



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Grants to National Voluntary Youth Organisations 1996–1999

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Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools**

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INTRODUCTION

1 In June 1995 the Youth Service Unit (YSU) of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) launched a three-year scheme of Grants for National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NVYOs) for 1996-99. Nine million pounds were made available over the three years and an extra £400,000 was allocated just before the end of the 1997-98 financial year. Organisations are placed on the NVYO register when approved by the DfEE. To gain approval they must be NVYOs which promote the personal and social education of young people.

2 Registered youth organisations were invited to apply for funding for a single coherent programme of work. Priority was given to projects which were designed to meet the needs of young people aged between 13 and 19 years and which promoted equality of opportunity. The scheme aimed to enable more young people to take part in youth work and gave priority to programmes intended for young people who suffered disadvantages, especially those living in inner cities, urban housing estates and rural areas. It also gave priority to work with those suffering from disabilities or learning difficulties, young people from minority ethnic communities, and girls and young women. The scheme encouraged work that contributed to crime prevention, drug and health education, and aimed to involve adult and young volunteers. It also aimed to promote partnership and co-operation between organisations and to develop young people's participation in the management of their organisations.

3 The funding was intended to increase the quality and effectiveness of youth work, provide training in youth work skills and improve the operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the organisations. The DfEE was looking, in particular, for programmes that demonstrated that the organisation responsible had an overall strategic plan. NVYOs should have developed specific strategies to create the opportunity for young people to reflect on their experiences, to recognise them as part of a learning process, to share them with other young people and with adults, and to recognise the value of teamwork. Programmes were to include the active participation of young people in planning and reviewing their learning.

4 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) were invited by the DfEE to advise on the quality of the applications, to monitor and evaluate the progress and quality of the scheme, and to report on its success in meeting the DfEE's objectives.

5 This report is based on the overall evaluation of the work inspected by HMI over the three-year period of the scheme, from April 1996 to April 1999. All organisations were visited by HMI, some a number of times during the period of the scheme's operation. The evidence included monitoring and evaluation reports provided by the organisations after six, 18 and 36 months of the schemes.

6 Fifty-five individual organisations and eight joint projects, involving a further 26 organisations, completed the three-year programme. This is the first time that joint projects have been funded as part of the scheme. HMI made 132 visits to inspect the standard and quality of the work and to assess progress in relation to the criteria and targets set by the organisations and agreed by the DfEE. The inspection included evaluation of each organisation's work, the quality of its management, and the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures. HMI also evaluated the effectiveness of the programme as a whole, in relation to the DfEE's original aims.

7 In addition, 84 meetings were held with the participating organisations to discuss the progress of the work and any emerging problems. Frequently these meetings were arranged at the request of the organisations themselves. There was a tendency for organisations to be over-ambitious when making the original application for funding, particularly in relation to achievable numerical targets and the time it took to appoint staff and make initial contacts, particularly with 'hard to reach' young people. Early meetings often focused on these issues. Occasionally targets were altered in the course of the programme because of the innovative nature of much of the work. This sometimes made the project dynamic, but created difficulties when trying to anticipate timescales and set achievable, realistic numbers to be recruited.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Standards of achievement by young people have been variable, but have generally improved steadily throughout the life of the scheme. Good work has provided young people, especially those who are disadvantaged educationally or socially, with the opportunity to gain in self-confidence and relevant skills and develop the motivation to succeed in their chosen vocation. Where standards were poor, young people were simply recipients of programmes rather than participants in them and sometimes gained nothing more than association with their peers.
- The quality of youth work was good. Increasingly, NVYOs are demonstrating that they have a firm grasp of youth work skills in group work, peer education and training, outdoor education and detached work. Good work is usually associated with enthusiastic, highly motivated, well-qualified staff.
- DfEE funding has been well used and has successfully encouraged organisations to be innovative, to develop partnerships and to improve their quality assurance, curriculum development and youth work.
- Many organisations are successfully working with the DfEE's priority groups for the first time and some highly innovative, challenging and exciting work has been undertaken. In some instances, specific groups of young people have been reached through referrals from agencies, but many young people have become involved through good, tenacious youth work at local level.
- The NVYOs have been particularly successful in group work with young people in danger of becoming involved in criminal activity, in work specifically aimed at conflict resolution, and in working with disaffected young people who have failed in the statutory sector or who are in custody.
- The development of detached and outreach youth work has been apparent over the life of the scheme, and its quality has improved considerably. It has become more structured without losing its ability to meet the immediate needs of the young people. Recording, evaluation, and supervision and support for the workers have been crucial in this improvement and there is now considerable expertise within the voluntary sector.
- Organisations have tackled the issue of equality of opportunities vigorously and are making rapid progress both within the organisations and with the young people in the projects. A minority of organisations are still relatively unaware of the need to work hard at this aspect of their programme.

