



Department of  
**Education**

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AN ROINN

**Oideachais**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

**Lear**

# Priorities for Youth

*Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work*





# Priorities for Youth

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# Priorities for Youth

# Priorities for Youth

## Ministerial Foreword



I am pleased to be publishing *Priorities for Youth – Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work*, which will set the overarching policy framework for the future delivery of the youth service.

Many of you responded to the consultation on the draft *Priorities for Youth*. The response to the consultation was excellent, particularly from young people, and I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond. In finalising *Priorities for Youth* I have considered the many responses received and the views of key stakeholders.

As Education Minister, I value the role and contribution of youth work and recognise the positive contribution it makes to education, employability and life skills for young people and how it helps them to positively engage as active members of their own and wider communities. It is my aim that the key actions contained within this policy framework really will help to improve young people's lives through youth work.

Everyone wants the best for children and young people. The Executive is committed to helping children thrive, achieve and develop the confidence to make the transitions into adulthood. Youth work has a good track record in engaging young people in positive activities that empower, encourage and support them to work through these transitions and help them develop the necessary personal and social skills to face the challenges they may encounter along the way.

Youth work has an important contribution to make to the development of young people within the context of the education service, funded from the education budget. It is an increasingly relevant aspect of non-formal education. I am committed to ensuring that youth work continues to contribute to achieving the vision of ***every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development***.

I want to provide a clear policy remit for youth work within education and to enable a clearer focus for youth workers, volunteers and managers, a refreshed approach to planning, delivery and evaluation, and crucially a high quality service for young people which can demonstrate effectively its contribution to improved outcomes.

Results from inspection are mostly good with some practice outstanding. However, a range of issues had been identified which needed to be addressed. The major and recurrent issue for my Department was that youth work could no longer be allowed to remain a separate policy, detached from the overall education priorities. It is and should be recognised as a major contributor to improving educational and lifelong learning outcomes. I now want to ensure that by providing a clear policy remit, planning and performance will improve and provide increased evidence of the value of youth work and a stronger case for continued and potentially wider investment.

While there is much to be proud of in our overall education system, there is also much to be done. I have made it a priority to tackle educational underachievement and promote equality and the raising of standards across education. I therefore want to ensure that the non-formal side of education plans and delivers high quality youth work services in line with the broad education priorities. It is crucial that

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youth workers and volunteers are supported in these efforts and understand the distinctive contribution they can make to improved educational outcomes for young people.

I am also seeking to place a greater emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged young people and those for which youth work can provide a valuable link with future education and training.

Shared education is one of the key commitments in the Executive's Programme for Government. Youth work can support this through providing valuable opportunities for young people to build upon their school-based learning, to learn new skills, to develop new relationships and to develop themselves as citizens. The recently announced plans for youth provision set out in the Executive's Together: Building a United Community strategy will also enable this agenda to be progressed. We know that the more opportunities children and young people have to learn and work together in a sustained and meaningful way, the more they will develop positive and inclusive attitudes towards one another.

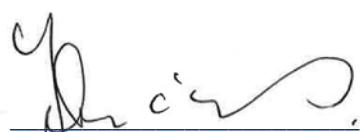
Taking part in youth work is not compulsory but it is an important part of the education continuum. Youth workers, paid and unpaid, have a key role in ensuring that young people continue to make the most of the positive enjoyable opportunities youth work offers to experience new and different educational activities which help them to develop as active members of their communities. The personal commitment of those involved across both the statutory and voluntary youth sector will have impacted on the lives of many thousands of young people and communities over the years. I acknowledge that contribution and recognise youth work for the important contribution it can make to a range of outcomes by enhancing personal and social skills, as well as keeping young people actively engaged in a learning process.

Engagement will be key to implementing the new policy. The Education and Skills Authority will develop three-year plans which set out how services will be provided to meet the Priorities for Youth outcomes and which take account of local need. These plans will be developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. I hope that these plans will provide a mechanism for effective engagement with other agencies operating with young people.

The most challenging education budget settlement in modern history, together with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), provide the mandate for a converged statutory youth service which will work collaboratively with key sectoral partners in the voluntary sector to ensure young people's needs are met through a range of high quality, cost effective provision.

I am confident that the Priorities for Youth policy framework will provide the impetus for continued improvement across a youth sector which has already delivered excellent services over the years and will help to improve young people's lives by enhancing the planning, delivery and performance of youth work in the best interests of young people.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these outcomes.



John O'Dowd  
Minister for Education

# Priorities for Youth

## Section 1

### Introduction

*Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development* (DE Vision Statement)

- 1.1 The Department of Education (DE) invests in youth work to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. Effective youth work helps young people to identify their personal and social development needs and involves them in shaping the services designed to meet those needs to improve both their own skills and life chances in order to create a better future for themselves and their communities. Unlike school, participation is voluntary.

"Youth Work helps develop social skills and anything you learn you can take to school and improve your grades"

**Young Person**

- 1.2 The uniqueness of youth work is that young people of all abilities and of often diverse interests choose to participate regularly on a voluntary basis in a part of the education system that is less formal than school but no less important in terms of learning and development. This dynamic and changing service should complement the formal education service; it is, and must remain, distinctive from formal education; yet, at the same time, it must connect with broad education priorities to ensure maximum benefit for young people.

"Being clear about the role and remit of the youth service and being able to articulate this...is a fundamental"

**Youth Manager**

- 1.3 Non-formal education in the form of youth work is an important part of education as it encourages children and young people's participation to develop their personal and social skills encouraging them to engage or re-engage in positive learning within a non-formal setting.

- 1.4 The Youth Service developed a non-statutory curriculum endorsed by DE "Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice" (1997 - updated 2003) which provides a flexible framework for the delivery of good youth work practice. Effective youth work can help overcome barriers to learning by providing further opportunities to gain qualifications, to volunteer as junior leaders and to develop a range of skills and attributes that can help young

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people improve their life outcomes as individuals and as contributors to their community and the wider economy. It provides opportunities to build self-esteem, to work as part of a team, make friends, socialise and take part in enjoyable and structured activities in a safe environment. It also has the potential to develop mutual understanding and respect for others, and to promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity.

