

Making a Positive Contribution

This section is all about the ways in which we are helping young people to make a positive contribution to their communities. It includes providing them with opportunities to 'do' as well as to learn, thereby helping them to develop their self-confidence and sense of purpose by developing positive relationships. It is about stronger families and stronger communities. It is about involving all young people at every stage in the decisions that affect them.

Where are we now?

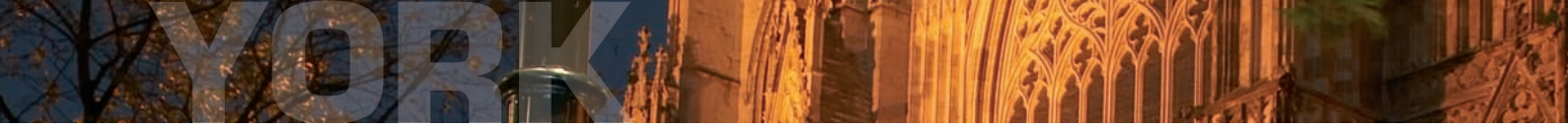
Since the last Plan we have established integrated Young People's Services in York by bringing together the work of Connexions and the Youth Service. This is already reaping benefits through the provision of more activities, advice and support in local areas. We have greatly



increased the range of activities for young people to do through our Play Strategy and successful initiatives such as Street Sport, York Arts Academies and School's Out, but more is still needed.

Volunteering remains a high priority in our work with young people. Increased participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award has been sustained, and the 'It's Up 2 U scheme', supporting young people's involvement in voluntary community projects, was launched successfully in 2007. The 'involved team' has been creating new opportunities for young people to volunteer. The involvement of our secondary special school, ensuring the inclusion of young people with special needs, is particularly welcome.

As we described earlier, we are proud of the development of our Parenting Strategy, which offers a continuum of support for parents and carers with children of all ages. Increasing numbers are attending our targeted programmes and giving excellent feedback. We have run



specific programmes for hard to reach groups such as Travellers, drug users, parents with English as a second language and fathers.

Young people in York are actively encouraged to influence decisions that will have an impact on their lives. A network of School Councils involving all schools is well-established in the city, and the annual conferences for both secondary and primary pupils ensure that young representatives can have direct access to politicians and senior officers within the council, as well as influential members of the wider community. Many other initiatives complement this work, including Takeover Day (where young people have a chance to swap roles with decision makers), Chatterbooks (where young people buy books for their local libraries) and YorKash (where young people have a direct say in the allocation of grants). Our 'Show Me That I Matter Panel' has been praised for its pioneering work with Looked After Children.

We now need to take this involvement to new levels, with young people having more formal representative opportunities, such as a Youth Council, and more say over the allocation of resources.



We have run a number of successful celebratory events including the 'Yoscars' and the 'Young People's Awards Evening' – and can point to a number of positive stories about young people in the local media. Yet many young people continue to express frustration that they are often portrayed as stereotypes, who do not make a positive contribution to the city. We need to provide even more opportunities for them to demonstrate that the reverse is true.

Finally, there has been excellent progress by the Youth Offending Team and their partners in reducing offending and re-offending rates by young people in York. York does not have a serious problem with youth crime. Our overall performance in this area now compares favourably with the national figures and we were recently judged as best within the region. Nevertheless, a small number of young people in York have a high rate of re-offending; we need to tackle this, as well as ensure that we only bring children into the criminal justice system as a last resort.

"Non-alcoholic bars and cafés for teenagers to go to in the evenings."

All quotations with a yellow border are from children and young people across the City

As a result our priorities are:

14. Provide more things for children and young people to do and places for them to go, by:

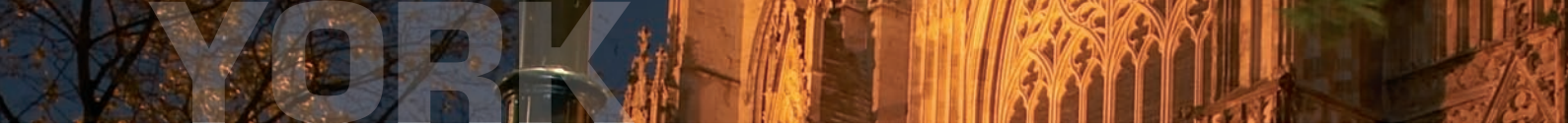
- ▶ developing enrichment opportunities that complement the main curriculum;
- ▶ providing more opportunities for positive activities outside school hours through targeted youth support, extended schools, Explore Library Learning Centres, York Arts Academies and specific projects to meet the needs of vulnerable groups;⁵
- ▶ building on young people's awareness of, and commitment to, the sustainability agenda, creating opportunities for environmental action such as recycling;
- ▶ further developing and extending our Play Strategy, Street Sport and other recreational facilities using new Government funds;
- ▶ further developing mobile and 'outreach' provision such as the Toybus, mobile library, Urbie and voluntary sector programmes, especially for the hard-to-reach communities;
- ▶ providing new youth facilities as resources permit and, specifically, a city centre facility that includes a youth café;
- ▶ providing more volunteering opportunities in association with the 'involved team', including volunteering for disabled children;
- ▶ providing more opportunities for young people to gain and use sports leadership skills and Arts Award experience in their own communities;
- ▶ ensuring that our facilities are accessible to all, recognising that disabled children and their parents have told us they wish to access mainstream provision where appropriate;
- ▶ developing the YorOK and Yortime (www.yortime.org.uk) websites to provide better information about cultural and other activities for parents, practitioners and young people.



15. Strengthen communities through innovative family involvement by:

- ▶ promoting community cohesion through extended schools and targeted work with particular communities;
- ▶ involving parents, carers and the wider community in the life of our schools and Children's Centres;
- ▶ delivering a new range of inter-generational projects to reconnect generations and recapture lost skills, tradition and wisdom;
- ▶ developing more community champions to lead and work within youth clubs and similar facilities.

⁵ This will include specialist provision for those unable to access universal activities, such as those young people with severe autism.



16. Value children and young people’s contribution and celebrate their successes by:

- ▶ continuing to develop innovative ways to listen to children and young people’s views, enabling them to influence the decisions that affect them and commissioning services where possible;
- ▶ listening to the harder to reach groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and Looked After Children;
- ▶ establishing an influential Youth Council in York and participating in the Youth Parliament;
- ▶ increasing young people’s involvement in our ‘City of Festivals’ programme and delivering a successful new ‘Festival of Youth’ in the city.



17. Further reduce the likelihood of offending and its impact on communities by:

- ▶ agreeing a joint Youth Crime Reduction Strategy along with the Safer York Partnership and the Local Criminal Justice Board;
- ▶ identifying earlier those children at risk of multiple poor outcomes and of engaging in risky behaviours (including anti-social behaviour or offending) to ensure that targeted prevention services are provided;
- ▶ reducing still further the number of first time offenders through preventative work and diversionary activities;
- ▶ focusing our joint efforts ever more closely on the few children who commit the most offences;
- ▶ promoting schemes that enable young offenders to make amends either directly to their victims or to local communities.

“To make York proud of us and to be proud of ourselves, I think we should have a big talent show.”

How will we know we are making a difference?

The YorOK partnership collects a wide range of information about the extent to which children and young people make a contribution to their communities. As we make progress against the priorities set out above, we would expect to see improvements in:

- ▶ the rate of proven re-offending by young offenders,
- ▶ young people’s participation in positive activities,
- ▶ first time entrants into the Youth Justice system,
- ▶ families attending ‘Parenting Programmes’.

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