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- The credibility gained with the DfEE funding has enabled NVYOs to attract external funding to increase the extent of their programmes and maximise the benefits for young people.
 - Numbers of young people taking part in the scheme have increased considerably. Since the scheme started in 1996, more than half a million young people have participated on a wide range of projects, and many of these have been involved in youth work for the first time.
 - Most organisations have a professional analytical approach to needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and the development of programmes which meet the needs of young people. Quality assurance arrangements are, however, of variable quality. Local groups often operate autonomously, and in some cases the national organisation has difficulty in monitoring and evaluating this work.
 - A significant number of organisations with previously rigid structures and routine practices have changed their procedures and attitudes in a way which has improved the quality of their work, particularly with disadvantaged young people.
 - Joint projects have, on the whole, been very successful, but a few have experienced considerable difficulties. The time needed to form partnerships was frequently underestimated and difficulties emerged when one partner was not as committed to the project as the others or was unable to give it sufficient time. There were also problems when organisations with different methods and different definitions of youth work were working together in joint projects. Not everyone realised the importance of reaching clear agreement on all aspects of the partnership working before the practical work with young people began.
 - Most staff working for the scheme have been committed and industrious, and many are professionally qualified in youth work. Training courses for workers have been of high quality. A few organisations have made poor progress in developing the skills of youth work among these staff, but all have achieved some element of success. The small minority of weak projects are frequently those in receipt of small grants.
 - Many NVYOs have gone through recent reviews and reorganisations. These have often resulted in staff changes, which have on occasions caused delay to the work. This was particularly problematic when the member of staff who had prepared the application left and new staff had to implement the programme. The short-term nature of the funding also causes staffing problems, as workers sometimes have to look for new jobs before the project is complete.

- Peer education and training have been features of some of the work. Good progress has been made and most peer projects have been successful. Workers show a greater understanding of the needs of the peer educators and trainers, and the standard of the work is much higher than it was at the beginning of the scheme. The young people have worked extremely hard to learn about the subject concerned and how to communicate their knowledge to other young people.

- Young people are gaining a voice for the first time in a number of NVYOs. The scheme has enabled them to gain confidence, knowledge, to learn negotiating and decision-making skills, and to use them to make choices about their own lives.

POINTS FOR FURTHER ACTION

8 The NVYOs involved in both the previous and current schemes, with the support of the DfEE, should:

- ensure that, in all circumstances, work is informed by consistent and vigorous adherence to principles of equity and equality of opportunity;
- introduce commonly agreed procedures for evaluation across the many separate projects which may make up an organisation's total activity and ensure that the youth work element of an organisation's full range of activities is appropriately supported;
- further develop strategies for assessing quality which concentrate primarily on what is being achieved and how, rather than promote paper-based systems which alienate and distract those actually doing the youth work;
- in joint projects, make certain that partners are working to agree objectives which clearly identify the desired learning outcomes for the activity;
- continue to give high priority to developing and updating the youth work expertise of staff;
- attenuate the negative aspects of short-term funding by planning, from a project's outset, an appropriate exit strategy for both staff and young people which will enable the work to be sustained and built on effectively.

STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

9 Over the three years of the scheme, the standard of young people's achievement has increased in line with the marked improvement in youth work expertise and quality assurance procedures. Standards are often determined, not only by the length of time the young people have been attending the project, but also by their own particular circumstances. Young people who have not attended youth work provision before, and are disadvantaged educationally and socially, frequently display low self-esteem and are reluctant to be seen to strive to achieve, for fear of rejection. Many projects aimed at this group show very good outcomes for the young people after an initial difficult period.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has had considerable success in working with young people from some of the poorer disadvantaged estates in, for example, Birmingham, Sandwell and Tipton. Good work was demonstrated particularly with those from minority ethnic groups and those who were underachieving at school. These young people were achieving gold awards or other accreditation, not only for their efforts, but also for the high standards they were reaching in interesting and challenging enterprises, ranging from the completion of an expedition to the learning of a completely new skill, such as swimming or embroidery.

10 Despite this overall success, standards are variable across the wide range of projects involved in the scheme. Often, lower standards achieved by particularly disadvantaged young people actually reflect the organisation's success in retaining and working with this group. Although the skills, knowledge and understanding of important issues in their lives may be improving for the young person, the standard of attainment will be lower, initially at least, for these than might be expected for their age group. An organisation, therefore, with growing success in involving these young people will be likely to have a number at the difficult early stage of development at any one time. Many of these young people do, however, reach good levels of attainment quickly, when given the appropriate opportunities and support.

Ocean Youth Club worked with many young people who had little experience of the outdoor activities. Indeed, a few had never visited the sea. Some had rarely been challenged educationally or expected to achieve anything of significance. Through intense group experiences, led by skilled youth workers, during the training voyage they quickly gained confidence and learned how to compromise, share and take responsibility. They responded well to the adult environment on-board ship.

11 Some NVYO's have been particularly successful in group work with those young people in danger of becoming involved in criminal activity, with work specifically aimed at conflict resolution, and with disaffected young people who have failed in the statutory sector or who are in custody. When much was expected of these young people and they were given responsibility for their own learning, they often gained the confidence, not only to achieve high standards, but also to review and evaluate their performance.

The Fairbridge Centre in Newcastle has, in the past, suffered from vandalism and damage to property and equipment. In 1997 a Security Project was established with sponsorship from an insurance company. The project offers young people the opportunity to handle real responsibility in a safe environment. They take care of the premises and encourage others to do the same. Regular reviews of progress by participants have allowed the young people involved to guide its development to a point where they are almost totally responsible for its organisation. All 23 participants achieved the goals set within their Fairbridge action plans and received certificates of achievement. Twelve gained a City and Guilds Profile of Achievement Award detailing the skills developed through their participation in the project. Since the project was established two years ago, there have been no security incidents at the site.

