

# Positive Activities for Young People

## Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision



Positive Activities for Young People

## Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision



The National Youth Agency  
Getting it right for young people

Department for  
children, schools and families

# Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all those who completed the survey and to those who offered further time to contribute to this briefing paper through telephone interviews. Some 50 respondents offered to take part in telephone discussions; due to the timescale involved we were not able to take up all these offers, so made a selection based on geographical area and type of authority. We are also grateful to those who attended a round table event to discuss a draft paper and contribute to an amended version. Our thanks go to the Confederation of Heads of Young People's Services (formerly APYCO) for its support for this project.

July 2009

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Securing an appropriate offer</b>	<b>5</b>
▶ What is currently in place?	5
▶ What do young people want?	5
▶ What approaches are being used?	5
▶ Involving young people	8
<b>2. Managing risk-taking behaviour</b>	<b>10</b>
▶ Reaching the most vulnerable young people	10
▶ Alcohol and drug use	10
<b>3. Building in pathways for progression</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. Using resources effectively</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. Developing effective partnerships</b>	<b>16</b>
▶ Securing support services	16
▶ Working with the police	16
<b>6. Addressing workforce issues</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7. Securing safe access to positive activities</b>	<b>20</b>
▶ Availability and accessibility of provision	20
▶ Transport	20
▶ Risk assessment and safeguarding	20
<b>8. Securing wider community support</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9. Promoting and publicising activities</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>10. A way forward</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>26</b>



# Executive Summary

## Background

This briefing paper sets out some of the central issues and barriers for children's trusts in expanding their provision of positive activities on Friday and Saturday nights. It demonstrates ways in which local authorities are addressing these barriers and some general points for all local areas to consider when commissioning and delivering provision on Fridays and Saturdays. It is primarily aimed at those responsible for securing and managing positive activities provision including traditional youth work, but there will be implications for practitioners from a variety of professional backgrounds and settings.

## Key messages

Friday and Saturday night provision needs to be planned and delivered as part of an inclusive offer for young people. Key issues and challenges include:

### **Securing an appropriate offer of activities which are accessible, interesting and relevant and which take account of young people's different circumstances and needs**

- ▶ Provision already exists on Friday nights and to a lesser extent on Saturdays, in addition to the well-established tradition of daytime weekend provision. However, the need to increase this is recognised.
- ▶ Local authorities, through their children's trust arrangements, are working with a range of partners, including voluntary, community and faith groups, commercial providers and other local authority departments, to secure provision in their local areas.
- ▶ Young people appear to want less structured, more recreational activities on weekend evenings. While having 'a place to chill' is important, young people also welcome opportunities to take part in music and creative arts, sports and physical activities and, in general want a wide range of activities.

- ▶ Youth support services are adopting four main approaches to Friday and Saturday night provision. These are: youth centres offering a mix of open and targeted provision; working with other providers to extend young people's access to provision, particularly for sports and creative arts; detached and outreach work; and large-scale events. These approaches are not mutually exclusive.
- ▶ It is vital that young people – including those who are not currently using services – are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of provision.

### **Supporting staff and young people in managing risk-taking behaviour**

- ▶ Young people need to be offered provision and activities which are relevant, fun and challenging – something for which it is worth behaving well.
- ▶ Detached and outreach approaches, based on local intelligence and a wide range of partnership activity, are critical to engaging vulnerable young people.
- ▶ Concerns about young people's behaviour on weekend evenings, particularly with regard to alcohol use, need to be addressed through support and training for staff.
- ▶ Young people themselves need to be involved in determining what is acceptable behaviour.

### **Building in opportunities for personal and social development and pathways for progression**

- ▶ Even apparently unstructured and recreational activities offer opportunities for non-formal education and personal and social development.
- ▶ Exploiting opportunities for informal education – or youth work 'at the margins' – is critical.
- ▶ It is important to focus on interventions which will change young people's behaviour and improve longer-term outcomes rather than simply keeping them occupied.

### **Developing coordinated and transparent approaches to use limited resources most effectively**

- ▶ Friday and Saturday night provision needs to be

## 2 Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision

developed as part of effective commissioning processes, including the involvement of young people – this includes making difficult decisions about the use of resources when shifting provision.

### Developing effective partnerships to secure a wide range of services for young people at weekends

- ▶ There are challenges in ensuring that all services for young people are available on Friday and Saturday nights. However, successful examples of partnership work provide evidence that it is possible, and that different services recognise that weekend provision helps them meet their own targets.
- ▶ While there is some debate about the appropriateness of police engaging in direct delivery, strong and positive partnerships have been developed in some areas – including involving the police in commissioning provision. These approaches are seen as important in breaking down barriers and increasing understanding between police and young people.

### Addressing workforce issues to secure an offer which includes Friday and Saturday nights while retaining good employment practices offering staff a reasonable work/life balance

- ▶ Concerns have been expressed about staffing Friday and Saturday night provision, but different areas have varied experiences, with some finding staffing arrangements relatively easy.
- ▶ Services are using a range of approaches to staffing provision, including practical responses and those intended to change 'mindsets'.

- ▶ It is important to get the balance right between involving existing staff and employing new staff.

### Securing safe access to positive activities

- ▶ There is a range of factors which need to be taken into account, including availability of buildings, transport, risk assessment and management, and safeguarding.
- ▶ Policies and practices may need to be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently robust to deal with young people who may present a risk of harm to themselves or others.

### Securing wider community support for youth provision and improving relationships between young people and the wider community

- ▶ Friday and Saturday night provision not only seeks to address young people's anti-social and risk-taking behaviour and improve outcomes, but also offers opportunities to secure more positive attitudes to young people within their communities.

### Publicising and promoting provision in ways that do not stigmatise particular groups of young people or raise unrealistic expectations among the wider community

- ▶ Friday and Saturday night provision needs to be publicised in ways that are easily accessible and understandable to young people, using a variety of methods. While it aims to engage vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, it is important that it is promoted as an entitlement to all young people.

# Introduction

This briefing paper sets out some of the central issues and barriers for children's trusts in expanding their provision of positive activities on Friday and Saturday nights. It demonstrates ways in which local authorities are addressing these barriers and some general points for all local areas to consider when commissioning and delivering provision on Fridays and Saturdays.

It is primarily aimed at those responsible for securing and managing positive activities provision including traditional youth work, but there will be implications for practitioners from a variety of professional backgrounds and settings. It is based on information from 73 respondents to a survey on weekend youth provision, circulated by The National Youth Agency (NYA) to managers of youth services/youth support services, and follow up discussions with managers from 27 local authorities, chosen to include a range of geographical areas and types of authorities. Additional discussions were also held with managers of third sector organisations. The NYA also organised a small round table event for participants from the statutory and voluntary youth sectors and the Department for Children, Schools and Families to share their experiences and views.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a new duty on local authorities, through their children's trust arrangements, to secure access to sufficient positive leisure-time activities for young people in their area. This covers both recreational and educational provision, and includes a specific requirement to secure access to sufficient youth work activities. The act also requires local authorities to involve young people – particularly those who experience disadvantage – in determining what activities and facilities should be available to them.<sup>1</sup>

This legislation underpins the Government's ten year strategy for positive activities, *Aiming high for young people*. Launched in July 2007, this set out commitments intended to secure an offer for all young people – particularly the most disadvantaged – that includes a wide range of attractive, structured, positive activities available throughout the week at times that suit young people.<sup>2</sup> *Aiming high* also highlighted the benefits of

positive activities in building young people's social and emotional skills, self-esteem and resilience, and in helping improve longer-term educational achievements and outcomes in later life.<sup>3</sup>

Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) funding, which aims to engage disaffected young people in high quality positive activities, is a key component of *Aiming high*. In 2008-09, the government gave 15 local authorities a total of £6.5 million additional PAYP funding to test out innovative approaches to involve the most disengaged young people in positive activities. All local authorities will receive additional PAYP funding during the next two years (£28m in 2009-10 and £48m in 2010-11) to help them develop year round personalised provision for the most disadvantaged and disengaged young people.<sup>4</sup>

The *Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP)* included a specific focus on weekend provision, setting out the government's commitment to ensuring that 'more youth centres stay open late at weekends and evenings, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays when young people say they need access most'.<sup>5</sup> This followed the 2008 Crime and Communities Review which concluded that provision in the right places at the right time could help divert more young people into constructive activities and away from crime and anti-social behaviour.<sup>6</sup> The importance of weekend provision is also reflected in the criteria for the £270 million **myplace** capital investment programme, and in the £22.5 million Youth Capital Fund Plus initiative.