- 1.5 Youth workers can help young people to develop holistically, by enhancing their readiness to learn, building positive relationships and acting as role models. Without effective intervention, the outcomes for some young people are poor compared to their peers. Although relevant for all young people, youth work can be particularly relevant to those at risk of disengaging from society, those who become disaffected at school, those at risk of committing an offence, those who could become non-stakeholders in their own community and those adversely affected by the legacy of the conflict.




- 1.6 This document outlines a set of priorities within a policy framework for youth work within education, strategically aligned to the overall DE policy and vision for young people. Establishing Priorities for Youth provides a clear focus for ESA, where the investment in youth work is directly linked to supporting good quality educational services that deliver positive outcomes for young people. The principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) have been taken into consideration when developing these Priorities. This framework should promote children's rights. It reflects and supports the guiding principles of the UNCRC and is consistent with the educational rights and duties therein.



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## Participation of young people

- 1.7 Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enshrines participation rights including the right to express opinions and have those opinions taken into account. The Model for Effective Practice has strengthened the participation of young people at the centre of youth work and the extent and success of their participation is a major emphasis in any education inspection activity.



"Youth Clubs  
are about sharing  
and making your own  
decisions"

**Young Person**

- 1.8 The youth service is able to provide young people with the means, the space and the opportunities to participate at local, sub-regional and regional levels. This underpins the actions contained within Priorities for Youth.

## Current legislation and funding for DE supported Youth Work

- 1.9 The statutory provision for the Youth Service is contained in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986<sup>1</sup>, which sets out the requirements in regard to providing youth services, and the Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1989<sup>2</sup> which established the Youth Council.
- 1.10 During 2013-14 the Department allocated approximately £33million resource and £5million capital into youth services, which it must ensure is used efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of young people. On an annual basis, this funding is distributed via six different funding schemes, one in each Education and Library Board (ELB) and one in the Youth Council, each operating independently of one another. Each of the five ELBs and the Youth Council receive revenue budgets of approximately £5m to £6m. Funding is currently allocated to ELBs to support local delivery, maintain statutory units or programmes and to provide funding to local voluntary youth units who satisfy registration criteria and are eligible for funding. Most organisations funded by the Youth Council use the grant to support the day-to-day running of their regional office, salaries and/or the delivery of regional programmes.

## Current Delivery Structure

- 1.11 The most recent figures available estimate that over 182,000 young people are involved in registered youth work (over one third of the population aged 4-25)<sup>3</sup>. There are 108 statutory youth facilities and 11 Outdoor Education Centres controlled and managed by

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<sup>1</sup> 1986 No. 594 (N.I. 3).

<sup>2</sup> 1989 No. 2413 (N.I. 22).

<sup>3</sup> A Statistical and Geographic Report of the Registered Youth Service in Northern Ireland – 2011 Data Cycle

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ELBs, with over 1,700 voluntary groups supported either by the ELBs or the Youth Council (uniformed/non-uniformed units; church related and secular units; headquarter and umbrella bodies; residential centres).

"The Contribution of volunteers is essential to management and delivery of Youth Work"

**Youth Organisation**

- 1.12 The Service relies on the contribution of over 20,000 volunteers, whose dedication, commitment and skills are vital in helping to deliver services. These volunteers make a positive difference to the lives of young people and their communities.



- 1.13 The Department fully supports the shared values and principles in the 2011 Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the NI Government, and is committed to working with partners towards implementation of the agreed commitments contained in the Concordat. The Department requires all its Arms Length Bodies and ESA, when established, to adhere to the values and principles of the Concordat when carrying out activities on its behalf.

"The principles that underpin the concordat should be embedded at all planning and operational levels"

**Youth Organisation**

- 1.14 References to youth work or youth services throughout this document relate to youth work which is delivered by the ELBs and the Youth Council, or by the voluntary sector supported through the ELBs and Youth Council and which is directed by the Department and subject to inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Once established, ESA will subsume the ELBs and the Youth Council.


# Priorities for Youth

## Section 2

### Current Policy Context

#### Introduction

- 2.1 The youth work policy document 'The Youth Work Strategy 2005–2008' achieved a number of key objectives identified as relevant at the time. The current context for the delivery of, and support for, youth work needs to take full account of the issues and challenges facing young people and the youth service today, including the establishment of ESA, changing educational priorities, inspection findings, results of the public consultation and increased pressure within the education budget.
- 2.2 The increased focus on achieving public value with public investment, combined with a renewed emphasis on demonstrating improved outcomes for young people, creates an ideal opportunity to review both the value and contribution of youth work in contributing to the DE vision of every young person fulfilling his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.
- 2.3 DE's policies and associated funding enable the delivery of services almost exclusively to children and young people and therefore have more capacity to enhance overall outcomes if used as collectively and effectively as possible. Despite universal access to education, outcomes are not universally the same. Whilst many young people achieve and succeed, other young people are at risk of not fulfilling their potential either because of their social context, additional need or their experience of and attitude towards education.
- 2.4 Not all young people struggle with the context in which they find themselves and, even when they do, some will thrive despite the issues they face; others will not. In deciding on priorities for youth work, it is important to understand what some young people achieve in terms of educational, social and employment outcomes and the barriers they may face to achieving their potential.



"All Youth Work  
should be responding  
to identified needs"

**Youth Manager**

# Priorities for Youth



## Wider Education Policy

- 2.5 There is a substantial suite of policies that youth work contributes to, or which can impact on the planning and delivery of youth work, particularly the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy. At the heart of the revised curriculum for all schools is an emphasis on developing children and young people's personal, interpersonal and learning skills and their ability to think both creatively and critically. This is also the case with the non-formal curriculum for youth work, although the youth work curriculum has a more flexible format which provides additional opportunities for young people to develop these skills. The two are not mutually exclusive. Indeed non-formal education plays an important role within the education continuum by complementing, reinforcing and enhancing the learning that takes place in formal education settings.