A project for young carers, 'The Voice,' is a partnership between St John's Ambulance and Salford Social Services. The young people involved have significant responsibility for parents or siblings. Normally they cope with this task willingly and with good humour, but sometimes miss out on schooling and opportunities to socialise with their peers. The project provides respite and an opportunity for the young people to try new and constructive activities. The last session of the school term was dedicated to break dancing. The young people showed tremendous enthusiasm and achieved a very high standard of performance. They were athletic and energetic, listened intently and tried out new and demanding physical dance routines. On the surface, the outcomes for these young people were those one would look for in youth work generally. In the case of 'The Voice', however, the outcomes have been exceptional. The young people demonstrated an unstinting allegiance to the project, the workers, and to each other. The project helped to prepare young carers for the difficulties facing them at home very effectively (see Appendix 1, Case Study 1).

12 Young people were achieving accreditation, across a wide range of NVYO's, through the Youth Achievement Award, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Gateway Award, and others, but very often these were not added to their school Records of Achievement.

Organisations should liaise with schools to ensure that these often hard-won achievements are appropriately recognised. In schools where such awards are added to Records of Achievements, teachers often report an increase in pupils' self-esteem and improvement in other aspects of their schoolwork. This applies particularly to young people who find learning difficult, have poor school attendance and rarely achieve awards of any kind.

13 In the most successful projects, young people were fully involved in decision-making and in many they were also involved, through committees, forums and consultations, in the running of the organisation as a whole and in negotiating its future direction. Some are run entirely by young people, but a few are still totally controlled by adults, who find it difficult to accept that it is important to consult young people, even when programmes are designed specifically for them.

THE QUALITY OF YOUTH WORK

14 The profile and quality of professional youth work are being raised throughout many of the organisations. Many NVYOs have a much wider remit than youth work and this has not always been fully understood, supported and integrated with the rest of the organisations' work. Those with rigid structures are gradually adapting to informal youth work, and enabling young people to participate in a more meaningful way. Some extremely effective work is being done with the most difficult young people. In this successful work, support, development and training for staff are given high priority, thus ensuring that the improvement established early in the scheme is continuing. Most organisations are paying serious attention to the improvement of the professional youth work element of their schemes.

15 This has included a move away from the emphasis on activity-based open youth work at club level, as organisations have sought to find ways of reaching the young people in the DfEE's priority groups. Although there is still a place for open youth work in the centre, club or village hall, many young people simply do not wish to attend, do not have the confidence to go, or feel there is nothing there for them. The majority of young people, however, are involved in other relevant pastimes through school, sports clubs, hobbies or bands, but a significant number are not included and are vulnerable to negative influences such as drug cultures, crime, vandalism and sometimes violence. They very often miss school, have been excluded or expelled, or are unemployed. In order to meet the needs of such young people, organisations have developed or introduced more project, group, outreach, and detached youth work.

16 The development of detached and outreach youth work has been apparent over the life of the scheme, and its quality has improved considerably. It has become more structured without losing its ability to meet the immediate needs of the young people. Recording, evaluation, and supervision and support for the workers have been crucial in this improvement and there is now considerable expertise within this part of the voluntary sector.

The Lubavitch Youth detached work team of Rabbis have made real progress in the young Jewish Community, with a mobile unit attached to a street work project. They are reaching young Jewish people, many of whom have become alienated from their families and sometimes from their religion and culture. The van is used for discussions or counselling, either individually or in groups. The Rabbis were non-judgemental and professional in their work and were prepared to listen and help young people make their own choices. They were

knowledgeable about the drugs which some of the young people used and were prepared to sit with them into the early hours of the morning, offering good support. The Rabbi counsellor helped to raise very low self-esteem and to convince the young people that they could succeed in dealing with their particular problems, and that Lubavitch was able to help. The team also had considerable success in working with some young women (see Appendix 1, Case Study 4). The fact that they were unable to use female detached youth workers limited the potential of the project.

17 An interesting dimension has been added to the youth work in NVYOs by the inclusion for the first time of funding for joint projects. These projects are each being run by two or more organisations, with one taking the lead. They are subject to the same criteria as the other projects in the scheme but have the advantage of a wider range of expertise and a broader base of organisational support. This is particularly valuable in administration, training, and specialist subject areas. It has not been easy, however, and several have experienced management and organisational difficulties, largely because of varying levels of commitment and failure to agree clear learning objectives at the outset. Their staff have, on the whole, benefited from each other's experience and expertise. They have produced innovative projects of high quality and raised the quality of youth work in many organisations, since those with particular expertise are able to pass it on to colleagues whose organisations are at an earlier stage of development.

18 Many of the projects have gained considerable experience of peer education and peer training, both of which are now recognised as potentially effective youth work methods. However, there can be difficulties in using young people to deliver training to their peers if they lack the relevant expertise and maturity.

A young woman, who was extremely confident and knowledgeable about the dangers of misusing drugs, led one session. She presented activities skilfully, but lacked the experience and skill required for successful group work. She was unable to ensure that each member was involved and contributed to discussion wherever possible. While the benefits for the young woman were undoubted, the session itself became less beneficial for the other members of the group than it might have been. Those who were too shy, more reticent, or found it difficult to understand, were left out, lost interest and gained little.

19 Despite such difficulties, group work is probably the area that has improved most over the duration of the scheme. Skilled youth workers used the group dynamic to help individual young people benefit from their experiences, both personally and socially. As a result, young

people knew how to develop positive relationships with peers. Those peers also learned to accept each other and encouraged the more reticent to participate fully in discussions or events. They were prepared to value each other.

In an excellent session on drug and alcohol abuse at the Coventry Deaf Centre the worker demonstrated an ability to ask exactly the right questions in sensitive situations, to listen well and to respect young people's opinions. His knowledge, skill and understanding of both drug and alcohol abuse and, just as importantly, the issues that arise from being young, deaf and vulnerable, helped young people to participate fully in the session, and be honest and frank in their responses. Good relationships existed between workers and young people involved in this project. Those with hearing all used British Sign Language, which ensured equality and enabled an interesting discussion with all the young people and staff to follow the more formal session.

