

Civil Society Strategy Feedback Partnership for Young London

This feedback presents a summary of the views of people who attended the London Policy Network in May 2018. A session was facilitated to gather feedback from a number of partners on the youth section of the strategy. This feedback doesn't not claim to represent the views of the wider network supported by Partnership for Young London but gives a snap shot of some of the issues that should be considered to make this strategy successful. Overall, there is a welcome focus on young people in the strategy and a huge range of ideas and programmes on offer across London that can be used to create pathways for young people that will help make any strategy reality. Alongside of this, there are several challenges which need to be surfaced to enable us to collectively work with young people, accessing opportunities and support in line with their needs.

Q How have disadvantaged and disengaged young people been successfully encouraged to get involved in social action?

Overall the strategy needs to apply to all young people not just disadvantaged groups, but within this make sure a number of approaches are used to engaged diverse groups of young people

- Context. There are variable levels of investment in local youth services and many young people are disadvantaged by the lack of statutory provision. Without a statutory requirement there will be huge variability in place across the regions. *'There's a huge void in terms of need and provision – are we talking about meeting and learning from other communities? How are people going to move out of their circumstances without seeing other ways of doing things and other ways of living?'*
 - o Local provision will help to create a pathway for young people and NCS and other programmes can then be integrated into this.
- Key social action programmes - There are some good developments with NCS, but it requires a build-up programme to create a journey and sense of belonging for young people. The challenges are well rehearsed but, in many areas, it engages those already involved
 - o NCS cannot be seen as the only game in town, one size fits all doesn't work everywhere we need multiple approaches to meet the needs of young people
 - o Social action is an approach and needs to be included in a wider pathway for young people. Ranging from co-designing services, youth owned organisations, youth boards, young inspectors. Young people need to see the results of their actions

- Need for all year-round provision to sustain engagement, pick up where issues or challenges arise, engage other services in offering support where needed, where this is in place then social action results can be more visible
- For young people not engaged in social action, young people need access to services and sustained relationships in their local areas. ‘The solution is about long-term relationships – *‘you can’t parachute in services for a summer’*
- Ideas of young people from their area, building confidence and resilience, doing things locally & meeting regularly, additionally a ‘Local citizens service’ – needs to also involve business leaders to help who know what’s needed but also contribute in terms of skills, resources, access into employment
- Need to challenge the deficit view of young people which is ever present, knife crime agenda has created a media focus which impacts on how young people are perceived
- Great examples of practice in place that can be built on i.e. arts and culture projects, hubs, local partnerships
- There are some challenges that imply social action makes up for the lack of services – social action should help in co-designing services but they both need each other to exist, it is critical to engage young people and create an environment whereby young people continue to engage in the future
- Training and support for volunteers and staff. Youth work needs staff/volunteers with skills and the ability to develop relationships preferably with accreditation
 - Strength of relationships is key in good services
 - Importance of good voluntary training and continuous provision in
 - Key areas that are emerging i.e. loss and trauma need a skilled workforce. This is being developed across settings, but again it’s a resourcing issue that needs further support
- Co-designing services - The social action agenda where really effective - needs to reflect young people’s agendas, helping young people to really shape their local areas, develop and design local services.

Q How have young people shaped national policy making?

- Political education and engagement – some young people don’t know they have ownership and accountability for these programmes
 - Many have never seen anything implemented even if they are asked for their views

- Young people also need through the curriculum to understand more about where power lies and how to affect change.
- How do we find a communication channel so they see their contribution (so they know their ideas have mattered)? Need for quicker movement and often the shape of the issue moves more quickly than national policy.
- Giving people meaningful feedback and showing impact of engagement will encourage ongoing involvement
- Be clear that this takes time – there is no quick fix for meaningful engagement
- Great examples in place locally and through specialist youth groups, build on that and use that evidence base, but also consider how other policy areas can be enhanced to address the gaps i.e. political education in schools i.e. Youth Mayor in Lewisham, youth councils, young inspectors, children in care councils
- Current context post Brexit - Think about where we are now – do programmes such as NCS fit with where we are now – fragmentation of our society, radicalisation, Brexit, many young people voted to remain and feel disenfranchised about the referendum
 - Youth engagement needs to sit alongside civil society – need to engage those who won't sign up to social action (but can't be subsumed into civil society work)
 - Need to work where young people are – go to them – don't design services for government/youth service convenience
 - Recognise that certain issues need to be addressed first - How can young people engage properly when they may have unstable home lives, live in poverty, they need basic rights to be fulfilled i.e. food poverty
 - Investment in the whole system is critical otherwise change can't happen. As too many aspects of this are interdependent i.e. housing, mental health, education

Q How is collective working with or within the youth sector, supporting delivery of local provision that meets young people's needs?