More recently, the government has announced various initiatives as part of its drive to deliver more Friday and Saturday evening activities. These include the announcement, in November 2008, that 81 local authorities where crime and anti-social behaviour is a problem would receive an additional £25,000 for Friday and Saturday night provision for spending by March 2009. This additional funding was intended to identify and disseminate good practice to inform commissioning in 2009-10. There is also an expectation that local authorities will use their additional PAYP allocation to increase their focus on provision on Friday

## **4 Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision**

and Saturday evenings. The third round of the Youth Sector Development Fund is providing small third sector organisations with funding to deliver activities on Friday and Saturday nights. The Open Weekend, taking place on Friday 10 and Saturday 11 July, is a key milestone for

local authorities and their partners in improving access for young people to Friday and Saturday night positive activities, based on young people's own perceptions of what they want.<sup>7</sup>

# 1. Securing an appropriate offer

## What is currently in place?

It is clear that provision already exists on Friday nights and to a lesser extent on Saturday nights, in addition to the well-established tradition of daytime weekend provision. All 73 respondents to the survey said that there was some Friday night provision in their local authority area, and over half said that some Saturday night provision was in place. However, they recognised that this needed to be expanded, in the context of mapping existing provision and demand. In some areas there has been more provision in the past. This was sometimes attributed to giving greater priority to work with schools and daytime work with vulnerable young people, including recent targeted youth support developments. In other areas, however, there appears to have been a rather less planned drift towards a culture of weekday working.

Local authorities, through their children's trust arrangements, are working with a range of partners to secure Friday and Saturday night provision. These include national and local voluntary organisations, community groups, sports and arts organisations, faith-based groups, commercial providers, the police and community safety partnerships, other local authority departments, district and parish councils, and young people themselves.

Rochdale Youth Service has made weekend provision a priority since 2007, through working with a range of partners and using leisure-based provision including specialist youth gyms, detached and mobile work. It is seeking to secure a high quality youth facility in each of the borough's four townships. The council allocated additional funding specifically for weekend working in April 2008. Of the 101 three-hour sessions run in December 2008, 27 were at weekends including 17 on Friday nights, and this will increase. The service's statistics indicate that approximately 1,000 additional young people will be contacted over the year as a result of weekend working. Rochdale Youth Council manages the Youth Opportunity/Youth Capital Funds, which have funded a mobile youth facility which goes out on Friday nights (among others) and have supported 30 groups with proposals for weekend projects.

## What do young people want?

It seems clear that young people want less structured, more recreational activities on Friday and Saturday nights. They see weekends as their own time, when they might welcome contact with staff from youth support services, but do not want to feel overtly 'youth worked'. The survey found that young people consulted about weekend provision said that they wanted 'somewhere to chill', closely followed by music and creative arts, sports and physical activities, a wide range of activities, and residential and trips away from the local area. The least popular provision was structured activities with accredited outcomes, and information, advice and guidance.

However, this apparent preference for 'chilling out' needs to be treated with caution. While some young people may be attracted by informal approaches and less structured activities, the survey shows that young people are also keen to engage in activities – particularly those related to sports, music and creative arts – which provide opportunities for personal and skills development, challenge and achievement. Plans for Friday and Saturday night provision should therefore include opportunities for progression from unstructured to structured activities. It should also be noted that PAYP funding can be used to support both types of provision.

## What approaches are being used?

There appear to be four main approaches (not mutually exclusive) to securing Friday and Saturday night provision:

- ▶ youth centres (statutory or voluntary and community sector) offering a mix of open and targeted provision;
- ▶ working with other providers (local authority, third sector and commercial) to extend young people's access to provision, particularly related to sports and music;
- ▶ targeting young people through detached youth work or mobile provision in areas where there are

## 6 Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision

concerns about anti-social behaviour (actual or perceived); and

- ▶ organising large-scale events for young people, often in conjunction with other providers.

These different approaches are commonly used together in order to provide pathways and progression for young people, particularly those who are least likely to be currently using provision.

Stockton Integrated Youth Support Services runs Friday and Saturday night provision through its Responsive Engagement and Prevention Project (REPP). This offers positive activities across the borough delivered by a range of providers including community and faith groups, with sites including youth buses, a youth café, youth centres, schools and community drop-ins. Right Trax motor project engages young people on Friday evenings, and offers accredited motorcycle courses on Saturdays and Sundays, with young people's places on these courses linked to improved behaviour. The service makes use of police intelligence to identify hotspot areas where it deploys the buses and multi-agency teams to contact and work with young people engaged in anti-social and risk-taking behaviour. There is a strong relationship with the police, who encourage young people to use the youth bus and engage in positive activities in order to reduce first-time entrants to the criminal justice system.

### Centre-based provision

In many authorities, at least some youth centres are open on Friday nights as part of the normal offer. The quality of this provision is critical; a useful comparison could be made with restaurants in prompting consideration about what would make young people enter, stay and return as satisfied customers. 'You need to get young people in, show that what is on offer is appealing, with good equipment, attractive furnishings, and staff who are responsive but not too obtrusive', said one service manager. Youth Capital Fund and Youth Capital Fund Plus (YCF+) have been used to improve the quality of youth centres and, over the next two years, new 'world-class' facilities will be developed with **myplace** funding. Young people – and those working with them – will therefore increasingly expect that the facilities they use will be of good quality, will offer a range of interesting, relevant and challenging activities, and are open at the times they want.

From 24 April 2009, eight of Stoke-on-Trent's 14 youth centres have opened on Friday and Saturday evenings as part of a four night a week offer. The service has invested around £250,000 in upgrading these centres, including redecoration, new furnishings and equipment and employing a professional firm to consult young people and market the provision including better use of the internet, viral e-mails and text messaging. While there is more emphasis on social activity on Fridays and Saturdays, staff are expected to exploit opportunities for more educational work, for instance about alcohol use. YCF+ money is being used to convert a city centre site into a music base and internet café, intended to complement the **myplace**-funded youth village being led by the YMCA. YCF+ money has also been used to buy youth buses and a mobile recording studio, which will be used throughout the week (including weekends) by the youth service and its partners. The focus on weekend provision has therefore provided a stimulus to improve facilities and activities throughout the week.

### Sport and recreation

Many youth support services are working with other providers, particularly leisure and cultural services trusts and sports and arts organisations, to increase young people's access to mainstream provision. In most cases this is through securing discrete space for young people in leisure centres, often at times when the centres would either be closed or under-used. This provision is generally staffed by a combination of youth workers and sports or leisure staff. It is, however, important to recognise that young people may not feel welcome at this type of provision, and work may be needed to ensure that staff respond appropriately and sensitively to young people, for instance through offering 'introduction to youth work' training.