20 Often the success of the youth work was linked closely to the worker's expectations of the young people.

For example, in the Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA's) Participation in Management project (PIM), the high level of expectations, both from the worker and among the young people themselves, was striking. Extremely high standards were set and young people were able to call on support from the worker whenever they felt it necessary. This combination of high expectations and support was integral to the success of the project.

21 Open youth work, which uses activities such as indoor games, sport, arts and crafts, music, and project work to promote young people's personal and social education, has noticeably improved over the duration of the scheme. Invariably, such youth work was structured, planned and linked to the particular project's aims and objectives. The importance, emphasised by the DfEE, of using activity sessions only as part of a planned process of personal and social education, has been accepted and adopted with considerable success by most organisations. As the individual schemes have become more successful in reaching specific groups of young people, they have been creative and innovative in developing programmes to meet the individual and particular needs of these groups. However, a few organisations, particularly some of those which have not previously worked with priority groups, are still struggling with the concepts of youth work of this nature. Most, however, have introduced training for staff to develop awareness and understanding of current youth work issues and help them to refine and extend their skills.

EFFICIENCY AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USE OF FUNDING

22 Most large voluntary organisations in the NVYO schemes have comprehensive administrative procedures, backed up by good management information systems. A number of organisations have used the funding to set up comprehensive databases, and the majority of these have added greatly to the efficiency of the organisation and the programme. Databases have simplified the collection of information, particularly for quality assurance purposes, improved the effectiveness of administration, and provided the individual programmes and the scheme as a whole with reliable, up-to-date information on the young people. This has made it possible for the majority of organisations to know with confidence what proportion of their target group they are reaching and to give reasonably accurate participation rates. However, a number of organisations have underestimated the time taken to set up computerised systems and there have been considerable delays. This situation has been exacerbated by inefficient use of the paper-based system during the changeover. Others are using very effective manual systems.

23 Peer education projects frequently devolve part of their budget to young people or ensure that they are involved in decisions on how the budget should be used. This policy has almost always met with success and young people have risen to the challenge and responsibility with enthusiasm, much common sense and good awareness of the need for financial planning.

24 The scheme of grants for NVYOs makes some less obvious contributions to efficiency. Every pound that is allocated to organisations attracts much greater resources (some eight to ten times as much) to voluntary youth work, both from staff and volunteers who frequently give extra time freely, without whom many projects would fail.

25 In approximately 80 per cent of NVYO schemes, accountability is very clear and management is good. However, despite the excellent progress achieved, the remaining schemes still require to make major attitudinal changes to enable youth work to flourish within their organisations. Some of these organisations are very hierarchical and are accustomed to decisions being made at senior management or boardroom level. Decisions are passed down to staff for implementation with little or no consultation. It is very difficult for such organisations to see the need not only to consult the staff with specialist expertise, but also the young people with whom they are working. The culture of doing things to or for others, rather than with them, has been ingrained over many years, decades, and in some cases more than a century. Change is taking place, but is part of a slowly evolving situation.

Gateway has achieved a major change in its policy-making and planning procedures by altering the constitution to ensure that people with learning difficulties are represented on the overall council. This has made the management of the organisation much more responsive than before to the needs and aspirations of its client group.

26 Approximately three-quarters of the organisations demonstrate clear structures, careful planning, and a reflective and creative approach to the management of the scheme. There were many well-planned, ambitious and coherent programmes that often gained considerable momentum as the work developed. However, the broadening of the remit for some organisations, to involve the young people most in need, requires a tighter management approach than many are using at present, to ensure that work maintains high standards and good learning outcomes. In almost a quarter of organisations the task of the regional manager or equivalent is too wide-ranging, and often covers a large geographical area. This can make it impossible for the manager to support workers effectively, since there are few opportunities to observe the work and follow it through to the evaluation and review stage.

27 Most organisations have clear, well-presented documentation, mission statements, policies, structure diagrams, and often development plans. It is, however, sometimes difficult to discern the youth work elements in them. The organisations with youth departments are usually very clear on the management of this element, as are those which work only with young people. They usually show evidence of rigorous development of policy, planning and research to support their work. Some youth departments, however, suffer from isolation from the

organisation as a whole and this can bring about a ‘them-and-us’ culture that is unhelpful. Organisations such as the Council for Environmental Education, which represents others working in the same specialist area, are good at consultation and much of their documentation demonstrates the effectiveness of the consultation process. Those that have a broader remit than youth work sometimes have a less clear approach and a more complex structure.

28 The majority of NVYOs produce attractive, informative, well-presented annual reports and other good-quality marketing documents. The DfEE funding has enabled many to include useful additions to these on relevant themes and issues and to produce training materials of high quality. This element of the funding has also helped the dissemination of good practice, although this is an area that requires improvement. Policy makers need to ensure that this aspect is included at the planning stage to avoid duplication and gaps in provision as well as to gain the maximum benefit from the work.

29 A number of organisations are devolving management to regions or provinces, as in the case of the United Reformed Church (URC). This has the benefit of making it easier to respond to the needs of local and specific communities, although problems of communication sometimes remain, making it difficult to assure standards across the organisation as a whole.