"We believe our work is non-formal education and works in a complimentary manner with formal education in preparing young people for their future"

**Youth Organisation**

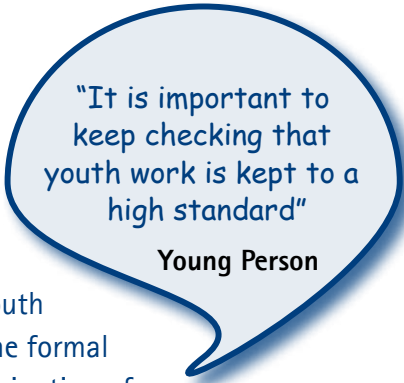
- 2.6 Education is going through a major period of change. The change from the present structures to ESA will present significant opportunities. In 2005, the then Education Minister confirmed that youth services would remain the responsibility of DE and would be included in the remit of ESA. The Youth Service RPA Policy Paper 9 (DE, 2006) signalled the intention for youth services managed by ESA to 'ensure as far as is reasonable that the commissioning and delivery of youth services is planned and carried out to meet Ministerial/Departmental objectives, to standards set by the Department, having regard to a combination of effectiveness, economy and efficiency'.

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## Inspection

2.7 The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) emphasises continually the importance for providers and policy-makers from the different areas of education to make connections in the interests of the same young people with whom they work. Such connections recognise the important and complementary contribution which teachers and youth workers make towards preparing young people for employment and life. Young people should be able to identify and articulate their common learning outcomes across each sector. Strategic planning for youth services should therefore be informed by an analysis of the educational needs of young people as articulated by them.

2.8 ETI reports that, in policy terms, youth work has been strategically and operationally too discrete. It has sat separately from related policies such as Extended Schools, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and the development of area learning communities at a departmental level. Too often there have not been strong enough links made between the skills and attributes attained through non-formal learning in the Youth Service and those being developed through the work of the formal curriculum. Few opportunities have existed for the dissemination of good practice.



"It is important to keep checking that youth work is kept to a high standard"

**Young Person**

2.9 ETI reports that there continues to be a need to monitor and evaluate more specifically the coherence, progression and outcomes in young people's learning. ETI has developed quality indicators for the youth sector around the core themes of the quality of achievement and outcomes, the quality of provision and the quality of leadership and management.

## Wider Executive Policy

2.10 The education service needs to take account of a range of wider Executive policies and youth work can assist in the delivery of a range of key strategic outcomes such as those contained in the Programme for Government 2011-2015, the Children and Young People's 10 Year Plan, the Play and Leisure Policy, the Child Poverty Policy, Pathways to Success, Delivering Social Change and Together: Building a United Community. In preparing Priorities for Youth, the wider policy context was considered to ensure that the policy aligned with and was complementary to developments elsewhere. By helping to deliver on all the policies aimed at improving the experience and life chances for young people, the Youth Service will demonstrate its relevance to a wider audience.



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## European and Regional Strategic Context

- 2.11 Education is a devolved matter and non-formal education policy is therefore the responsibility of the Minister of Education. However, it is useful to consider the thrust of youth policies elsewhere. It is clear that across regions, countries and at European level, youth work is recognised as an important aspect of learning, on the continuum of educational provision. Although it has distinctive characteristics which set it apart from formal education, it seeks the same long term positive outcomes for young people. At European level, there are initiatives and funding opportunities which local youth organisations should be encouraged to explore.
- 2.12 While there is already cooperation between youth sectors north/south and east/west, there are opportunities to build on this in order to share good practice and to consider how best to address the many common issues affecting young people.



## External Factors

- 2.13 In common with other developed societies, the north of Ireland has been experiencing a period of social, political, technological, cultural and demographic change. When drafting this policy, a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis was completed. It provided a framework within which to consider external factors and presented an analysis of the external environment that could impact on youth work within education in terms of future planning and delivery.

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## Consultation

- 2.14 In 2008 DE undertook comprehensive pre-consultation to establish the views from children and young people, volunteers, youth workers, leaders and managers within the youth sector and wider educational service. Views were gathered through questionnaires, focus groups, street-based consultations, seminars and workshops. Summaries of the pre-consultation are available on the DE website at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).
- 2.15 DE established the Priorities for Youth Stakeholder Group, a cross-representational group based on recommendations from the Youth Service Liaison Forum, to enable it to draw on the experience and involvement of the statutory and voluntary youth sectors. The views of the Stakeholder Group contributed to the development of the policy.
- 2.16 Public consultation on the draft policy took place between September and December 2012. In order to inform the consultation and help develop responses, the Youth Council, ELBs, regional voluntary youth organisations, local youth groups and others with an interest in youth work policy and delivery held a large number of consultation events and meetings. As a result, DE received a total of 518 consultation responses. Quantitative analysis shows that over 86% of respondents agreed or mostly agreed with the overall aims, vision, issues and actions of Priorities for Youth. Respondents also raised a range of particular issues, which were taken into consideration when finalising the policy. A summary paper of the responses to the consultation is published separately and is available on the DE website at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk). The quotes printed throughout this document have been taken from consultation responses.



# Priorities for Youth

## Priorities for Youth

- 2.17 Youth work can and should directly contribute to the DE vision for education. The meaning of youth work in education has been diluted over the years, and the important contribution good quality youth work makes to achieving a range of education and wider social aims has not been sufficiently recognised outside the youth sector. Taking into account all of the evidence, the following issues were identified as requiring review and direction.

"The challenge is to address the historic legacy...whereby resources are allocated on the basis of 'that's the way it has always been, without recourse to outputs, impact or change"

**Youth Manager**

## Department of Education's Vision

- 2.18 Youth work is an important area of education policy and therefore must directly contribute to the DE vision and priorities for education. In support of the DE vision "every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development" Priorities for Youth sets youth work in the context of the DE overarching goals, which reflect the importance of:

- Raising Standards For All; and
- Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality.