There is a danger that this type of provision will focus on young men, and attention should be paid to offering activities more likely to appeal to, or specifically targeting, young women. Examples include girls' football, dance, cheerleading and netball. For some young women, providing safe spaces and activities – such as women only gym sessions or Asian women's swimming groups – is particularly important. The employment of female staff is also important in encouraging young women's engagement in sports.

It is also important to recognise age-related requirements, for instance providing gym equipment specifically

designed for young people who have not yet reached physical maturity. Consideration should also be given to how equipment and activities can be adapted to meet the needs of disabled young people.

Barnsley Youth Service is using YCF+ money to offer Friday night provision in partnership with Metrodome Sports Centre. This will offer an open access chill-out area and internet café (staffed by youth workers), a youth gym (staffed by sports tutors) and a specialist dance studio (jointly staffed). The aim is to use sports and exercise to promote healthy lifestyles and fitness and, through giving young people ownership of a dedicated space, to encourage them to use the rest of the facilities. The service is also in discussions with Barnsley Football Club about using currently under-used space under the main stand to develop open access provision on Friday and Saturday nights with a focus on arts and music. Importantly, young people see both the sports centre and football ground as neutral, universal spaces.

### Detached and mobile provision

Detached and outreach work is used to engage targeted groups of young people in activities and, where appropriate, encourage them to use centre-based provision. Recent guidance based on the experience of the 15 local authorities which received additional PAYP funding in 2008-09 highlights the importance of detached youth work approaches in engaging more marginalised young people. These young people may initially respond best to informal group work approaches in settings where they feel safe and comfortable. Once workers have gained their trust, they can then help young people shape activities in response to their interests, or support their involvement in more structured activities in other settings.<sup>8</sup>

Mobile provision is also an effective way of reaching young people in their own localities. In some areas there has been considerable recent investment in fleets of mobiles with good quality equipment, programmes developed with young people to meet their specific needs – including weekend provision, and staff working with community and residents' groups to address local concerns about young people and promote better relationships between young people and adults. Mobile provision can also provide a base for staff from specialist services, for instance sexual health or Connexions, allowing young people to access these services in their own neighbourhoods.

Detached work is key to Bury Youth Support Service's Friday and Saturday night provision. Two years ago, following research into alcohol use on Friday and Saturday nights, the service opened some centres on these nights, but young people did not use them. The service recognised the need to build relationships with young people through detached youth work and develop provision in partnership with young people, based on their identified needs and wants. Three centres are currently offering Friday night provision. One centre opened on Friday evenings following detached work with a group of around 20 young people on an outlying estate. The first Friday, no young people turned up, and the youth workers subsequently found that that young people had not believed the centre would open. The centre now attracts 40 to 60 young people on Friday evenings, who take part in a range of activities including cooking, music, DJing, dance and sports, from around 7 to 9.30pm.

Brent Youth Service used its £25,000 YCAP money to run a seven week Friday/Saturday night project at two town centre locations, running from 11pm to 2am. The project was delivered in partnership with the police, street pastors, drug and alcohol outreach workers, the anti-social behaviour team and third sector partners. Detached youth workers made contact with young people, found out what they wanted to do, and offered them activities at a youth bus and youth centre. Activities include sports, arts and music, watching videos and using computers, plus interactive workshops on issues such as drugs and gun crime. One project had a focus on sexual health, promoting young people's awareness of STIs and drug related issues, and by mid-March had screened 11 young people for Chlamydia.

### Large scale events

In some areas, weekend provision, particularly on Saturday nights, is taking the form of larger scale, less regular events such as band nights, under-18 club nights and discos, competitions and leagues, and awards and presentation evenings.

The requirement for local authorities to secure positive activities distinguishes between educational and recreational positive activities. Many of these larger-scale activities, such as club nights and discos, fall into the latter category, and there may be questions

## 8 Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision

about whether it is appropriate for youth workers to staff recreational events. In the past, however, youth centres often ran popular discos on Friday nights which attracted young people who did not otherwise use the centres. Now, as then, the opportunities that such provision offers for contacting different young people and seeking to engage them in more purposeful relationships and activities need to be weighed against concerns about allocating scarce resources to largely recreational provision. The two examples below show how recreational weekend provision can provide youth work opportunities, albeit sometimes light touch.

Since August 2008, Medway Youth Service has provided a chill-out zone at an under-18s club night run by a local commercial night club. The club nights are run twice a month on Saturdays or Sundays from 7pm to midnight, and youth workers (four or five per session) meet at 5pm to spend time outside with young people as they queue, before providing information on health-related issues alongside fun activities such as ultra-violet face painting or Wii consoles in the chill-out zone. Young people can get information on local activities, complete healthy living questionnaires and make comments on a discussion wall. The presence of youth work staff has encouraged more young people to attend the events as they feel safe with known and trusted adults to talk to. The service has also embarked on Streetball on one Saturday evening a month, and is now working with two local third sector groups to secure funding to develop sports-based provision with healthy living and community safety messages, running between 10pm to 2am on Fridays and/or Saturdays.

Slough Youth Service included some large-scale leisure music and dance activities open till 11-12 midnight in its YCAP-funded Friday and Saturday night provision. The events were mainly publicised via social networking and word of mouth and attracted large numbers of young people – up to 2,500 out of a 13-19 population of 12,000, far exceeding expectations. There is a strong focus on safety, including security staff, portable knife arches and sniffer dogs. This has reassured parents, and has given the events greater status in young people's eyes. Youth workers make contact with the young people as they queue and to a lesser extent, in the venues themselves, and signpost them to other provision. They have piloted incentives such as prize draws to encourage young people to give contact details so they can follow them up. Since some young people turn up two or three hours early,

the service has also experimented with an 'overflow' system, giving these young people priority admission passes and taking them to youth centres where they can relax and take part in low key activities.

### Daytime provision

While much discussion of weekend provision explicitly or implicitly focuses on Friday and Saturday nights, daytime weekend provision has a long history and an important role to play in engaging young people who might not otherwise use provision, or in enhancing the depth of their engagement. For some groups of young people, such as Muslim young women or disabled young people, weekend daytime provision offers a safer environment than evening provision. For these groups, work with their families may be particularly important to secure their trust and understanding of the benefits of involvement.

Other daytime provision seeks to expand young people's horizons and challenge them to undertake new activities and develop relationships with others, for instance through residential or outdoor education events. Daytime sessions also provide a longer timescale for focused activities often with tangible outcomes. Community and celebration events provide opportunities to showcase young people's skills and achievements and to build more positive relationships with others in their local community.

It is important that this provision is not unintentionally displaced by focusing solely on evening provision.

Bolton Lads and Girls Club is open seven days a week. Weekend daytime provision is used to engage specific groups who find it difficult to use generic provision. These include Sunday afternoon gym sessions specifically for young Muslim women and their female relatives (with transport provided); Saturday afternoon provision for Somali young men who were proving difficult to integrate into mainstream sessions; and Connexions drop-in sessions on Saturdays for young disabled people and their families, who found it more difficult to access the service during weekdays.

### Involving young people

Involving young people in determining and shaping provision underpins *Aiming high for young people*. The strategy sets out the government's commitment to increasing 'young people's direct influence and control

on the design, commissioning and delivery of local services', and notes that giving young people genuine influence over services is the best way of increasing access and participation.<sup>9</sup> While the national policy focus on weekend provision is relatively recent, Friday and Saturday night provision in some areas has been developed over a number of years, in response to the expressed wishes of young people.