30 DfEE funding has encouraged the voluntary sector to develop partnership projects with other NVYOs, and joint working has, on the whole, led to improved quality. Some organisations have, however, found joint work difficult, usually because responsibilities have not been made clear at the outset. Adequate time was not always allocated to the initial planning of the work and to deciding upon the monitoring and evaluation processes to be used. In one case, an organisation planned a series of events that did not materialise because the other partner failed to make its contribution. This situation arose because communication was poor and one partner was less committed to the project than the other and not prepared to dedicate the required time to the work. This situation occurred only in the first year of the project, and better forward planning and communication enabled the work to proceed successfully.

31 In some instances, good links with the local authority youth service have enabled voluntary organisations to gain access to training and resources. Conversely, some NVYOs have been able to provide local authorities with training on specific issues, such as disability awareness, first aid, and the environment. Joint working has also improved co-ordination and reduced duplication of effort.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

32 From the start of the programme in April 1996 to its completion in March 1999, more than half a million young people have participated. Some have taken part throughout the duration of the scheme and others for a relatively short time, but all have followed programmes of personal development. More than half of those young people have been involved in the particular organisation's programmes for the first time. This suggests that many will have had no previous experience of youth work, since organisations have been focusing on those who are disaffected, disadvantaged and often suspicious of authority. Some of these young people do not attend school or participate in other provision for young people. The vast majority of those in custody report that they have never attended youth clubs or centres, preferring to 'hang around with their mates'.

33 On the whole, good progress has been made in enabling young people to participate actively in youth work rather than being passive recipients of it. A number of the older, more traditional organisations have moved from a position of adult and institutional dominance to an evolutionary model that has put in place structures to enable young people and adults to learn together the skills of youth participation. Youth forums have been developed across the country and most have been beneficial to young people's development, particularly in teaching them organisational and presentational skills and in raising their levels of confidence and self-esteem. The work inspected showed high levels of self-discipline being achieved by the young people who were developing a mature understanding of the needs of others and understanding the importance of listening to each other.

34 A number of organisations have used the funding to develop peer education programmes. Many of these have been successful, both for the young people, concerned and for the organisation.

The Centrepoint national peer education programme has promoted awareness about leaving home, housing and homelessness through supporting the development of peer education. Centrepoint has successfully balanced the role of encouraging and enabling the development of the work. This work has had a significant impact on the young people who participated in peer-led sessions, but the focus has also been on the peer educators and their development. The work has provided them with a forum for development and learning.

35 The success of such programmes, in the personal and social development of the peer educators and the response of programme recipients, shows that good peer education is a useful way to help some young people make the transition to full independence.

The Guide Association, supported by the Save the Children Fund, developed young people's leadership and presentational skills so that they could make more effective contributions to the work of the Association. Their preparations for a residential weekend required them to research and prepare materials and to run at least one of the sessions. The weekend focused on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provided a good vehicle for the young peer educators to develop workshops. The young women showed increased self-confidence, had learned to research and prepare materials, make presentations, summarise documents and seek help from more experienced leaders when appropriate. The experience was enhanced by the allocation of a mentor to each young woman, particularly valuable in the early stages of taking sessions out to other Guide groups.

36 Many projects and courses, including the above, are finding it difficult to recruit young people from minority ethnic groups and thus do not work with a fully representative cross-section of society. Some NVYO's have found that the only way to reach some young people of minority ethnic heritage is to employ youth workers from those groups. This is not always possible, but when it does happen the workers demonstrate a thorough understanding of the group and are accepted and trusted by the community and the parents.

The Youth Hostels' Association has made considerable efforts to recruit young people from the inner city. It has been successful, particularly with young people of African Caribbean and Asian heritage. The process was helped by the appointment of an Asian worker in Birmingham. He was familiar with the local youth and community services, had access to the minority ethnic communities, and was respected and trusted by community leaders and parents alike. Such trust was often the key to success in expanding the groups with which organisations worked.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has been successful in recruiting from minority ethnic groups for many of its projects. The YWCA's 'life group' of young Asian women organised its programme of activities, including visiting speakers, and devised its own code of conduct for the group, including confidentiality and respect for the rules which it had devised. Group members were eager

to learn and were making progress that had an impact on their personal and social lives, instilled confidence, raised self-esteem, and enabled them to solve problems together.

37 Organisations without specialist knowledge or experience of work with young people with learning, physical, or behavioural difficulties often fail to integrate these young people into their provision for all young people. This is partly because of their lack of understanding of the needs of these specific young people, but more usually because they do not prepare the existing young people in their clubs and projects for the introduction of those with such difficulties. Too often workers think that young people with disabilities have little to offer, and that the others have nothing to learn from them. Their peers often need help to understand that all should be fully contributing members of the group or project. There are, however, occasions when young people benefit from separate provision.

Gateway, an organisation working with young people with learning difficulties, succeeded in reaching young Asian women with learning difficulties and was making good progress in developing relationships with this often neglected group. As a result the young people were benefiting from youth work and learning to relate to their peers and work with them in groups.

CURRICULUM RANGE AND CONTENT

38 Many of the organisations have wide-ranging programmes of work for young people, although some do not use the term 'curriculum'. Some of the specialist projects add an innovative dimension to the overall curriculum of the youth work in the organisation running them. Other bodies focus all their work on a specific aspect or theme, such as the environment. Some of the most innovative curricula are being provided by joint projects.

The Global Awareness Partnership Project (GAPP), a joint project between the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs and the Scout Association, involved young people at the writing, piloting, and implementation stages of developing the GAPP pack. Those involved in devising the pack were gaining an understanding of global environmental issues and their political and economic complexities. They were also considering ways in which issues could be acted upon by young people at a local level.

