centre, as they felt that they had not been given sufficient time or information to make an informed decision.

Instead, the town council, with the agreement of the community, decided to support other existing provision for young people; such support included funding through grants, general support for the development of youth work and a strategic ‘co-ordinating’ role to try to ensure that there was a balance of provision in the town, e.g. a balance between secular and non secular youth provision.

Other activity has taken the form of supporting, along with a JNC qualified youth worker employed by the local Methodist church, the newly formed ‘Youth Collective’, a group of senior members from the previous local authority youth club, who have now formed their own organisation that includes their own bank account, chair, treasurer and so on. They exist to raise funds for youth work, provide voluntary workers for other youth projects and to campaign for their own projects. These young people are also fully active in contributing to discussions and decisions regarding youth work in the town.

As part of the Town Councils ‘strategic development’ role, currently undertaken by the part time town clerk, with support from a part time clerical officer (in addition to their many other ‘town council’ duties), a very committed town councillor, and the youth worker at the Methodist Church, a new youth cafe has been established with the active involvement of young people through their ‘youth collective’ group. This facility is a ‘drop in’ facility providing coffee bar, social area, and advice and information (currently they are seeking the involvement of a school nurse to advise on various health issues).

The town council is also supporting a number of other strategic functions, such as carrying out a survey, with others, regarding the needs of young people and what services can be provided for them. The council also monitors current provision through occasional meetings, (convened by the town councillor with the ‘youth portfolio’ and the town clerk) with other providers in the town such as the Methodist and congregational churches, the leisure centre and schools. Monitoring is also carried out by the town council’s policy and planning committee; this includes how town council grants for youth work are being used and that there are proper safeguarding arrangements in place for youth projects funded by the council.

In reflecting upon progress thus far, the following matters were raised by the respondent:

1. There is a need for regular meetings of providers and stakeholders to plan and monitor provision.
2. There is a need for a forum whereby ‘professional’ youth work issues can be discussed and shared, such as how to develop detached youth work projects (the town clerk has recently been approached about this), managing challenging behaviour, how to increase young people’s participation and so on. In other words, the establishing of a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1991) - see also Somerset case studies below.
3. A current challenge is to determine how to find the time and resources to do more: the town council wants to provide more evening sessions, and dedicated facilities for secular youth work, so that young people can have ‘ownership’ of their own space.
4. It has been important to start by carrying out an ‘audit’ of what was available and then developing from there. This also had the advantage of identifying key stakeholders and supporters within the community.
5. In reflecting on what has contributed to the success of this project, it was important to take small steps initially and to go for ‘quick wins’ to encourage commitment and feelings of success.
6. It was also important to involve young people as early as possible and to ensure that there are ongoing strategies in place to keep them ‘on board’ with a clear and influential role to play.
7. Support is now required regarding training and support of workers, whether voluntary or paid.
8. Support and advice is now needed with regard to professional issues regarding the informal learning of young people (youth work) - see also ‘communities of practice’ in point 2 above.
9. Arrangements are now needed to support sharing of resources such as equipment; inter club activities, safeguarding procedures, training and so on.

It is clear that this project has been very successful, due to the strong leadership and support of the town council, through its two part time staff and a dedicated councillor committed to youth work. To sustain and develop this work, support is needed along the lines of points 1-9 above. Currently, the town council is also considering making approaches to major voluntary sector providers as partners in developing the work to be undertaken in the future.

**‘Desk Study’ of other Case Studies: A Synopsis of a Report of Similar Projects in Somerset**

What can be learned from similar projects in Somerset, where community development approaches to youth provision have been in operation for a number of years?

Early in 2013, the Regional Youth Work Unit, at Learning South West, Taunton carried out a report, Millar (2013), of a project involving Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) County Councils, entitled: **Localism in Action - Parish and Town Councils Supporting Youth Work**. There are a number of strands to this project, including:

• Ways of implementing ‘localism’ in relation to work with young people – devolving decision making and potentially funding for youth work to community or neighbourhood level

• Exploring partnerships between the tiers of local authority to enable effective use of resources

• Evaluating different models for local council involvement in youth projects

• Identifying and meeting the support needs of parish and town councils in relation to supporting youth work

The report is based upon three case studies featuring: a town council; a Parish council; and a ‘community of practice’ of parish and town councils working in partnership.