It also considers the three enabling goals of:

- Developing the Education Workforce;
- Improving the Learning Environment; and
- Transforming the Governance and Management of Education.

"Priorities for Youth recognises the non-formal sector can support young peoples' learning and personal and social development"

**Anonymous**

## Planning

- 2.19 Strategic planning of youth services must reflect wider DE policy and will be in response to the assessed need for a youth work intervention, prioritised age ranges and priority groups. In planning for youth provision, managers must take account of a range of high level education policies and services, such as CRED, extended schools, full service schools, EOTAS, Irish-medium education, special education, area learning communities and the entitlement framework. Funding for youth provision will be consistent, transparent, and allocated proportionate to the level of disadvantage experienced by young people.



# Priorities for Youth

## Provision

- 2.20 The youth service should provide learning opportunities and experiences that are relevant and interesting for all young people, but should also provide a more targeted service for those most in need. ESA will reshape delivery with a focus on value for money, where regional priorities are planned to complement and support local and more tailored provision, and implementing the relevant recommendations of the Irish-medium Review.

"Different young people have different qualities and needs"

Anonymous

## Performance Management

- 2.21 Investment in youth work should contribute to achieving agreed defined outcomes for young people in a cost-effective manner. Statutory and voluntary organisations should be expected to report against agreed proportionate outcomes set out in approved plans. Numbers of young people who take part in youth activities continue to be an important indicator of engagement, but not the sole basis of performance measurement. Youth work must demonstrate the difference between those outcomes achieved through planned programmes, projects, accreditation and training and those achieved through taking part, association and participation generally.

"The best Youth Services are those that can clearly articulate what it is they are doing and why"

Youth Manager

## People

- 2.22 The Department recognises the significant contribution of the entire workforce and the increasing demands placed on it, both in enhancing youth work practice and managing administration and governance. Structures will be put in place to ensure appropriate, timely and relevant support is available to enable continuous professional development across the workforce, paid and unpaid.

## Participation

- 2.23 There will be a renewed focus on active and evidenced participation of young people in youth work at local, sub regional and regional levels. Current and emerging participative structures and programmes will be assessed to determine the degree to which they support the development of a credible, democratic and accountable voice for both the empowered articulate and the less empowered less articulate young person before expanding the concept further.

"All young people should have a part to play in what happens"

Anonymous

# Priorities for Youth

## Section 3

### Future Context

*Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development* (DE Vision Statement)

#### Aims

3.1 The strategic aims of youth work in support of the DE vision are:

- To contribute to raising standards for all and closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest achieving young people by providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that help them to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning; and
- To continue to improve the non-formal learning environment by creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes.

3.2 Achieving the overall aims requires:

- Alignment of youth work policy with the strategic priorities for education, which will help shape and modernise provision in order to produce more equitable outcomes for young people;
- The proportionate targeting of services based on need with a clear focus on those most in need of additional support to achieve their potential, embrace diversity, and overcome disaffection; and
- A clear focus on the provision of measurable, quality learning experiences for young people.

# Priorities for Youth

## Principles supporting Youth Work in Education

3.3 The following principles underpin all aspects of youth work supported by DE:

- Participation in youth services is voluntary and should enable young people to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to tackle the issues that are important to them;
- The active participation of young people should be fostered, supported and evident across all youth settings;
- Equality and inclusion should be fundamental to planning and implementation and the values of equality, diversity and interdependence should be at the heart of youth work;
- Young people, their families and the wider community should be involved in youth work in a meaningful way, with expectations managed within the resources available;
- Young people should expect high quality services, which follow best practice including the highest standards of child protection;
- Collaborative working between the voluntary, uniformed, faith-based and statutory sectors should play an important part in securing improved outcomes for young people and the continued commitment from the youth workforce, including volunteers;
- The contribution of the volunteer workforce within the youth sector is invaluable and should be acknowledged, supported and celebrated;
- Resources should be used to achieve priority outcomes for young people in the most cost effective way, according to best practice principles (public value);
- The needs of the young person should be the key focus at each stage of development; and
- Activities should be engaging, enjoyable and planned to deliver improved outcomes.



"Inclusion and participation as building blocks on Youth Policy - this is to be welcomed"

Young Person

# Priorities for Youth




## The Contribution of Youth Work to the DE Priorities

3.4 Equality, inclusion and rights are the cornerstones of an education system which enables every learner to fulfil their potential. Setting a clearer policy for youth work aligned to the DE priorities provides a clear sense of purpose and focus on the added value youth work brings to the holistic education of young people. It enables workers, volunteers and managers to connect not only what they are contributing, but also why their programmes and activities are important, including:

- Helping young people to overcome barriers to learning and engagement;
- Providing personal and social development opportunities for all young people, but targeted for those who need it most;
- Helping young people to gain confidence, develop their self-esteem and have high expectations and aspirations for themselves;
- Helping young people to develop an understanding of, and respect for, the rights, equality and diversity of all without discrimination. The Department's CRED policy is a key driver in this regard;
- Providing opportunities for young people to gain additional skills, accreditation and training;

# Priorities for Youth

- Developing young leaders through supported volunteering in a leadership capacity;
- Helping young people to transition effectively into adulthood;
- Securing outcomes for young people that complement what they learn in school;
- Providing young people with access to a different or, in many cases, a second opportunity to learn, engage, and improve life chances, using a youth work methodology; and
- Supporting young people to participate positively and effectively in society.



"The process of assessing need should be a common approach and agreed criteria"

**Youth Organisation**

# Priorities for Youth

## Section 4

### Priorities for Youth

- 4.1 The following priority areas detail the key actions required to effect change and prioritise the delivery of youth work in education. Although numbered for ease of reference this does not reflect an ordering of priority. Delivery of many of the actions will be the responsibility of ESA, as DE's delivery body. Until ESA is established, implementation of these actions will be taken forward by ELBs and the Youth Council, collaboratively as appropriate.