39 New themes are entering the curriculum as organisations respond to the specific needs of young people. Organisations are learning to help young people understand the choices available to them through youth counselling, group and individual discussions and sessions on issues such as drug misuse, conflict resolution, crime prevention and concerns about sexuality. Workers are moving away from some of the more traditional activity-based programmes and using activities more as a vehicle for personal and social education.

A Woodcraft Folk group in Birmingham tackled the subject of stress management. All members of the group, even the most diffident, were able to contribute through brainstorming and stress relieving exercises. The session was well planned and even those who found it difficult to articulate their points of view were listened to and their contributions valued by their peers. The young people were from a wide range of ethnic heritages.

40 Sometimes the curriculum is specifically developed to meet the special needs of particular groups of young people.

At the Nottingham Bridge Camp run by Focus, a combination of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with special educational needs, and young volunteers, worked well with staff to plan events on the theme of Robin Hood. They took part in some complex tasks, which required skill, patience and imagination. Tasks were sensitively completed so that no one was excluded. The work was

innovative and motivated young people to compete in a non-threatening way. The curriculum content was stimulating and structured in a way that encouraged each group to develop the theme.

41 The educational base of the curriculum is an important feature of the work of a number of organisations. Some focus specifically on work with schools, particularly those concerned with young people deemed to be at risk of being excluded from school and other educational provision. Organisations such as Endeavour have been especially successful in this area of work, as has Rathbone Community Industry.

Rathbone has directed a programme, 'Choices', towards 14–16-year-olds at risk of exclusion from education and related services. The programme emphasises and facilitates re-integration to education and other provision, and has been successful, through a structured programme of counselling, guidance, personal development and confidence building, in supporting young people back into education or placement with employers. These programmes have gained credibility from employers and other agencies, and have enabled young people to make informed decisions about future routes to employment or further education on leaving school. The recording, monitoring and evaluation of each individual's progress and placement have been vital to the success of the programme (see Appendix 1, Case Studies 2 and 3).

STAFFING

42 Many organisations have gone through major changes over the duration of the scheme. Continual staffing changes have had a detrimental effect on a number of projects, causing considerable delay and confusion. In a few instances, not only the member of staff who submitted the DfEE application but also all of those involved with it and committed to the project have left. Sometimes those remaining have been ill-equipped to run the programme and, on occasion, have not understood the purpose of the project, or worse, have not agreed with its philosophy. This has, however, been rare and usually staff have been appointed specifically to the task and are enthusiastic and committed.

43 A number of NVYOs have found it difficult to introduce an educational focus to their youth work practice. A weakness in some instances has been that previously the term 'youth work' has meant work specifically geared to the aims and objectives, and sometimes the religious and cultural aspects, of a specific organisation. They have had little experience of educational youth work. Issue-based work, group work and detached work, for example, are all new areas for those who have previously relied almost entirely on sports, competitions and achieving skill badges to motivate young people.

44 Training in youth work skills is a big challenge for some NVYOs and there is considerable resistance, particularly from some older, unqualified leaders who regard themselves as highly competent because of years of experience, but have not updated their skills to respond to new and different demands. This causes tensions with younger, qualified staff who want to introduce new ideas and bring in more young people from outside the organisation's usual priority group. At the other end of the scale, organisations such as Youth at Risk and Fairbridge insist on intensive training for volunteers as well as paid staff, and do seem to be able to achieve this.

An excellent training session formed part of an accredited youth work course, bought in by an organisation to meet the DfEE's requirement to improve the youth work skills of staff. The trainer had planned the session carefully, used appropriate visual aids, and explained complex issues simply and clearly. She drew on some very good examples from her own experience and linked the session skilfully to the organisation's work with young people. Her clarity of delivery made the presentation interesting. It was varied in pace and style and sensitive to the needs of the group. Despite the fact that some of the group held very entrenched opinions, they took part in a sensitive and thoughtful manner. They realised that to achieve accreditation they would have to adopt a more open approach to the learning and

submit work of high quality. Future visits to study portfolios, and discussion with staff showed that a great deal of development and understanding had taken place and that all were likely to complete the course successfully.

45 On occasions, the appointment of workers from a different ethnic heritage has made issues of race and culture feature high on a project's agenda. Staff have learned to work together, valuing cultural differences, and although it has been difficult at times, considerable understanding has been achieved.

46 Many organisations are made up of autonomous units affiliated to the headquarters organisation. This makes it difficult to develop a coherent and comprehensive strategy for quality assurance. In one organisation, volunteers threatened to leave because of the amount of paperwork requested of them for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. They felt the time entailed was excessive and above their normal voluntary commitment. Such situations make data collection very difficult. There is a need to achieve an appropriate balance between the needs of the organisation and those of volunteers.

47 Umbrella organisations have contributed well to quality assurance processes, particularly in relation to standards.

Youth Access, for example, has launched a number of high quality and high profile documents within its specialist area of youth advice, information and counselling. Its Quality Standards document, launched jointly with the National Youth Agency (NYA), has made considerable impact on member organisations and is helping to raise the standard of youth advice, information and counselling nationally. It has produced materials that are relevant and fit for purpose. It has also increased the levels of professionalism generally in youth advice, information and counselling.

48 The best monitoring reports were decisive, constructively critical, and represented a genuine attempt to record the quality and quantity of the work. They were then scrutinised in an equally thorough manner, and the conclusions drawn used to improve and disseminate best practice. The process was often helped by an agreed standard framework for recording the work, and a regular pattern of internal monitoring visits, with the purpose and criteria for reporting made clear to all concerned. Written reports were then shared with the project, discussed and used as a basis for improving practice.