- Developing effective networks and collaborations – need to create a range of opportunities for groups to come together, develop their practice, co-produce the training offer required. There are many good examples i.e. Partnership for Young London, Young People's Foundations and London Youth.
 - There are great examples of practice in place i.e. umbrella groups brokering relationships
 - Placed based solutions that are reflective and respond to local needs

- Young foundations – John Lyons offer a useful model and includes training – this is a useful start. This is a place-based approach
- The lack of systemic funding for young people’s services make its hard to build sustained collaborations. Where’s the local offer?
- Shifting policy agenda - Legislators shouldn’t ignore the wider brief for youth provision, 2008 there was a knife crime programme that was good, it lapsed, now knife crime is spiking again and it’s worse
 - New challenges present through social media and mental health
 - There’s need for a focus on transition years – importance of primary to secondary transition, work is taking place in various areas, but the coverage needed is patchy
 - Loss of sense of belonging and engagement so earlier engagement is required

Q Which changes do you think are the most important in enabling stronger collaboration and more cross sector partnerships with and within the youth sector?

- Resourcing - Resources are critical, everything has cost implications, i.e. volunteering requires a skilled workforce with training and support. Services cannot exist without resourcing. Also recognise the value that civil society groups in bringing more diverse funding streams into local areas. But they need to have core funding support to do this.
- Creating the environment for cross sector collaboration. The contracting agenda has driven up competition - You can’t force people to collaborate – the sector has been pushed towards being competitive. There needs to be a better focus on systems change, partnerships work really well when people can be immersed in different situation ice. Social worker in school, CAMHS in charity settings etc
 - There are some helpful conversations & some coordination in place across key areas. But falls short when no one has the resource to communicate and coordinate. Need for cross-sectors cultural understanding (i.e. Across schools, social workers, GPs, youth services.
 - Core funding – for many groups without this it becomes exceptionally hard, many funders are recognising the need to create capacity to develop collaborations. Then good collaborations can be developed and sustained. It does require capacity and resource.
 - Local knowledge and expertise to reduce duplication and create services based on local need – someone needs to help broker this if it is to be sustained
 - Relationships with schools – there are ongoing pressures and also conflicting (at times) agendas how to align priorities and make the good links

- Being clear that it's not all about shiny new projects and the next new thing, we need to sustain what works, give it space to develop and show impact
- Supporting an effective workforce Development - Workforce development is crucial, staff and volunteers need to skills to build effective relationships and also taken on more challenging issues and complex needs.
 - Recruitment challenges in terms of getting good staff, linked to the perception of the role, cost of living, training availability
 - Getting staff who know and understand the young people and their experiences and who can offer genuine relationships
 - Effective leadership and supporting the next generation of leaders
- Displaced Risk - There is risk shunting in place across the system, where cuts faced to other organisations i.e. local authorities, schools and other partners. This is then offloaded into civil society groups who may or may not have the capacity and expertise to respond.
- Collective Impact models – having a framework that looks across the system at the longer-term outcomes, following young people through that transition stages and making sure that the right support is in place, with all agencies agreeing to focus on one aspect.

Q What to do now and 10 years:

- Cross departmental focus on young people - Create a cross-party consensus on youth policy with longevity and cross departmental accountability
 - Government's lack of policy focus for youth services has created a range of challenges i.e. spike in serious youth violence
 - Northern European success in this area has come from 20-year commitments to young people that cannot be changed with changing administration – this provides stability. There is a need for conciliatory cross party working not polarised politics – this doesn't help the sector. Additionally, a call for greater collaboration across diverse groups in political arena and outside of it
 - Need to set up a real youth policy portfolio that's not an add on to sport and civil society
 - When the government make the right decisions, such as supporting apprentices, this influences the whole system of provision
 - 'Embed this strategy into others' i.e. industrial strategy
- Contracting culture - Business models have not been successful, as grants and contracts have dried up, enterprising approaches are really useful but there is no payment structure for many of these services. Many organisation are using tech solutions for good, sharing back office functions, creating strong collaborations, but still struggle to resource their work.

- Commissioning models all too often don't produce the results needed, they work against social value and are often cost based not quality based
- Intergenerational Fairness - Any strategy should focus on intergenerational fairness and investing in young people. House and location insecurity and competition with a huge wealth divide create a deeply challenging environment for young people
 - Acting Quickly - Ten years on is too late! We need a faster more reactive approach, the challenges across generations is increasing
- Need for a whole system approach – work with family and community not just a young person
 - Working with schools and other partners to support key areas of transition
 - Long term investment rather than short term interventions
 - Business engagement across inclusive growth, ranging from targeted and skilled volunteering, resources, apprenticeships etc