#### Priority 1: Raising Standards for All

- 4.2 Youth work has an important role to play in raising standards in education. To achieve this, youth work should be planned and delivered in response to the assessed need for a youth work intervention. There should be stronger strategic planning, supported by a composite assessment of need at local, sub regional and regional level. Planning should include an assessment of capital requirements. This will provide a clear framework for the delivery of youth services.
- 4.3 The voluntary sector will be encouraged and supported to provide those youth services assessed as needed and the statutory youth sector will continue to deliver youth services where there is no viable alternative.
- 4.4 Robust qualitative and proportionate reporting systems, along with clear performance indicators and measurable evidence of progress and achievement of the young people, will demonstrate the contribution of youth work to improved educational outcomes for young people and, consequently, its public value. In pursuit of improved performance management and accountability, the principle of proportionality should underpin the development of all processes and systems to ensure accountability, whilst avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy.
- 4.5 The current age range for youth work goes nine years beyond the compulsory school age and provides services for all those in the age range 4-25. Interventions in support of DE's priorities will mainly cover young people aged 4-18, with support for those aged 19-25 provided to meet particular needs.

# Priorities for Youth

## 4.6 Actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Raising Standards for All:

1. Planning, funding and delivery of youth work will be based on the ESA composite (local and regional) assessment of need and will support requirements linked to the DE key priorities at local, sub-regional and regional level.
2. ESA will develop a strategic three year Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) for DE approval, which will be implemented via annual Youth Development Plans across all levels. These plans will take account of anticipated needs such as youth intervention programmes, but will also require a degree of flexibility to deal with unforeseen circumstances and to adapt to meet changing needs. The RYDP will address the DE priorities in the regional or local context and will be informed through stakeholder engagement in the form of Advisory Groups. DE will determine the basis for membership and the function of these groups and will consult with sectors as appropriate. DE will also issue guidance, if necessary.
3. ESA will support and encourage the development of robust and proportionate quality assurance systems in all parts of the youth service.
4. ESA, in consultation with sectoral stakeholders, will design a framework of expected outcomes for all types of provision, proportionate to the support provided and in line with the RYDP. The framework will measure expected outcomes and will take account of the broad range of youth work educational outcomes, including those focussing on personal and social development. An example of an outcomes framework is provided at Annex 1.
5. ESA will also design and implement an appropriate management information system for all DE-supported youth work, which will inform future planning and evaluation and will consider the IT infrastructure requirements for funded provision.
6. ESA will develop an annual report for youth work to provide a high level summary of investment, activities, and outcomes achieved.
7. There will be five distinct age bands for ESA funded youth work, 4-8, 9-13, 14-18, 19-21 and 22-25. The key age bands for intervention will be 9-13 and 14-18, in line with the priority needs identified. These age bands should drive the allocation of resources at a strategic level. Age bands for particular local schemes can, however, be flexible.

# Priorities for Youth

8. Youth work activities with individuals and groups of young people will be determined based on an assessment of need, but in general:
  - The focus for the age range 4–8 will be through general youth work provision linked to the Youth Work Curriculum;
  - For the age ranges 9–13 and 14–18 the focus will be on the provision of youth work activities, in line with the priority needs identified;
  - For the 16+ age range, the focus will be on programmes that provide access to leadership/training opportunities or apprenticeships. Young people should also have access to recognised and/or accredited programmes to volunteer either within units or in the wider community;
  - The focus for the age range 19–25 will be on issue based programmes or volunteering and leadership opportunities;
  - For the age range 22–25, the focus will be on those who are either in, or at risk of being in, the group of young people not in education, employment or training or those who have not yet accessed developmental or other educational opportunities and are unlikely to do so.
9. The RYDP should include actions designed to ensure greater progression for young people in the revised age ranges.
10. ESA will develop robust and proportionate quality assurance systems to monitor and evaluate youth service provision, taking into consideration ETI standards and inspection findings. Systems must ensure the administrative overhead is proportionate to the level of funding involved.

## Priority 2: Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality

- 4.7 There is a significant gap in achievement between the highest and lowest achieving young people and those most and least disadvantaged. Specific groups of young people are more likely to experience barriers to learning, participation and progression and consequently be at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes. There is a need to address and minimise root causes of educational disadvantage and barriers to learning that young people face. Youth work in statutory and voluntary youth settings, schools and through detached and



# Priorities for Youth

outreach work, provides additional opportunities to support young people's learning and development and improve employability by re-engaging them with education. It can also equip children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to recognise, understand and respect difference. This is particularly important as we continue to deal with the legacy of conflict and move towards a shared and inclusive society. We also need to provide opportunities for children and young people to put these skills into practice.

## **4.8 Actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality:**

1. DE will allocate the global youth work budget to ESA on the basis of a funding distribution mechanism. Whilst all geographical areas will be included, more weighting will be allocated according to disadvantage, which will determine an indicative distribution amount for each area. This funding mechanism will replace the existing population-based youth Assessment of Relative Need Exercise (ARNE) used for the ELBs, and the non-ARNE Youth Council and ELB allocations. It will be for ESA to determine actual allocations.
2. Funding to support regional voluntary youth organisations will be capped at no more than 10% of the youth budget available to support local units, programmes and projects operating at a local level (excluding ESA administration, which will also be kept to a minimum) to ensure a focus on frontline delivery.
3. There will continue to be non-targeted/generic youth provision available in line with the assessment of need. Depending on the needs identified, young people will then be directed towards more targeted/specific youth work activities.
4. Targeted provision will be supported to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people, within the Section 75 grouping, or those who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning. The following provides examples of the types of groups who will be targeted. However, this list is not exhaustive:
  - Young people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or at greater risk of social exclusion;
  - Young people engaged in risk taking behaviour;