Young people are involved in decisions about weekend provision at both strategic and delivery level. The youth panels and other structures developed for the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds (YOF/YCF) are providing a basis for further involvement of young people in decisions about resource allocation. Some YOF/YCF panels give priority to applications for weekend provision, while in other areas applications to the funds are being monitored to see what (further) evidence they provide of young people's need for weekend provision.

It is also important that young people are involved in both commissioning and evaluating services. One metropolitan local authority is currently setting up a commissioning group bringing together a range of stakeholders, including a parallel executive youth group which will have representation on the commissioning group. A rural authority plans to set up a network of community boards to give local people more involvement in provision, with a clear commitment from the chief executive that young people will be part of these boards.

The partnerships set up to develop applications for **myplace** funding have also provided a basis for the continued involvement of young people in determining provision. Where these applications are successful, there is a clear expectation that young people will continue

to be at the heart of developing this new provision. The **myplace** process has also provided evidence of the range of ways in which young people can be involved in determining the nature of provision, from involvement in formal processes to simply talking about what they want with youth support staff and other young people.

Halton Youth Service used a pilot detached youth work project which took place between January and March 2009 to gain further information on the types of provision young people want. As well as signposting young people to local youth work provision, detached youth workers asked young people why they hung out in the area, whether they knew about existing youth provision, and specific questions about what kind of provision they would like on Friday and Saturday nights. These covered activities, timing, who should run activities and whether they would pay to take part. The results will be analysed by young people and youth workers, after which the Youth Cabinet will make recommendations to the youth service and partners.

#### Some points to consider

- *How do you respond to the needs and interests identified by young people – and offer them support and challenge to go beyond these?*
- *How do you involve young people in determining provision?*
- *How do you reach the most marginalised young people who are not using existing services?*
- *When working with partners who have not previously engaged with young people, how do you ensure that young people have a positive experience?*

## 2. Managing risk-taking behaviour

### Reaching the most vulnerable young people

The drive for increased Friday and Saturday night provision aims to give young people – particularly the one quarter of young people who do not currently engage in any form of structured provision – a safe place to go at the weekend where they can explore their interests, learn new things and socialise. There appear to be some key features to securing the involvement of the most vulnerable young people:

- ▶ Using detached, outreach and mobile youth work to contact young people and work with them to develop activities that meet their specific needs, as well as helping them to access other provision.
- ▶ Using police, crime and disorder reduction data and community intelligence to identify both particular geographical areas for targeted work, and individual young people – sometimes described as the ‘top ten targets’.
- ▶ Engaging with young people ‘where they are’, but then challenging low expectations, raising their aspirations and giving them the right to make demands.
- ▶ Developing partnerships with a range of agencies, particularly the police and community and voluntary groups.
- ▶ Offering incentives and rewards to engage young people and encourage them to take part in a broader range of activities.
- ▶ Making use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to build effective support plans for individual young people.

Further evidence of effective approaches is offered in the guidance drawing together the experiences of the 15 local authorities which received PAYP additional funding during 2008-09.<sup>10</sup> Its findings include:

- ▶ The need to engage young people at an earlier age, including targeted diversionary activities for children from the age of 8.
- ▶ The importance of finding ways to gain the views of young people in targeted areas.
- ▶ Recognition that the engagement of highly

disaffected and distrusted young people is a time-consuming process.

- ▶ The need to ensure that staff and volunteers have the personal characteristics to engage with marginalised young people, and that there is a consistency of approach over time.

For the past year, Kirklees Young People’s Service has been the lead partner in a Friday night football project set up to combat high levels of anti-social behaviour and alcohol use. Other partners include police, neighbourhood wardens, drug and alcohol projects and a detached youth work project. The project is based at a private indoor football venue with four five-a-side pitches, and attracts around 80 young people (mainly young men) with a core group of 50. There were initially issues with the behaviour of some young people; while the centre wanted to ban them, the youth workers successfully insisted that it was their role to manage young people’s behaviour, based on providing the young people with an activity they value. The sessions run for three hours, but each young person generally only plays for 45 minutes, giving staff time to chat and build relationships with them. Young people who have been drinking are not allowed to play, but are encouraged to come back another week when sober. The partnership with specialist drug and alcohol projects provides opportunities for more focused work on substance use. The project is expensive, costing around £800 to £900 per session, but has had a major impact on crime and anti-social behaviour, with reported incidents down by 85 per cent.

### Alcohol and drug use

Many youth workers have concerns about young people’s behaviour on weekend nights, particularly related to their alcohol use. Friday, rather than Saturday, is generally identified as the main drinking night, and many areas are said to have a strong adult drinking culture which is emulated by young people. Young people drinking in public spaces are not necessarily from disadvantaged backgrounds; in some rural areas, where young people

achieve well, young people's alcohol use – often condoned by parents – is seen as a particular problem.

Weekend youth provision is therefore only one element in combating a deep-rooted drinking culture. Youth support services will need to work with partners to develop a coherent strategy to reduce harmful alcohol use including:

- ▶ a consistent approach to alcohol and drugs education and risk reduction among all agencies working with young people;
- ▶ acknowledgment of the role of specialist agencies and clear referral protocols;
- ▶ reducing the availability of alcohol to young people, including working with Trading Standards and young people themselves; and
- ▶ clear and consistent activity from the police and other enforcement agencies, including involving them in planning and delivering the overall approach.

Being realistic about what can be achieved is also important; while for some young people attending provision on a Friday night may provide a total alternative to drinking, for others it will reduce overall consumption by limiting drinking time.

Derbyshire Youth Service is the lead partner in B-Safe, a multi-agency project which has received £415,000 from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) to provide 'safe centres' and positive activities on Friday and Saturday nights in four areas with high levels of drinking and anti-social behaviour. Each safe centre will operate with a multi-agency staff team. Detached workers will seek to engage young people on the streets and, if necessary will direct them to the safe centre for additional support. Centre-based workers will engage young people in a range of positive activities to divert them from drinking, and those young people who need additional support because of their alcohol consumption will be referred to specialist staff. The initiative is intended to start in July 2009, and is funded until March 2011. The project is currently consulting young people in the targeted areas, developing integrated training for staff, and creating protocols on aspects such as safety, alcohol, legal boundaries and engaging with parents.

Concerns about the additional difficulties associated with Friday night provision are legitimate, but it is important to recognise the skills that those working in voluntary and statutory services already have, and can develop further, in dealing with challenging behaviour. The skills and

experience of street-based workers, whose work often requires them to make judgments about whether it is safe or feasible for them to engage with young people who have been drinking, will be valuable in helping other staff develop appropriate skills and approaches.

The need to reach young people not currently using provision has also prompted some services to review existing policies and practice. Many voluntary and statutory youth organisations have traditionally operated 'no admission' policies to young people who have visibly been drinking or using drugs, on the basis that these are clearly communicated to and understood by the young people themselves. Some youth support services are now adopting approaches based on risk assessment, rather than outright bans, to engage young people who would normally spend their weekend evenings drinking. They may therefore develop a range of responses to young people under the influence of alcohol or drugs:

- ▶ Young people who are not aggressive and with whom staff judge they may be able to work, may be allowed into youth centres or projects under certain conditions.
- ▶ Staff may work with young people outside centres if they decide that allowing young people into provision would be risky or disruptive.
- ▶ If young people's drinking is thought to put themselves or others at risk, arrangements are made to take them home or to secure medical attention if necessary.