49 Often, evaluation of individual events and courses is good, carefully and conscientiously done, and skilfully involves the young people concerned, but rarely is evaluation of the whole scheme as thoroughly carried out.

50 Although a number of organisations have effective quality assurance systems, approximately one-quarter are at a relatively early stage of development. These systems are often patchy and over-reliant upon word of mouth, and informal networks and structures. However, the overall improvement in the standard and quality of quality assurance over the three years of the scheme is impressive.

Youth Clubs UK has introduced a systematic approach to developing good-quality assurance across its network. All workers involved in the many separate projects use standardised monitoring procedures and report on a quarterly basis, reviewing young people's learning and behavioural changes as well as using standard quantitative data.

CONCLUSION

51 The scheme of grants to NVYOs has enabled voluntary youth organisations to reach many young people not previously involved in youth work. A significant proportion of these young people was from groups deemed to be at risk of becoming involved with drugs or criminal activities, and a number were in custody. Many organisations were successful in reaching socially excluded young people and in developing innovative programmes to help them gain the skills, awareness, confidence and self-esteem to make choices about their own lives. In such cases, young people were encouraged back into education, to jobs or further education. Partnership working enabled organisations to learn from each other and NVYOs used each other's resources and expertise to good effect.

52 The quality of youth work in the voluntary sector has improved markedly over the three years of the scheme, and some excellent resources have been developed. More organisations are working with young people from a wide range of backgrounds and communities and have gained the expertise to do so through training and partnerships. The work has been enhanced and extended by the time and expertise given by volunteers, many of whom have been highly trained. It is very important that so much learning should not be lost, and that good work should be disseminated, followed up and sustained where appropriate.

53 There were, however, some weaknesses which need tackling. Larger organisations with a wider remit other than youth work need to ensure that those staff with a brief to develop work with young people are appropriately supported and their particular contribution recognised. More generally, efforts need to continue in ensuring that quality assurance is in place, not only at national level, but in a form which volunteers can relate and respond to locally.

54 Taken overall, DfEE funding has been used well and the scheme has, to a large extent, provided good value for money.

Case studies

Thanks are expressed to all the organisations which have provided material for these case studies.

1 Sarah, aged 16, has domestic responsibility for her mother and younger brother. She takes on the adult role, including negotiations with social services and financial matters, as her mother has a learning disability, very basic literacy skills, cannot sustain personal friendships, and can give only minimal help with household tasks. In addition to holding down a part-time job, Sarah cares for her younger brother, and is loving and patient with her mother. She hopes to enrol at college but, at present, is receiving little help to do so. She cannot bring friends home, as her mother becomes jealous and upset and makes them feel unwelcome. The Voice Drop-in for Young Carers in Salford, supported by St John's Ambulance and Social Services, provides Sarah with friendship and respite.

2 Erica found it hard to cope with school and by Year 10 had become a school refuser. When she joined the Rathbone Choices programme she was very quiet and lacked confidence. However, because of her interest in child care, she began a work placement in a children's nursery. Her attendance and time keeping were excellent. For the first time in her life, she gained qualifications: National Skills profile in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), communication and numeracy. She is going on to follow a childcare course at a local college.

3 When Marcus joined Choices, he was not sure what he wanted to do and tried different placements. He had little enthusiasm for any of them until the Choices team discovered his interest and skill in football. He is now attending a football coaching course, arranged by Rathbone Community Industry, for a period of two years at a local college. This offers an official coaching course plus a specialist first aid award. He has also decided to take three GCSE subjects, which he did not get the chance to take at school, through an access course.

4 Helen, aged 17, not a member of Lubavitch, claimed that the project had saved her life. Sexually abused by her father since early childhood, she turned to drugs in her teens, then to prostitution to maintain the drugs habit. She attempted suicide and was on the streets and destitute when she approached a Rabbi as a last resort. He talked with her for days and persuaded her to seek professional help to give up drugs.

She has done that, but realises she is still vulnerable and keeps in touch with the project, particularly when things go wrong for her and she is tempted back on the streets.

5 Jolyon first joined the Bridge Programme at the age of 13, referred to Focus by a counsellor at a time when he was experiencing many difficulties following the death of his uncle, a close and supportive member of his family. Jolyon found himself in with the wrong crowd and soon rebelled at school, despite initially doing well. As he himself puts it, 'When my uncle died I turned to the wrong kind of role models'. Over the next few years Jolyon's problems grew to the point where he was diagnosed as 'school phobic'. He was unable to deal with the social side of being at school and would suffer severe panic attacks. As a result Jolyon left school at 16 with no qualifications at all. However, Jolyon responded rapidly to the warm and supportive atmosphere on a Bridge Camp. He found that, 'On the Bridge projects, there were mature guys I could talk to about my problems'. For the first time in his life he was able to admit to himself that he had some valuable skills and abilities. He felt a sense of belonging, that he was a part of something. 'It gave me a lot more confidence' he says 'and made me feel I am an important part of something. Bridge was the only thing for a long time I knew I was good at'. Jolyon continued his involvement as a Bridge participant, taking part in Weekends Away, the weekly Saturday Club and the Team Projects scheme. As he took on new challenges his confidence grew and at the age of 16 he became the first of his peers to join the Focus Helper Training Programme. Since then Jolyon has returned to several Focus projects as a team helper, a team leader and even the leader of the Activities Team, a member of the core staff team with responsibilities for the whole project.

