

Youth Action Group

Ministerial Level Meeting – 13 February 2014

Introduction

- The co-chairs agreed that Cabinet Office taking over the co-chairmanship is an opportunity to re-boot the group as a productive interface between government and youth charities. The Princes Trust thanked the Cabinet Office team for their work on preparing the agenda items and liaising across Departments.

Agenda item 1 – Character Skills

The following points were made:

- The evidence that employers want young people to have more than academic qualifications is clear. Extensive research is being conducted into initiatives that build character skills, particularly in the U.S, and the Cabinet Office is already delivering National Citizen Service and a series of social action programmes that have been designed to develop character skills in young people;
- In his recent speech it was clear that the Secretary of State for Education agrees with renewed emphasis on developing character skills; it would be useful to explore how the proposed extension of the school day could offer opportunities to expand and roll out high quality activities;
- Public Health England (PHE) is developing an adolescents' health outcomes framework, in which resilience is a key component. The framework is being developed for launch in mid April, and has been developed in collaboration with a range of partners;
- The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) is being delivered to increase the number of cadet units in state schools, aiming to improve employability and attainment, particularly among disadvantaged students;
- There are a number of voluntary initiatives delivering similar interventions, and these should be better coordinated with the CEP;
- The group agreed the Cabinet Office's proposed work plan, to strengthen the evidence base and develop an asset-based narrative around character skills would be valuable. They particularly recommended that the Cabinet Office team act as a central point for related work taking place across government;
- Group members warned against the risk of 'over-programming' work on character skills and recommended that Cabinet Office focused on refining objectives carefully, before using the evidence base to be able to specify the successful components of interventions. In this area particularly, government needed to avoid over complicating, and fragmenting public service delivery;

- Although terminology in this area is complicated this could be overcome, and the recent report from the All Party Group on Social Mobility offers some useful definitions;
- Group members agreed that an asset-based approach was important, and that young people should not be referred to as 'the problem';
- Supported housing offered an under-utilised opportunity to work holistically with young people; and more thought should be given to parenting and young peoples' domestic context when developing policy around character skills; and
- In its development of the recently-announced pathfinder Secure College for offenders under 18, the Ministry of Justice stated that the education which will be at the institution's heart will be education conceived of in its broadest sense, possibly including character skills.

Actions:

- A. PHE to work with Barnardo's, the Princes Trust, and any other interested members to refine the framework and longer term associated outcomes; and to make contact with Big Lottery-funded resilience programmes to build on lessons from their programmes
- B. PHE and Cabinet Office to work together to ensure join up of the adolescents' health outcomes framework with other government departments' agendas
- C. CEP to work with Youth United Foundation and other group members to improve join up between related initiatives and ensure the local offer for schools
- D. The Prince's Trust to submit their recommendations related to voluntary delivery of cadet programmes using injured and ex-military personnel to CEP for consideration
- E. Cabinet Office team to deliver work plan as per submitted paper, including mapping existing interventions and cross government work; and to report back to the group on progress at the next meeting of this group
- F. Cabinet Office to collaborate with Foyer and Rathbone, both of whom are developing their own projects on character skills
- G. Cabinet Office to put interested YAG members in touch with Ministry of Justice officials, so that charities can contribute the learning from their own work to the development of the secure colleges programme

Agenda item 2 – Careers Advice

The Minister for Employment introduced the proposed Jobcentre Plus (JCP) pilots for outreach support for 16 and 17 year olds disengaged from employment and education, expanding support provided to schools and other youth settings, and providing a more holistic package of support. The following points were made:

- Group members agreed that the best role for government in this space was to act as a facilitator and enabler for local support and existing services;
- Group members advised that the JCP brand is generally not well received by young people, and it is often associated with sanctions
- The Minister agreed that young people who turned their lives around are often in the best position to reach out to other young people; and
- The group agreed on the importance of mentoring, and suggested that any careers support should use the model of a single trusted adult being assigned to participants, which studies including DWP research have consistently found to be effective

BIS and DfE invited comments on the implementation of the Inspiration Vision, particularly around how co-location and partnership between JCP, the National Careers Service and local charities can be improved. The following points were made:

- Careers advice provision should be driven by the demands of employers, not the state;
- Employers should be well informed and fully supported to get into schools. Employers may not be best placed to deliver rounded careers advice but if made more visible, can open the eyes of young people to what's possible;
- More needs to be done to raise awareness of existing resources, perhaps making greater use of gov.uk; and
- Skype and other technological advances could be better used to deliver NCS provision cheaper and more effectively to young people, while acknowledging that BIS are continuously improving the online NCS resource and Cabinet Office are developing Plotr as an online resource for young people.

Actions:

- A. Group members to submit any further recommendations to DWP regarding the proposed JCP outreach pilots for 16 and 17 year olds (Cabinet Office team to follow up with contact details and timings for suggestions);
- B. DWP to share their plans with group members when finalised, including locations of pilots and models to be tested;
- C. Princes Trust and the Cabinet Office to work together to connect those developing online careers advice resources to young people, who can test and feedback on NCS resources and Plotr (where not already happening); Princes Trust to share their expertise from research already undertaken on the most effective form of online support with BIS;
- D. Cabinet Office to update on the development of Plotr as a key careers advice resource;
- E. Cabinet Office to update the group on research into the effectiveness of mentoring;

- F. BIS to report back to the group on the feasibility of delivering careers advice face to face via Skype;
- G. Charities to develop a proposal, led by the Prince's Trust, as to how their network of detached workers can be maximised to signpost young people to support. BIS to identify available resources that would support this work;
- H. Charities and BIS explore how charities' relationships with corporate volunteers can best be used to support BIS / NCS work to link up employers and young people;
- I. DfE and BIS to consider how advice and provision can better direct young people towards industries that are expanding and recruiting;
- J. BIS to respond to charities' proposal that vulnerable 18 year olds (particularly care leavers) should be prioritised for dedicated face to face advice, and consider whether any of the Youth Contract underspend could be diverted to fund this;
- K. BIS to explore feasibility of sharing data on usage of the site and specifically the young people section, to allow benchmarking and evaluation of the success of the above ideas.

Next ministerial meeting

- To be scheduled for June
- Health and enterprise had been proposed as agenda items; the co-chairs have since provided steers that we should keep up momentum on the above agenda items, and also, potentially, cover work experience as an agenda item. The Cabinet Office and Princes Trust teams will be in touch shortly to confirm the agenda / agree the additional items to accompany updates on the above, and arrange official level pre-meets to drive these items forward.