These more flexible approaches bring difficulties with them. They may require higher ratios of staff to young people and therefore additional resources. Staff may be asked to accept behaviour that would previously not have been tolerated. Staff may also have different interpretations of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. Using a different approach on weekend evenings may potentially create problems for staff on other nights. Other young people using provision may feel threatened or resentful about what some groups are allowed to 'get away with', and they or their families may no longer see the facility as offering a safe environment.

It is important to acknowledge these potential difficulties. But rather than accepting them as reasons not to make provision available at weekends, the focus needs to be on exploring ways, particularly through strengthened risk assessment and safeguarding processes, to anticipate and address any issues and to

## 12 Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision

ensure agencies cooperate to meet the needs of young people. This could include:

- ▶ ensuring that staff feel adequately supported, including support from senior managers;
- ▶ offering training on behaviour management, negotiation and conflict resolution;
- ▶ developing clear protocols for handling different situations including the involvement of other agencies; and
- ▶ critically, involving young people themselves in determining what is acceptable behaviour and the consequences of breaching this.

Newcastle Youth Service, working with a range of partners, has developed a Friday night programme offering high quality activities in youth centres across the city. Nearly 500 young people attended the first 14 sessions, including some clearly under the influence of alcohol whose behaviour has been challenging for staff and some other young people. The service has addressed this through developing risk assessment procedures and detailed operational guidelines, and providing staff training. Senior management team members work sessions with staff, to support any difficult situations and to show that they are not asking staff to do anything they are not prepared to do themselves. Security staff have been used for some venues.

A city-wide youth steering group has been set up which is developing a behaviour code for all youth service provision. This is based on feedback from young people that: young people want clear rules that are the same across all provision; bad behaviour needs to be challenged; and everyone has the right to feel safe in a session. The code focuses on young people's behaviour, rather than alcohol intake. It uses a red and yellow card system to encourage young people to take responsibility for their behaviour. There is also a gold card to reward improvements in attitudes and behaviour. Young people are asked to sign up to this code and staff from all agencies are expected to apply it consistently.

Police data show a significant reduction in ASB and young people are reducing or stopping drinking on

Friday nights through choosing to engage with the programme.

The timing of provision is also a critical factor. While Friday evening provision often starts at around 6.30 or 7pm, young people may start drinking earlier. Consideration should therefore be given to starting at 3.30 or 4pm. It may also be necessary to offer provision until 10 or 11pm if it is to have an impact on alcohol-related anti-social behaviour. Clearly, operating double or treble sessions has major resource implications. The availability or otherwise of public transport will also be an important factor in determining the times of sessions, while the police may be keen to ensure separate dispersal of those using youth provision and those using pubs.

However services choose to manage the issue of young people's alcohol use, or risk-taking behaviour in general, it is important to find ways to continue to engage with young people. Youth support services should make a clear distinction between refusing to condone risky or illegal behaviour, while not rejecting the individuals and groups of young people who are engaging in such behaviour.

In a minority of areas, drug use rather than alcohol is the main problem. While in some areas this reflects the low cost and availability of cannabis, in others drug use is linked to gang activity and organised crime and must therefore be addressed through multi-agency approaches for safeguarding young people at high levels of risk.

### Some points to consider

- *How do you identify the most vulnerable young people and tailor provision to their needs?*
- *How can you best support young people to manage risky behaviour and improve their wellbeing and attainment?*
- *How can you ensure that staff have the skills and support they need to manage challenging behaviour?*
- *How can you engage young people in defining acceptable behaviour and make positive use of peer pressure?*

### 3. Building in pathways for progression

Friday and Saturday night provision brings into sharp focus current debates about the role of structured and unstructured provision in improving outcomes for young people. *Aiming high for young people* describes the level of 'structure' – activities which have an underlying purpose and goal and are facilitated by a trusted adult or older peers – as critical in determining young people's outcomes. However, since unstructured provision tends to attract more disadvantaged young people, it may be most effective to initially offer unstructure activities to attract these young people and introduced more structure once they are engaged.<sup>11</sup> A recent Audit Commission report on the role of sport and leisure activities in helping prevent anti-social behaviour by young people concluded that long-term impact would only be achieved by combining sports and leisure activities with 'developmental components supporting young people to improve their personal and social skills and to change their behaviour'.<sup>12</sup>

The examples in this paper illustrate some ways in which youth support services are seeking to embed purpose in less structured and recreational activities, whether by encouraging healthy lifestyles or teamwork through football or sports, engaging young people in exploring issues through music or drama, or building on young people's interests to develop employment-related skills. These are underpinned by the skills of paid and volunteer workers in developing trusting relationships with young people. In some instances, staff will only introduce elements of education or challenge once they have developed relationships with young people. In others, activities or conversations may offer unanticipated opportunities for intervention, for instance an immediate response to a young person who indicates that they want to change some aspects of their life. Staff will use their skills and experience to make a judgment about when it is appropriate to introduce these elements of challenge and progression.

Gradual progression is also critical in engaging young people contacted on Friday and Saturday nights in more purposeful provision. Detached youth workers, with their detailed local knowledge and existing relationships with young people, have an important role in ensuring that young people both know what is on offer and have the

confidence to use provision. In urban areas, contacts with older young people may focus more on providing pathways – information and where necessary support – to a range of different options rather than direct provision.

Stoke-on-Trent's Mobile Soccer project aims to use sport as a means of improving young people's behaviour and increasing their employability. Operating on selected sites until 11pm on Fridays and 9pm on Saturdays, the project will offer young people opportunities to take part in short four-a-side football games. These will operate under a set of rules, devised by the teams, using a points system to reward 'fair play' and encourage the involvement of girls – winning will not just be about scoring goals. There will be no referees, and young people will be trained as advisers to help participants agree the rules at the outset. Each team attending regularly for a month will receive a free kit. The service has set up two level 1 football coaching courses with Staffordshire FA, and the 24 young people who are identified as contributing the most to the project will be offered the chance to gain this qualification. They will be expected to volunteer at the project, and the service has made links with Sports Development so that young people, when qualified, can be offered opportunities for paid employment.

These progression routes are critical in distinguishing between diversionary activities which aim simply to 'get young people off the streets', and interventions which have a longer-term ambition of helping young people change their behaviour and improving their outcomes, not simply occupying them.

#### Some points to consider

- *How can you ensure that staff take full advantage of opportunities for introducing structure within more informal or recreational activities?*
- *Are you aware of the range of adults who engage with young people in your area, particularly paid or volunteer staff in voluntary, community or faith groups?*
- *Do staff – particularly detached and outreach workers – have information on the full range of local services and provision?*

## 4. Using resources effectively

Local authorities are reporting a range of approaches to mapping local demand – with the involvement of young people – and reconfiguring services as a result of this. These changes include shifting provision away from Monday to Friday to, say, Wednesday to Sunday; reducing daytime work with schools; and coordinating provision across the whole local authority area. One London authority is encouraging youth centres and projects to work together to timetable activities across seven days; this approach may be particularly relevant to cities where public transport is better and young people are used to travelling to school and leisure time activities, as well as across local authority boundaries.

It will be important that commissioning processes are based on explicit needs assessments and clear priorities arising from these. These need to take into account the expectation that the additional PAYP funding for 2009-11 will be used to support an increased focus on Friday and Saturday night provision, in response to local needs and circumstances.

The *myplace* initiative has also highlighted the importance of achieving a balance between neighbourhood provision and larger-scale provision which attracts young people from wider geographical areas and a range of backgrounds, and this should be addressed in the commissioning arrangements. Both types of provision are important. Neighbourhood provision is often delivered by local voluntary and community projects, whose staff, whether paid or voluntary, often share the backgrounds of the young people they work with and may therefore have greater credibility with the most disadvantaged young people. These staff may, in turn, encourage young people to engage with large-scale provision with high quality equipment and facilities which offer young people opportunities and challenges that they might not otherwise experience.