6 Jamie tells of his experiences with Friends for Young Deaf People (FYD): 'I am profoundly deaf. I have a hearing family that has always tried to make sure I was involved within and outside the family. I can remember being whisked away to Breakthrough Family weekends, attending Crystal Palace and Bude when I was a nipper and various other events. I am now 21 and have been through school, attending a Partially Hearing Unit (PHU) at Primary School and going to a school for the deaf for my secondary education, getting GCSEs and three good GCE A Levels. I had a few false starts after leaving as they didn't prepare me fully for what to expect in life outside a school for the deaf. I went to University – unfortunately pulling out after a week after being placed on the wrong course. I hadn't really been involved with FYD during my time at school. I went through some low periods and thought it would do me good to get back in touch with FYD. I went on the 'Initiative Training Weekend', helped supervise at Crystal Palace, did the 'Post-Initiative Training Weekend' at Bude, and went on the

Leadership Courses. Meanwhile, I applied to University and got a place on their Industrial Design Engineering Course starting in September 1997. I started at University again and found it very hard but I persevered. I decided to sign up for the FYD Action Centred Development (ACD) Course as I wasn't feeling very confident and needed a 'kick' to get me back to my normal, happy self. I completed my first year at University, doing well – coming top in my year – but still feeling low. I wanted a change of scenery that summer so applied to work on a Summer Camp in America. I spent the summer of 1998 working on a Special Needs Summer Camp near Ithaca, in upstate New York. I had a brilliant time and felt much happier and cheerful. I came back home and started my University work placement. The further I progressed the more I felt my confidence coming back. I was learning about peer support, counselling, teamwork, leadership and group dynamics amongst many other helpful topics. I was learning more about myself as well as meeting other like-minded people and having a fantastic time. I learned skills that could be used in many aspects of my life – at home, in education and socially'.

7 A young woman attending Youth Club UK's 'Talking About Ourselves – Going Public' project was just 16 when she had a child. She took her GCSEs when she was nine months pregnant and obtained nine passes. The housing department placed her, the baby and the baby's father in a damp flat in an area where they knew no-one. The relationship between her and the baby's father did not last long and when she came along to the young parents' group she was staying at friends' houses. She became a regular member at the group, bringing other young women in similar positions with her. The social group that was run at the time allowed a little time for the young women to take part in activities without their children and it soon became apparent that she and some of the other young women had a great interest and considerable talent in art and craft. The project that Youth Clubs UK helped to fund grew out of the social group described. The group members wanted to develop their art and craft skills with a view to gaining qualifications which would help them re-enter the job market when their children started school. Over the three years in which the project has taken place, the young woman in question, and her peers, have had tuition in many areas of art and craft. She excelled in most of them, but particularly in making greeting cards, in art and in glass painting. The group took part in the youth centre's fundraising activities and sold some of their products. She was commissioned on several occasions to produce items for people. During the course of the project she decided that she would like to combine her artistic talents and her ability to get on with children and young people in her career choice. With some of the other group members she helped run an art and craft extravaganza for girls and young women from all over the county. The

members of the young women's group took responsibility for planning an activity each and for sorting out the resources that they needed. The extravaganza was very well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. Shortly after the extravaganza she volunteered to do some youth work at the project. She also began her part-time youth work training and successfully completed the foundation course. In November 1997 she was appointed to the post of part-time youth worker at a village youth club. In January 1999 she was appointed to the post of classroom assistant at a local special school.

APPENDIX 2

National Voluntary Youth Organisations

Single projects

Baptist Union of Great Britain

Boys' Brigade

British Deaf Association

British Red Cross

British Youth Council

The Campaigners

Catholic Youth Services

Church of England Board of Education

Church Lads'/Girls' Brigade

Commonwealth Youth Exchange Centre

Council of Churches for Britain & Ireland

The Crusaders

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Endeavour

Fairbridge

Focus

Friends for Young Deaf People

Frontier Youth Trust

Girls' Brigade

Girls' Friendly Society

The Guide Association

Hope UK

Inter Action

International Voluntary Service

Jewish Lads' & Girls' Brigade

Leaving Home Project

Lubavitch Youth

Methodist Association of Youth Clubs

National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) – Clubs for Young People

National Association of Youth Theatres

National Federation of City Farms

National Federation of Gateways Clubs

National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs

National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

National Youth Music Theatre

National Youth Theatre of Great Britain
New Testament Church of God
Oasis
Ocean Youth Club
PHAB (Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied) Clubs
Quaker Home Service
Rathbone Community Industry (CI)
Reform Synagogues of Great Britain
Sail Training Association
St John's Ambulance Youth
Salvation Army
Save The Children Fund
Scout Association
UK Federation of Jazz Bands
Union of MACCABI Associations
United Reformed Church
Woodcraft Folk
Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA)
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
Young Christian Workers
Young Muslim Organisation
Youth Access
Youth at Risk
Youth Clubs UK

Joint projects

Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade
Catholic Youth Services United Reformed Church, Baptist Union,
Church of England, Methodist Association of Youth Clubs,
Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army & YMCA
Council for Environmental Education, National Federation of Young
Farmers' Clubs, Youth Clubs UK, Royal Society for the Protection of
Birds (RSPB) & The Wildlife Trust
National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, The Scout Association
Ocean Youth Club, YWCA
Ocean Youth Club, Fairbridge
YWCA, Girls' Friendly Society
Youth Hostels Association, RSPB & Youth Clubs UK