Overall, the report shows that there has been much enthusiasm and commitment of many parish and town councils for supporting their young people. Many of them have identified young people as a priority, and a number have raised their precept to contribute to the costs of providing youth facilities. These projects have raised the profile of work with young people amongst parish, town and district councils in the areas involved and beyond. So far (as at 2013) at least eighteen parish and town councils in B&NES and Somerset have either initiated support for work with young people or expanded their previous support. This support has so far taken the form of some or all of the following:

• Employing youth workers directly

• Providing funding for needs assessments delivered through youth organisations

• Making buildings available and accessible to youth groups

• Recruiting volunteers and supporting management committees for youth groups

• Collaborating with neighbouring councils and the local authority on planning and delivering appropriate provision

Some of the general key learning points and needs identified from these case studies are:

• Town and parish councils would welcome the creation of a ‘Knowledge Hub’ on youth work from which they can get support and advice, and a network of peers involved in similar projects. This also relates to Wenger’s (1991) theory of ‘Communities of Practice’ (CoP) as: *“groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”*

• Although Brown’s (2013) Community Youth Handbook has been very well received by many communities as a useful reference and guidance tool, there is a strong demand for an up to date resource pack, possibly as a web-site, with practical resources to support youth work.

• There is scope for councils to collaborate on commissioning, training for youth workers, insurance and funding opportunities. (This is evident in the ‘Exemplar’ in Appendix 5)

• Youth projects need funding for sustainability, not just start-up – too many funding streams are only for innovations and initiation

• Local authorities (top-tier and districts) should have clear priorities for work with young people, which are shared with lower tier councils

Here are some specific points arising from the first two case studies, (those marked with an asterisk \* are also evident in the some or all of the Devon Case studies):

* Partnership with locally based organisations such as the police and local employers has improved, providing more opportunities for young people as a result.**\***
* Local community groups and organisations have strengthened existing opportunities and created new opportunities for young people. Young people have the opportunity to meet members of the town council and inform them of the issues that affect them - and directly have an influence in the decision making process**. \***
* Mentoring for the youth workers has been a big help ( there is a request for this from one Devon Case study)
* More support and training is needed for non-Youth workers, eg Town Clerks**.\***
* More professional advice and support needed.**\***
* Having a credible plan with public support **\***
* Listening to young people and engaging with them in the design of services and facilities **\***
* Investing in a viable ongoing funding plan.
* Engaging appropriately skilled and independent professional support**\***
* Ensuring that volunteers are properly trained and supported.(more work needed on this in Devon)
* Ensuring continued Local Authority, other agency and public support through building relationships and providing clear evidence of benefits i.e. identification and dissemination of good practice. (needed in Devon)

The third and largest project (the partnership of six town and parish councils, with others interested in joining) has provided a huge range of benefits and these are detailed in **Appendix 5**. Many of the points above are included but there are many more benefits with regard to the level of professional support available, which is extensive, good examples of partnership working, training and support, inter club activities and sharing of resources and so on. This case study, and its achievements in **Appendix 5**, is perhaps a very good exemplar from which Devon projects can learn and to which they can aspire.

**4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This section is informed by the evidence of the case studies and the contributions of other stakeholders identified in section D (Methodology) above.

In considering Dobson’s six aspects of community development (2015), there is evidence from the case studies to support the view that: ‘people have found a common cause’ (due to the cutbacks in county council funding for youth services) and that there are a number of factors, ‘helping people to work together’, (the involvement of town and parish councils, other providers, young people involvement, local leadership). There is also evidence to support the view that within Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, there are aspects of partnership, delegated power and citizen control that are present, all of which are the top rungs of the ladder.

To strengthen community participation within these top rungs and to support the development of Dobson’s other four aspects of community development, especially: ‘building organisations’ strength and independence’; building equity, inclusiveness, participation and cohesion’; and to ‘enable people to influence and transform’ the development of their services for young people, the following six recommendations are supported to varying degrees from the evidence.

These recommendations need to be considered, in particular, by VOYC Trustees in determining how it will prioritise its future infrastructure support functions in the future.