It should be recognised that effective commissioning processes are likely to result in the decommissioning of provision that is not well attended, where demand is greater elsewhere, or is not cost effective to maintain. It is important to ensure that the criteria for securing or

ending provision are based on rigorous and transparent needs assessment processes, and include discussion with young people and their communities. It will also be important to develop mechanisms to review the consequences of shifts in provision. As an example, one local authority has agreed plans to reduce the total number of youth centres from 18 to 11, including four hubs which will be open on six nights a week including Friday and Saturdays. Staff will be redeployed to support this extended opening. Elected members have agreed to the closure of facilities because there is a clear and consistent rationale for change.

Clarity is also needed about whether weekend provision will incur additional costs, and how these will be met. Factors to be considered include:

- ▶ costs of staffing weekend provision, including determining the appropriate ratio of staff to young people for different types of provision, and whether there is a need to hire specialist services, such as security staff or equipment;
- ▶ building in management costs, such as caretaking staff, cleaning, lighting and heating; and
- ▶ lost opportunities for external income generation.

While there is concern about the effective use and lack of sustainability of short-term funding, such as the YCAP allocation, it is important to recognise that work developed with time-limited funding can be used to make the case for sustained funding, through providing an evidence base on how interventions are improving outcomes for the most vulnerable young people. Short-term funding can also be used to test out different – perhaps as yet untried approaches – which if successful can inform longer-term service development. An element of sustainability may also be secured through using funding to buy equipment which can be used more widely, such as mobile sports pitches, youth buses or mobile cinemas.

Sefton Youth Service is seeking to bring together a range of information to resource weekend provision effectively. This includes encouraging young people

to 'think outside the box' about weekend provision, critical use of community safety and ASB data, and a detailed workforce analysis to enable area workers to understand their local resource. It is developing community profiles, live documents which allow staff to use their detailed local knowledge to help identify the needs and trends in different areas and show how these are being addressed. When working well, they ensure that area and unit plans reflect real needs, and enable the service to respond quickly to changed patterns of local provision by partners.

### Some points to consider

- *Do your commissioning arrangements explicitly encourage Friday and Saturday night provision?*
- *Do your commissioning arrangements encourage organisations to think creatively about working collaboratively to secure a coordinated approach?*
- *How can you secure community and elected member agreement to closing or reducing provision?*
- *Are you making full use of the different sources of information available to inform how you target provision?*
- *How are you developing an evidence base to make a case for sustained or additional funding?*

## 5. Developing effective partnerships

The duty to secure sufficient positive activities requires local authorities to build in contestability when securing provision. Rather than local authorities assuming the role of default provider of positive activities, they should identify the most appropriate provider, making use of and, where appropriate helping to build the capacity of high quality organisations within the third and private sectors.

Youth support services will therefore work with a wide range of partners to develop and support Friday and Saturday night provision. It is important that frontline staff in all agencies are fully aware of the range of provision in their area. Depending on local circumstances, providers may include other local authority departments such as parks or community safety, voluntary youth and community organisations, churches, mosques and other faith groups, specialist arts and cultural organisations, and sports bodies ranging from professional football clubs to local martial arts organisations. The involvement of third sector organisations is particularly important in securing rapid and flexible responses to new or as yet unmet needs. The PAYP guidance *Creating a Sense of Belonging*<sup>8</sup> highlights the importance of engaging third sector organisations in the most deprived neighbourhoods in delivering programmes for the most disaffected young people.

There appear to be two main issues related to partnership arrangements for Friday and Saturday night provision:

- ▶ ensuring that all support services for young people, not just youth work and positive activities, are accessible and available at weekends; and
- ▶ the involvement of the police in developing positive activities.

### Securing support services

While experiences vary, it appears that in many areas youth support services are finding it difficult to involve staff from other services for young people in Friday and Saturday night provision. Young people's access to other services such as housing or social care, is therefore limited

other than on an emergency basis. However, there are examples of successful partnership across services.

Wigan Young People's Services used YCAP funding to support X-Zones offering positive activities in two ASB hotspots from 3pm to 10pm on Fridays and 5pm to 10pm on Saturdays. The X-Zones were developed with a range of partners, including voluntary and community organisations such as Brook and Groundwork, the police, fire and rescue, drug and alcohol and teenage pregnancy teams, community safety, sports development and Greater Manchester Transport Authority. Partner agencies seeking to develop activities submit bids which are assessed on a weekly basis by a partnership panel. A set of draft working protocols – seen as 'live' documents – have been developed for all those involved in the X-Zones. These cover operational aspects such as consent forms, safeguarding, risk assessment, on-call arrangements and forms and guidance on recording and evaluating sessions. They also identify the roles and responsibilities of staff from different services.

The move towards integrated youth support services should provide a strong driver for a greater range of services for young people to offer weekend provision. Integration potentially encourages more flexible and effective use of resources, and greater understanding of the ways in which different services work and their contribution to improved outcomes for young people. More pragmatically, all services for young people need to understand how operating weekend provision will help them deliver their own targets, whether these relate to reducing levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training, first time entrants to the criminal justice system or teenage pregnancy.

### Working with the police

There appear to be five main ways in which the police (including police community support officers) are involved in weekend provision:

- ▶ providing data and intelligence to identify areas

- ▶ and individual young people for targeted work;
- ▶ helping ensure that young people and staff are safe, and managing dispersal at the end of provision;
- ▶ being involved in commissioning provision;
- ▶ working collaboratively with youth workers, but not as a joint team; and
- ▶ joint work through street-based teams or activities in youth centres or residential.

While there is some debate about the appropriateness of police engaging in direct delivery, strong and positive partnerships have been developed in some areas, with police involvement including:

- ▶ leading sports and other activities;
- ▶ taking part in introductory youth work training or training for specific activities such as expeditions and outdoor education;
- ▶ trainee police officers and PCSO staff undertaking placements in youth centres and projects; and
- ▶ competitions between police and youth teams.

These approaches are seen as important in breaking down barriers and increasing understanding between police and young people. They provide a good model for joint police and youth support service working for those areas where work with the police has not yet progressed beyond the use of police data and work with police in their emergency services capacity.

Where effective partnership work has developed, it is underpinned by clarity about different roles, training as appropriate, and the separation of prevention and enforcement. It may also be necessary to develop explicit protocols about police not using involvement in youth provision to pursue individual police cases.

In Newcastle, the youth service has developed a partnership with the police over the past 18 months to create a safer environment for young people in the city centre. Teams of detached youth workers are deployed on Friday nights and Saturdays during the day. They work in parallel, meeting up at the start of sessions to decide on the routes they will take and exchange mobile numbers. Police who come across groups of young people will text the youth workers to suggest that they make contact with them, while young people

who feel unsafe are more likely to approach youth workers than police. The relationship is described as extremely successful, but has taken time and commitment to develop, underpinned by a willingness to test things out and to review different approaches and how they can be improved.

These different approaches to the role of the police have been brought into sharp focus in areas piloting the Operation StaySafe initiative, through which the police are using existing safeguarding laws to remove young people at risk from the streets and take them to a place of safety. In some areas youth services are key partners in the initiative, while in others they have decided against involvement, based on concerns about young people's rights as well as police attitudes and practice.