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- Young people who live in areas of deprivation or in interface areas;
  - Young people not in, or who are at risk of disengaging from, education, employment or training;
  - Young people with special educational needs or disabilities;
  - Young people who are newcomers or have English as an additional language;
  - Young people in care;
  - Young carers and young parents;
  - Young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender;
  - Young people from the Traveller Community;
  - Young people living in rural isolation.
5. ESA will reflect, in the planning and delivery of youth services, key actions for youth as set out in other relevant DE policies. In particular, recommendation 18 of the Review of Irish-medium Education states that ***'The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector'***. The aims of the CRED policy must also be reflected in youth service provision.
  6. ESA will assess the local need for and, if appropriate, prioritise access to and longer opening times for centres or units operating within areas of disadvantage and on or near interface areas, including during periods when community tensions are heightened. ESA will review the current use of standardised contracts or agreements for schemes of assistance. The opening times and staffing levels should be determined on the basis of assessed local need, taking account of the need for flexibility and contingency for unforeseen events.
  7. ESA will ensure that youth workers, including outreach and detached youth workers, are deployed in response to the need identified, rather than historic deployment patterns.

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## Priority 3: Developing the Non-Formal Education Workforce

- 4.9 Youth work supported by DE relies on a wide range of qualified and unqualified staff, including the invaluable contribution of over 20,000 volunteers. Supporting youth work staff and, in particular, recognising and celebrating the contribution of volunteers is essential to the success of youth work delivery and implementing the actions in this policy framework.
- 4.10 The youth sector is made up of a range of statutory and voluntary providers, each with different employers, practices and ethos. DE recognises the contribution of the voluntary sector working in partnership with the statutory sector to deliver essential services. Strengthened governance and accountability arrangements are important aspects of effective performance management systems, which will enable the youth service to demonstrate more effectively the outcomes it delivers. In implementing any new system, the focus must be on proportionate accountability across a diverse range of providers.
- 4.11 Training and support for the youth workforce is fundamental to achieving and maintaining a consistently high quality of service to young people. In order to implement Priorities for Youth, the workforce needs a range of support systems to enable it to share practice, drive up quality standards and access enhanced support for specific issue-based youth work and administration and governance.
- 4.12 Staff development and training should enable youth workers, volunteers and managers to: articulate the value of the service and celebrate its educational achievements; evaluate their work effectively through evidencing progression, measuring the learning outcomes for individuals and demonstrating the positive impact of youth services on communities; support the active and meaningful participation of young people in various youth work settings; and provide ongoing and specialised training for specifically identified needs.

### **4.13 Actions to enhance the Development of the Non-Formal Education Workforce:**

1. A Practice Development Unit (PDU) will be established and managed by ESA. It will link with youth sector organisations and training providers to assist it to identify, coordinate and secure the provision of a range of functions, such as relevant and proportionate training, continuous professional development opportunities, application of the non-formal curriculum and its links to the revised curriculum, advice on governance,

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legal and regulatory requirements, participation and support for self-evaluation. A separate unit for developing the curriculum will no longer be required.

2. Proportionate support may be made available where practice has been evaluated as needing development, or where inspection findings have evaluated the provision as inadequate or unsatisfactory. ESA will commission appropriate additional or specialist support where necessary.
3. The PDU will establish a forum for the sharing of information across all education sectors, including a range of relevant higher education providers. It will act as a hub for sharing of support materials between education providers and may also commission or develop support materials where required. It will assess the need for senior managers, youth workers, volunteers and voluntary Management Committees to develop their capacity for good governance and continuous improvement through best practice.
4. ESA will support a continuous professional development programme to enhance the leadership and management competencies for youth work staff and provide opportunities for managers to keep pace with education policy overall.
5. ESA will explore the potential for youth workers to have access to elements of support services deemed necessary, which are currently available to schools for young people with additional needs.
6. ESA will agree a system with employers for linking the management and reporting arrangements for youth work staff to the achievement of agreed outcomes in the RYDP. The need to recruit, train, support and retain volunteers will be reflected in the duties of the Management Committee/Leader in Charge, built into proportionate Service Level Agreements and contracts with units, projects and programmes they either deliver or support.

## Priority 4: Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment

- 4.14 Improving the non formal learning environment will not only include the physical environment, but also the practice in that environment. Area-based planning is about anticipating the future education needs of an area and planning to meet those needs within the confines of the projected budget.

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- 4.15 Youth Development Plans will provide a means for assessing the optimal use of the education and wider community estate. They will also consider IT requirements.
- 4.16 Participation is an integral part of youth work practice and will be embedded throughout its delivery. The opportunities for participation in the youth service have evolved significantly since the late 1970s when DE issued specific guidance entitled 'The Greater Involvement of Young People in the Youth Service'. The Model for Effective Practice has put the participation of young people at the centre of youth work and the extent and success of their participation is a major emphasis in any inspection activity.
- 4.17 Increased participation of young people will also help to deliver the aims of the Department's CRED policy. It will help them to build positive relationships with those from different backgrounds and to dispel negative perceptions and images about those who are different from them.
- 4.18 Youth workers will have the flexibility to adopt the most suitable approach to enhancing participation within their setting, reflecting the needs of the young people at each age and stage of their development and supporting young people to participate across a range of formal participative structures where they wish to. Every opportunity should be given to young people to participate in all aspects of the youth service and in a range of different ways. The focus will be on creating opportunities for participation that meet the needs and aspirations of young people. Whilst formal participative structures may be a highly visible form of youth participation, there is a wide and diverse range of less formal, but no less important, methods of participation which involve young people as recipients, volunteers, junior leaders, partners and evaluators.
- 4.19 Consultation on proposals for a Network for Youth was completed in 2008 and a 'Network of Networks' option agreed, to use existing resources to build on and strengthen the networks and systems that are already in place for young people. This provides the context and starting position for the following actions on participation. In developing new arrangements, consideration must be given to developing a credible and accountable voice for both the empowered articulate and less empowered, less articulate young person, built on strong local foundations.