They also need to be considered by Devon County Council to inform their decision making regarding what needs to go into the commissioning specification(s) for future services to support communities following the divestment of the youth service and the identification of its priorities for use of its funding for Devon’s infrastructure support organisations such as VOYC and the CVS networks

**1. Training and support for the workforce whether they be paid or voluntary**.

Some projects did not know the importance of training at the outset nor how to access it. All projects now view this as very important and a priority. It is also a national infrastructure support function - **Develop: facilitate learning (See Appendix 1)**

This should include the recruitment and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and child protection arrangements; training in the youth work national occupational standards – NOS - (**see NOS Appendix 3**), safeguarding, health and safety, risk assessments’, leadership and management. Training is now highly valued and regarded by many as a priority. This is a quote from evaluation feedback received from a training session for one of the Devon projects, carried out by an independent trainer:

***Has this helped you understand the requirements of your youth work role?****Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes (1 no comment)****If so how?****Engaging with young people more. A greater understanding of my role as a youth worker, learnt about boundaries, ideas of how to involve kids. Given more ideas how to approach the kids, given me a wider scope of thought towards young people's needs. Given me a better understanding of my role as a volunteer. Help with recognising boundaries and working out boundaries are situation dependant. Explained we need to safeguard ourselves as well as our kids.*

The overall view, including the views of the Devon youth service officer and the independent training consultant, is that workforce training and support needs to be ‘joined up’ with one provider working in close partnership with others to provide a coordinated and comprehensive service for all youth projects in Devon.

**2. Setting up ‘Communities of Practice’**

This is to provide practitioners, in particular, a forum or mechanism by which they can share ideas and expertise, discuss and develop youth work practice and NOS professional youth work standards (**See appendix 3**), share resources and develop inter project or club activities.

These are also national infrastructure support functions under **Connect**: **Brokering Support; collaboration; networking** (**See Appendix 1**)

**3. Advice and Guidance to Projects**

This is a national infrastructure support function, also under the heading **Develop**: **advice and guidance** (**See Appendix 1,**). This should include access to support and advice in establishing and maintaining quality youth provision (policies, best practice guidance, legal requirements, etc.) - insurance for youth workers and activities. It should also provide dedicated support for town and parish councils:

*Town and parish councils would welcome the creation of a ‘Knowledge Hub’ on youth work from which they can get support and advice, and a network of peers involved in similar projects* (from Somerset Case Study above and requested by Crediton Town Council).

Such advice and support should include the establishment and maintenance of a suitable set of policies and procedures for projects, based on statutory and best practice guidance, under which youth provision in the participating communities will be conducted.

There should also be governance support to management/project groups, including professional guidance and advice on how to meet local priorities and to employ youth worker resources in the most effective and efficient manner, (as in Appendix 5).

It has also been suggested that to progress this recommendation, and that of recommendation 2 above, a dedicated website be established.

**4. Develop partnership working, especially between the different tiers of local government.**

Whilst there is good evidence of partnership working, more needs to be done to facilitate better coordination and effective use and sharing of resources and expertise.

Please note the evidence from the Somerset case studies:

* *There is scope for councils to collaborate on commissioning, training for youth workers, insurance and funding opportunities*
* *Youth projects need funding for sustainability, not just start-up – too many funding streams are only for innovations and initiation*
* *Local authorities (top-tier and districts) should have clear priorities for work with young people, which are shared with lower tier councils*

These recommendations are also national infrastructure support functions under **Connect**: **Brokering Support; collaboration; networking** (**See Appendix 1**).

They also relate to two of the national standards for professional youth work, (**see Appendix 3**) and in particular the following:

|  |
| --- |
| A2: Engage with the local community |
| A3: Build working relationships and networks |

**5. Monitoring needs, support required and evaluation of practice to inform future development and sustainability and the impacts of the work being undertaken.**

This should include support for local needs analyses, ongoing monitoring and evaluation to inform policy makers and funding agents, identification of effective working models, measuring and evaluating impacts and so on. This is drawn from the evidence from the Somerset Case studies:

*Ensuring continued Local Authority, other agency and public support through building relationships and providing clear evidence of benefits i.e. identification and dissemination of good practice*.

It is also an expressed function of the Devon Children, Young People and Families Alliance, (Page 6 ‘How we Work’, Devon Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015).

**6. That this Report and its recommendations be considered by the DCC Children, Young People and Families Alliance.**

As already mentioned in the early part of this study, this Alliance is a partnership of organisations that listen to and work for children, young people and families. This partnership has produced a Plan – ‘My Life, My Journey’ (DCC 2015) that sets out how it will improve outcomes for all children and young people aged 0-19 in Devon and their families. As this study clearly shows, there is good evidence of young people and their communities taking a lead role in working with and for young people. Their work needs to be recognised, considered, supported and included in this Plan. Not least as community (development) provision for young people is already working towards and achieving some of the stated outcomes of The Plan, especially: **‘Connect’** – ‘good access to social, cultural and environmental opportunities; young people influence decisions that affect them (page 10) and **‘Give’** – ‘young people have good opportunities to participate in their community’; young people establish supporting relationships and positive behaviour’ (page 10).