The initial phase of Operation StaySafe operates from 6pm to 2am on Friday and Saturday nights on three weekends a month in Slough, where a shared facility that combines a school, community centre and youth centre is designated as a place of safety. Police bring young people to the centre, youth workers contact their families and follow up by using the Common Assessment Framework to assess the needs of young people and develop an appropriate package of support. The service manager describes this as a positive experience for several reasons: young people do not resent it as they separate youth work from the punitive element; police have been impressed by the youth workers; parents respond more positively to youth workers than to the police; and schools have welcomed the youth service's offer of targeted youth support for individual pupils.

### Some points to consider

- *Have you identified the targets which different services for young people may meet through involvement in weekend provision?*
- *How can you encourage greater understanding and open discussion of the functions and respective roles of different services and sectors?*
- *How can you better effectively engage with the police service so that they are involved in commissioning and delivery of provision to improve the relationship between the police and local young people?*

## 6. Addressing workforce issues

Issues related to the workforce are a key concern in developing weekend provision. Areas of concern include:

- ▶ Current staff's inability or reluctance (because of other work or family commitments), to work on Friday and Saturday nights.
- ▶ Existing difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff for weekday evenings, particularly when there are opportunities for 9-5 working in allied services.
- ▶ The development of a culture of weekday working.
- ▶ Concerns about staff safety and access to transport.
- ▶ Variations in terms and conditions when staff from different sectors are working together.

Different patterns are emerging, however, with some services finding it relatively easy to staff Friday and Saturday evening provision. In some areas of the country, existing or historical employment patterns means that working culture is already based on seven-day working and shift arrangements. Staff in these areas may be more willing to embrace Friday and Saturday night working – and may actually see benefits in doing so. Third sector provision often traditionally takes place at weekends, and in many cases already attracts harder to reach young people. Younger staff may also be more willing to work on Friday and Saturday nights, since their own social activities may not start until after 10pm.

Managers reported a range of approaches to resolving staffing issues, including practical responses and those intended to change 'mindsets'. These included:

- ▶ Ongoing discussions with staff teams and unions to ensure that staff understand the need for weekend provision, based on evidence of young people's needs and wishes. This includes addressing concerns that youth workers will be involved in inappropriate activities, whether this is 'policing' or simply seeing over/seeing leisure activities.
- ▶ Developing arrangements for existing staff that support weekend work but allow for a reasonable work/life balance. Examples in different authorities included expecting staff to work every Friday night

but not every Friday and Saturday night, or an agreed number of weekends per month.

- ▶ Employing staff specifically to work on Friday and Saturday nights. However, there may be concerns that this could result in a fragmented service, and that the lack of consistency of staffing between weekends and weekdays could make it more difficult to establish progression routes for young people into mainstream provision.
- ▶ Including clear expectations about Friday and Saturday night working in employment contracts for all new staff.
- ▶ Managers being involved in service delivery on Friday and Saturday nights as well as management support arrangements.
- ▶ 'Growing your own' approaches to staff development, including providing progression routes for service users.
- ▶ Stressing the potentially positive opportunities offered by weekend provision in offering opportunities for staff to support young people in engaging in fun and challenging activities, have a laugh and develop relationships with them, without pressure to focus on accredited outcomes.

JNC terms and conditions offer an appropriate framework to support weekend provision, since they provide for working up to eight evening sessions a fortnight. Where difficulties are experienced regarding 'custom and practice', there is provision within JNC to give 90 days notice to alter existing work patterns. In some areas, youth workers, as well as staff from other services are on local government (or other) scales, and their terms and conditions allow overtime payments for weekend working.

Friday and Saturday night provision may also focus attention on youth workers' repertoire of skills in delivering positive activities. A discussion of '21st century youth workers' argued that youth workers should undertake regular professional development activities to develop transferable skills they can share with young people.<sup>13</sup> Weekend provision offers opportunities to

recruit staff from non-traditional backgrounds with practical skills and experience to share with young people. There is also potential to develop hybrid roles combining youth work and other skills, such as sports or arts. Consideration needs to be given to how a varied skills mix can be sustained over time, rather than depending on specific individuals.

### Some points to consider

- *Are you using JNC or other terms and conditions effectively to support weekend work?*
- *How are you managing the potential concerns of staff about Friday and Saturday night provision?*
- *Does the senior management team have a visible role in weekend working?*
- *How can staff with different skills work together most effectively to deliver positive activities?*
- *How do you manage potential tensions if staff from different services have different terms and conditions?*

## 7. Securing safe access to positive activities

### Availability and accessibility of premises

Local authorities are required to undertake an analysis of local activities and facilities to fulfil their duty to secure sufficient access to positive activities. It is therefore important to consider the full range of spaces in local communities – such as schools and colleges, libraries, parks and commercial provision – in securing weekend provision. There are problems in accessing school sites at weekends in some areas, and the definition of ‘extended services’ as covering the hours of 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday may not be helpful in this respect. Some community premises also offer only limited access for youth work activities at weekends, since they are hired out for weddings or events. In some authorities, youth centres have their own income generation targets and therefore face potential loss of revenue.

Attention also needs to be paid to the accessibility of premises – not just physical access, important though this is, but to less obvious barriers posed by attitudes of staff and other users. Approaches to address these include training – including involving young people as trainers, peer inspection and offering discrete spaces for young people.

### Transport

Lack of public transport poses a significant barrier to young people gaining access to positive activities, and the difficulties are increased at weekends when, particularly in rural areas, bus services are likely to be very limited. Concessionary fares have been negotiated in some areas but these are of little use if services are not running. Transport may also be a problem in urban areas, where population patterns mean, for example, that services run North-South but not East-West; or where perceptions of safety and the experience of territorialism mean that young people are reluctant to travel outside their immediate neighbourhoods.<sup>14</sup>

Examples of approaches adopted in different local

authority areas include:

- ▶ Free or subsidised transport: one local authority has plans to introduce free public transport for young people under 18 – but only up to 9pm.
- ▶ Taking activities to young people in their local areas, through mobile or neighbourhood-based provision.
- ▶ Using minibuses to bring young people to more central provision.
- ▶ Giving priority to transport in existing funding streams; the YOF/YCF panel in one local authority has decided to commit £230,000 to commissioning transport for positive activities. However, the issue of sustainability needs to be considered.
- ▶ Drawing on the 14-19 agenda to look at access, including potential links with the school transportation service to access youth service provision.

### Risk assessment and safeguarding

Services and organisations will need to review existing risk assessment and safeguarding policies to ensure that they are robust enough to deal with the specific circumstances related to weekend working which may potentially increase risks. These include working with unknown young people, engaging large numbers in provision, and developing arrangements with new providers, particularly in the commercial sector.

Particular attention will need to be paid to ensuring that policies and practice offer clear approaches to dealing with young people who may present a risk of harm to themselves or others, particularly where alcohol or drugs are involved. The emphasis is likely to be on getting young people home safely, but it may be necessary to check that current protocols anticipate more complex circumstances, including:

- ▶ seeking medical attention;
- ▶ involving emergency services to secure the safety of young people or staff;
- ▶ making arrangements for drunk young people

- ▶ whose parents cannot be contacted; and
- ▶ recording concerns related to the behaviour of young people or their families on Friday or Saturday nights.

There are significant management and workforce implications here, in terms of review of and potentially greater involvement with safeguarding processes.<sup>15</sup>

Brent Youth Service's late night project is supported by environmental services staff who use CCTV to monitor the locations where the work is taking place and provide a checking in and out service. The detached youth workers, who work in teams of four to five including at least two women, have walkie-talkies linked to the CCTV unit and carry mobiles and alarms.

They undertake risk assessments and reconnaissance to gain a feel for the area, taking into account factors such as street lighting, pubs and clubs' closing times, and CCTV location, as well as drawing on police data about known crime 'hotspots'.