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## 4.20 Actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment:

1. ESA will carry out a baseline audit of currently funded/supported provision to identify gaps and potential for over provision to inform the development of the needs assessment. This will include a review of the statutory youth estate and outdoor education centres.
2. ESA will administer revenue support for voluntary units/clubs who meet future funding criteria. This will be done through the Youth Development Plans. Current arrangements for the administration of the Voluntary Youth Capital Scheme will be reviewed.
3. ESA, in collaboration with key sectoral partners and young people, will develop options for a flexible contemporary model for strengthening participation in the youth service at a local, sub-regional and regional level. The pilot model, to be approved by DE, must take into account existing and emerging participative structures and forums, but must link effectively to the delivery of the RYDP. It will take into consideration the outworking of the Big Deal, including the need for participation workers at a sub-regional level, the agreed 'Network of Networks' option for 'Network for Youth' and other good practice in relation to participation. The model will include appropriate support to enable young people from a variety of backgrounds to participate. Young people in youth-led or youth-governed participative forums or in generic youth settings should be enabled and supported to help further develop the proposals. Further written guidance about enhancing and supporting youth participation following the implementation of this model will be developed, if required.
4. Practitioners within individual units, projects and programmes will be required to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they have supported an ethos and culture of active participation, and how the young people are provided with opportunities to be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes/projects, proportionate to the level of support provided. ETI will continue to evaluate the quality of participation, including the culture of participation, within units during inspection. The remaining elements of the formal guidance issued by DE in 1979 have been withdrawn.
5. ESA will provide access to a regionally managed small grants programme, supported by one organisation or a range of organisations, which will allow young people to administer grants to other young people. The programme will be aimed at strengthening the participation of young people as decision-makers.

# Priorities for Youth

## Priority 5: Transforming Governance and Management of Non-Formal Education

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- 4.21 The existing administrative structures in the DE-funded youth service have created inconsistency in practice and quality of provision. There are currently six different youth funding systems, with varying degrees of evaluation of the impact or public value achieved and little or no coherence between what is being funded regionally and what is being funded at a local level.
- 4.22 DE intends to bring greater coherence to deploying youth work resources through the introduction of ESA. All funding decisions, local and regional, will be based on the needs identified in the RYDP, which will provide greater consistency, coherence and cost-effectiveness in the interests of maintaining front line services for young people.
- 4.23 Historic funding considerations will be replaced by investment which is directly relevant to the collective needs of young people, whilst at the same time addressing issues of probity, fairness and transparency.

### 4.24 Actions to enhance the contribution of youth work to Transforming the Governance and Management of Non Formal Education:

1. Historic funding arrangements for local and regional programmes and organisations will be phased out and replaced with a converged (local and regional) approach to securing services on the basis of identified need to meet DE objectives. The new funding scheme will be developed to support local and regional services assessed as needed in the RYDP, rather than services available, namely:
  - Project funding – used to finance a specific youth project or outcome;
  - Development funding – where youth organisations are effectively supported to provide additional or enhanced youth services; and
  - Strategic funding – that is given to, often well established, youth organisations recognised to be of strategic importance and whose continued existence and activities are considered to be beneficial to delivering quality youth services.

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2. ESA will only consider funding those organisations who demonstrate that their services are required in terms of the delivery of the RYDP.
3. ESA will support innovative schemes to enhance collaboration and cost effectiveness of regional support structures, such as sharing of back office functions, amalgamation or clustering arrangements.
4. ESA will publish the RYDP to demonstrate the levels of demand for youth work within the framework of DE's priorities and the ESA-supported provision in areas. This should enable increased engagement with other Executive Departments, inform the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, and philanthropic and European funding streams and, where appropriate, facilitate merged or aligned investment in response to identified need which cannot be addressed by ESA.



# Priorities for Youth

## Section 5

### Next Steps

#### Introduction

- 5.1 Delivering the actions in this policy will provide the youth workforce, its sectoral partners, young people, the public, ESA, DE and other Departments with a clear and unambiguous framework for the future policy direction of youth work which is supported and delivered within a broad educational framework, and prioritised to maximise its contribution to overall education aims.



- 5.2 The support of key statutory and voluntary sectoral partners will be essential for the smooth transition to the new approach. Delivering on the actions will require the collective effort of a range of workers, managers and volunteers across a range of providers. Young people themselves also need to be fully involved in deciding how the proposals can be implemented.

"ESA will provide us with an opportunity to manage a service that is unambiguous, non-biased and offering fair and inclusive opportunities to all in today's society"

Anonymous


# Priorities for Youth

## Resources

- 5.3 The proposals in this document will be financed from resources available during the 2013-2016 budget period. Future resource requirements will be informed by the levels of need identified in the RYDP and prioritised within the available budget.

## Timing and Transition

- 5.4 There will be a phased approach for these reforms, planned at local level, and working towards full implementation by April 2016 at the latest. As the sector moves from the current delivery model and structures to the proposed arrangements it is important that the quality of services for young people is not adversely affected during the transitional period. The Department will develop enhanced cross-sectoral arrangements, drawing on the experience of the Youth Service Liaison Forum to ensure a strategic approach to transition and implementation.



"It is good that a phased approach is being considered and also good that each level of need is being addressed from project to regional"

**Youth Organisation**

- 5.5 At a sub-regional level, Youth Service managers will liaise with Stakeholder Advisory Groups to provide clarity about the timing and direction of travel in their local area, communicate this effectively to local partners and manage the process.
- 5.6 The priorities and actions in this document will be kept under review and updated as required.

## Delivery Partners

- 5.7 ESA will have a statutory duty to deliver and support youth work in line with DE's priorities. DE recognises that transition to the new system may create uncertainty for groups currently in receipt of funding. ESA will collaborate with voluntary sector partners to ensure that high quality services are maintained during the transitional period.
- 5.8 Having a single body responsible and accountable for youth work funded by DE will enable integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of youth work, both local and regional, from general participation and engagement through to more specialist and targeted support, structured around young people's needs.