This recommendation is also very important as it will provide all those involved in community development projects opportunities to: ‘influence and transform’; and ‘advise and inform public authorities’, two of the six aspects of Dobson’s (2015) Community Development Model (**see Appendix 4.2**).

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**6. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1:

Infrastructure Support Functions (as defined by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations – NCVS)



The VOYC Work Plan 2015/2016 sets out clearly the work it currently does under these headings.

Appendix 2: Reflection Note used to obtain evidence from interviews

|  |
| --- |
| TELL THE STORY: What happened and why do you think it happened in that way? Who was involved? When did it start? How did it progress/develop? |
| REFLECTIONS: How did you behave, think and feel as it was happening? What went well/not so well? Reasons for this. Issues that arose and how were they addressed. What were the wins/successes? Reasons for this |
| LEARNING AND IMPACTS: What were the main Learning points from both positive and negative experiences? What would you do/not do again? Reasons. What has been achieved/gained by young people/the community generally? |
| LOOKING AHEAD: What are your future plans? What issues need to be addressed/resolved? What are the key messages you wish to pass on to others – other projects; policy makers, VOYC. Is the project sustainable, if not what needs to be done to make it so? What future support do you need and from whom. |

**APPENDIX 3**

|  |
| --- |
| National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (as agreed by the regulatory bodies and the Government) |
| A1: Build relationships and engage with young people |  |  |  |  |  |
| A2: Engage with the local community |  |  |  |  |  |
| A3: Build working relationships and networks |  |  |  |  |  |
| B1: Facilitate learning and development of young people through youth work |  |  |  |  |  |
| B2: Plan and implement learning activities in youth work |  |  |  |  |  |
| B3: Promote young people’s self-awareness, confidence and participation |  |  |  |  |  |
| B4: Promote access to information and support |  |  |  |  |  |
| C1: Engage in critical dialogue and work with young people in promoting their rights |  |  |  |  |  |
| C2: Safeguard the health and welfare of young people |  |  |  |  |  |
| C3: Promote inclusion, equity and the valuing of diversity |  |  |  |  |  |
| C4: Fulfil regulatory and organisational requirements |  |  |  |  |  |
| E1: Manage yourself |  |  |  |  |  |
| E2: Lead and manage others |  |  |  |  |  |
| E3: Develop colleagues |  |  |  |  |  |
| E4: Maintain health and safety in the workplace |  |  |  |  |  |

Appendix 4.1



**Arnstein**, Sherry R. “A **Ladder of** Citizen **Participation**,” JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

Appendix 4.2



Community Development – A Different Way to Think About Local Economies. Julian.Dobson: <http://www.slideshare.net/juliandobson/communitythinking?related=6>

**Appendix 5: Exemplar: Detail of third Somerset case study**

* Fully qualified professional youth and community development staff.
* Access to support and advice in establishing and maintaining quality youth provision (policies, best practice guidance, legal requirements, etc.) – Insurance for youth workers and activities
* Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and child protection arrangements.
* Consultation with young people in the communities.
* A fully tailored support package relevant to each community.
* Established links with and work in local schools.
* Access to fundraising support.
* Support to the recruitment, training and development of local volunteers.
* Organisation and running of trips, activities and events.
* Opportunities for joint working with other local communities and youth groups.
* Professional support and supervision for all staff by appointed independent provider as follows:
1. Professional supervision of the youth workers, including occupational and training advice and support, personal development and performance monitoring.
2. Day to day management supervision of the youth workers, under the direction of the Management Group, including objective setting and resource allocation.
3. The establishment and maintenance of a suitable set of policies and procedures for the project, based on statutory and best practice guidance, under which youth provision in the participating communities will be conducted.
4. Support to the Management Group, including professional guidance and advice on how to meet local priorities and to employ youth worker resource in the most effective and efficient manner.
5. The provision of a call-off service for part-time/temporary qualified youth workers to provide holiday/sickness cover and to support the project youth workers at times of peak activity, as required by the Management Group.
6. Liaison and joint working with external organisations that have an interest in this project.
7. On at least a quarterly basis, holding a youth provider network event offering support to all organisations engaged in youth provision in the participating communities.

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3. My wife Frances, for proof reading; however any faults and errors are mine and mine only.

Paul Allan

November, 2015