#### Some points to consider

- *Are there levers you can use to widen young people's access to a range of local spaces?*
- *Is there scope to work with the voluntary, community and private sectors to develop not-for-profit transport services?*
- *Do your risk assessment and safeguarding processes take account of the additional challenges of weekend provision?*

## 8. Securing wider community support

Engaging young people in Friday and Saturday night activities is an important part of the drive to reduce anti-social and risky behaviour among young people, including their involvement in crime, youth nuisance and drug use. While the focus on anti-social behaviour can encourage negative images of young people, there are also opportunities to use this agenda to help improve the lives and fulfil the potential of individuals and groups of young people.

Discussions of anti-social behaviour often highlight that this may be based on other people's perceptions of groups of young people as inherently threatening, rather than the actual behaviour of young people. While this needs to be challenged, it is important to recognise the concerns of other people, particularly elderly people. Detached workers can make an important contribution to helping young people using public space understand how other people view them; young people making relatively small modifications to their behaviour can lead to greatly improved relationships with the wider community. Mobile provision has also proved effective in reducing tensions between young people and other residents within neighbourhoods.

Weekend work also provides opportunities to secure greater visibility for young people as active members of their communities. In one example, young people were offered activities to go quad-biking provided they took part in a two-hour litter pick. Although there was some initial grumbling, the young people found that they enjoyed themselves and were proud to be seen to be doing something positive for their community. There is also convincing evidence from inter-generational projects that when young and older people are brought together in structured activities and relationships, they often recognise that they have similar experiences (including the experience of being marginalised), needs and visions for their local communities.

Those services that involve police in delivering positive activities with young people see this as playing an important role in improving relationships between young people and the wider community and promoting

community cohesion. Police who have greater understanding of young people's lives are in a better position to act as an advocate for them and, where necessary, challenge other local residents' assumptions about what constitutes anti-social behaviour. Encouraging parents and other local community members to volunteer in youth provision will promote better understanding of young people's lives and needs, and lead to a network of adults able to advocate on behalf of young people.

Where youth provision is in residential locations, it is important to take into account local residents' concerns, either when extending the opening times of existing provision to Friday and Saturday nights, or in considering where to site new or mobile provision. Some issues to consider include:

- ▶ Setting up meetings with local residents to provide an opportunity to anticipate and address concerns.
- ▶ Considering whether noise and floodlights from outdoor provision such as midnight basketball may cause annoyance.
- ▶ Locating mobile provision in unused spaces away from residential areas, such as supermarket car parks, subject to safety assessments.
- ▶ Managing young people's dispersal at the end of sessions, so that they leave reasonably quietly and quickly. Building some cooling down activities into the end of sessions may help with this, as will involving the police in helping minimise disruption in public space late at night.

Bury Youth Support Service is involved in extensive weekend daytime activities, often with a strong inter-generational focus. Its Friday night football sessions, run in conjunction with Bury and Radcliffe Borough Football Clubs, lead to friendly matches against community groups and the police as part of weekend inter-generational fun day activities. The borough has good park provision, and young people are heavily involved in identifying the facilities they would like, working with youth workers and the Parks and Open Spaces Division. There are regular 'party in the parks', where young people organise activities, such as five-a-side football or running 'smoothie' stalls. In summer

2008, Party in the Park provided an opportunity for consultation on Bury's **myplace** proposals, with the young people's steering group gaining the views of over 300 other young people.

### Some points to consider

- *What opportunities does weekend provision offer to promote a more positive public profile for young people?*
- *How can you encourage a more accurate understanding of what constitutes anti-social behaviour?*
- *How are you engaging parents and local residents as volunteers in weekend provision?*

## 9. Promoting and publicising activities

Local authorities are required to publicise and keep up-to-date information on positive activities and associated facilities in their area. While Friday and Saturday night provision specifically aims to reach vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, it is important that it is promoted as an entitlement to all young people. The experience of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds, which are intended to involve disadvantaged young people at all levels, has shown that many young people are reluctant to categorise themselves or their neighbourhoods as 'disadvantaged'. Similarly, Friday and Saturday night activities need to be portrayed as offering appealing and exciting activities, not as being about 'prevention' or merely getting young people off the streets. The PAYP guidance, *Creating a Sense of Belonging*<sup>8</sup>, indicates some ways of ensuring that activities reach the most at-risk young people, including involving young people in promoting provision to other young people.

Provision needs to be publicised in ways that are easily accessible and understandable to young people, using a variety of methods – including websites and social media, text messaging, leaflets and posters, and through young people's own networks and word of mouth. Consideration needs to be given to securing greater consistency in language and branding, to make it easier for young people to find out about what is available in

different areas, since young people use provision across local authority boundaries. Coherent marketing strategies are therefore needed.

Services should also make use of the skills and contacts of local authority media and PR departments, both in promoting positive opportunities to young people and their families, and to secure a higher and more positive profile for young people. It is important, however, to promote weekend provision as one of a range of interventions intended to improve outcomes for young people and reduce risky or anti-social behaviour, rather than in itself providing an answer to more deep-seated social and economic problems.

### Some points to consider

- *How do you currently promote positive activities in your area?*
- *How can you involve young people in promoting weekend provision?*
- *How do you promote and support young people in accessing provision outside your local authority area*
- *How can you develop positive relationships – including the direct involvement of young people – with the full range of local media to promote weekend provision?*

## 10. A way forward

It is clear that there are various areas where more work is needed to identify effective approaches to and strategies for developing Friday and Saturday night provision.

One way forward might be the establishment of a national 'experts' group, drawn both from services for

young people and more broadly from services which affect and are used by young people. This group could be charged with the task of exploring these specific areas and, more generally, the issues and challenges highlighted by this paper, in order to develop more detailed guidance for local authorities on securing young people's access to positive activities at weekends.

# References

- 1 This was achieved by inserting Section 507B into the Education Act 1996. *Statutory Guidance on section 507B of the Education Act 1996* is available at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/thingstodoplacestogo/thingstodo](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/thingstodoplacestogo/thingstodo)
- 2 *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*. HM Treasury/DCSF, 2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/)
- 3 *Aiming high*, Ch 2.
- 4 See Beverley Hughes' letter to directors of Children's Services and lead members, 6 February 2009. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/localauthorities/\\_documents/content/2402090005\\_payp.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/localauthorities/_documents/content/2402090005_payp.pdf)
- 5 *Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*. DCSF, p52. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan)
- 6 Louise Casey, *Engaging communities in fighting crime*. Cabinet Office, 2008. [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/crime.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/crime.aspx)
- 7 See [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/open/open/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/open/open/) for more information.
- 8 *Positive Activities for Young People: Creating a Sense of Belonging*. NYA/DCSF, 2009.
- 9 *Aiming high*, p29.
- 10 *Creating a Sense of Belonging*, Ch 2.
- 11 *Aiming high*, pp21-22.
- 12 *Tired of Hanging Around: using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people*. Audit Commission, 2009, p25. [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/hangingaround/Pages/Default.aspx](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/hangingaround/Pages/Default.aspx)
- 13 Michael Bracey, *Youth Work Now*, 3 February 2009, p24.
- 14 The NYA published guidance on improving transport provision to support access to positive activities for young people on behalf of the DCSF and Department of Transport in May 2009. [www.nya.org.uk/information/100582/141457/transport/](http://www.nya.org.uk/information/100582/141457/transport/)
- 15 The *Working together to safeguard children* guidance, (DCSF, 2007) may provide a useful framework for reviewing processes. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/)