# Priorities for Youth

## Further Copies

- 5.9 This document is available on the DE website at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk). Other formats, including Braille and audio formats can be produced on request.

## Example of an Outcomes Framework (for illustrative purposes only)

Examples	Process of Engagement	Definition
Attendance at Youth Unit. Informal discussion, participates in recreational sport/activity; drop in; attendance at one-off workshop; seminar or conference; open day; initial meeting with unattached young people.	1. Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Worker consciously starts to develop a relationship with the young person.</li> <li>Young person attends activities occasionally.</li> <li>Young person attends one-off event.</li> </ul>
Youth Worker helps young person examine issues; young person is in regular contact with youth worker; participates in a youth worker led project; attends sessions/activities regularly such as a residential programme, a team-building process or a short project.	2. Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young person has an ongoing relationship with Youth Worker through informal programmes.</li> <li>Young person participates in the Youth Service curriculum.</li> <li>Young person participates in programmes normally consisting of 4-6 sessions with no recorded or accredited outcomes.</li> <li>Young person participates in an intervention, activity, process, project work or course, and consciously sets out to achieve preset, measurable personal or group objectives. This will be a non-accredited programme.</li> </ul>
Level 1 – Learning gains such as reaching a personal goal or target within a group activity; taking on a role within a group; or changing a behaviour; increasing knowledge or acquiring a new skill. PTSD outcomes eg seek information and use it; learn a skill; gain confidence, make a decision as a result of a youth work intervention, make a product (eg write a poem or rap song), take part in a drama production.  At Level 2 and 3, take increasing responsibility for own learning within structures such as Young Adult Development; Senior Member Training; (but not necessarily so – examples at Level 1 with higher degree of responsibility – language will change from ‘we’ to ‘I’).	3. Recorded Outcome Level 1 Level 2 Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Worker makes professional judgement on young person's progress/distance travelled based on baseline information.</li> <li>Youth Worker provides evidence of actions taken by young person.</li> <li>Youth Worker provides meaningful evidence of benefit or learning outcome derived by young person from non-accredited youth work intervention.</li> <li>Should relate to ETI “Quality Indicators for Youth Work” ‘Achievements and Standards – How well do Young People Achieve?’ section.</li> <li>Recorded outcome does not subscribe to a specific format.</li> <li>At Level 1 it doesn't have to be measured against a declared curriculum (but can be good practice to do so).</li> <li>Worker's planning and reviewing skills.</li> </ul>
For young people who need high level of support and/or structure; basic literacy and numeracy (OCR); one or two Wider Key Skills at Level 1; OCNNI Level 1/2; Duke of Edinburgh Bronze/Silver; OCR Level 1, Youth Achievement Bronze/Silver Award.	4. Accreditation 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young person undertakes accreditation supported by the youth work process at basic/Foundation/Level 1.</li> <li>Accreditation has currency outside youth work.</li> <li>Accreditation is subject to internal and/or external verification.</li> </ul>
For young people able to plan, do and review their learning independently; 3 Wider Key Skills; GCSE at A*-C; OCR Level 2+; OCNNI Level 3, Duke of Edinburgh Gold.	5. Accreditation 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young person undertakes accreditation supported by the youth work process at regional/national level.</li> <li>Accreditation has currency outside youth work.</li> <li>Accreditation is subject to internal and/or external verification.</li> </ul>

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Recorded Outcomes				
	Time Commitment	Personal Growth	Competences	Types of Evidence
Level 1	Normally 4–6 sessions in a Plan, Do, Review process	<p>Youth Worker-led:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased self-confidence</li> <li>Taking some responsibility</li> <li>Developing leadership skills</li> <li>Consciousness of learning gained</li> <li>Developing decision-making skills</li> </ul>	<p>Youth Worker-led:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic understanding of teamwork skills</li> <li>Improved communication skills</li> <li>Improved personal and social skills</li> <li>Basic ability to participate in the plan, do and review process</li> <li>Acceptance of self and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline information (Expectations and fears exercise)</li> <li>Programme outline</li> <li>Attendance records</li> <li>Evaluation</li> </ul>
Level 2	Normally 6–15 sessions in a developmental process	<p>Youth Worker-assisted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased self-esteem</li> <li>Taking responsibility for own learning</li> <li>Understanding of leadership qualities and characteristics</li> <li>Increased participation in decision-making</li> <li>Increased awareness of own values and beliefs</li> </ul>	<p>Youth Worker-assisted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of concepts such as aims, objectives, target setting, evaluating</li> <li>Understanding other's perspectives</li> <li>Take responsibility for own behaviour</li> <li>Present ideas and plans effectively</li> <li>Ability to manage conflict and disagreement</li> <li>Accepting and taking the lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline information</li> <li>Attendance records</li> <li>Programme outline</li> <li>Evaluation</li> <li>Certificate of completion indicating outcomes achieved</li> </ul>
Level 3	Normally 16 or more sessions in a developmental process	<p>Young person-led:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heightened self-expectations/self-belief</li> <li>Increased problem-solving and decision-making</li> <li>Increased social skills</li> <li>Increased awareness of needs of others</li> <li>Increased civic responsibility</li> <li>Increased organisational skills</li> </ul>	<p>Young person-led:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivation and belief in ability to achieve</li> <li>Consider outcomes of possible solutions</li> <li>Consider and manage risk</li> <li>Show trust, personal warmth and reliability</li> <li>Be supportive to weaker group members</li> <li>Ability to participate in improving things</li> <li>Ability to prioritise and manage tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline information</li> <li>Attendance records</li> <li>Programme outline</li> <li>Individual self-evaluation</li> <li>Certificate of completion indicating outcomes achieved</li> </ul>

# Priorities for Youth

*Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work*

