
The 2007 Annual Positive Futures Monitoring and Evaluation Report

positive futures: putting the pieces together?

For The Home Office
September 2007

substance.


Home Office

 *Sheffield
Hallam University*

Positive Futures: Putting the pieces together?

The 2007 Positive Futures Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Contents

Capturing Positive Futures: The ‘tag cloud’	5
Foreword	6
1 Introduction and methodology	7
2 Positive Futures: Tough on the causes of crime?	11
3 Positive Futures: Where Every Child Matters?	21
4 Positive Futures: Building communities?	29
5 Positive Futures: Raising participation?	34
6 Positive Futures: A new approach to positive activities for Young people?	42
7 Positive Futures: Providing a role for the third sector?	51
8 Conclusions and recommendations	62
Appendix 1: Positive Futures Every Child Matters Guidance	66

accreditation achieve achievement achieving activities activity art assessments
 awards awareness basketball **be healthy** body image boxing breaking down barriers budgeting
 bullying certificates challenge change programme child protection climbing coaching cohesion
commitment communication communication skills community
community cohesion community needs **competition** competitive
confidence confidence building conflict resolution cookery creativity dance decision
 making **development** distance travelled dj-ing drama drug education drugs economic well being
 education employment empowerment engage engaged **engagement** enjoy enjoy
 and achieve enjoyable **enjoyment** enthusiasm environment estate evaluation exercise
 experience **fitness** **football** friends friendship **fun** games girls group
 work growth happy hard work having fun **health** health and safety **healthy** healthy eating
healthy lifestyle healthy living inclusion inclusive intervention **involvement**
leadership **learning** life skills looking at issues make a positive contribution make new friends
 making decisions match media meet new people meeting new young people motivation multi sport music
new experience new skills norton grange norton option oakfields sport and recreation programmes
opportunities outcomes outreach **participation** partnership partnership work pay
personal development **physical activity** planning positive **positive**
activities **positive** **behaviour** positive contribution positive relationships progress progression
qualifications raise self esteem recognition relationship building residential respect responsibility
 reward risky behaviour role model safe safe environment **safety** school **self confidence**
self esteem sexual health education skills social social development social inclusion
social skills **sport** **stay safe** street dance streetwork substance misuse success
 summer **support** team **team** building team cohesion **teamwork**
 tournament training trip trust **volunteering** volunteers **young people** youth youth
 bank youth opportunity fund

Foreword



I am delighted to introduce *Putting the Pieces Together?*, the 2007 Positive Futures Monitoring and Evaluation Report. This report sets out the ways in which Positive Futures is making a real difference and illustrates how young people have been helped in their lives. This benefits not only young people engaged with the programme but the wider community as a whole.

The Positive Futures programme has made significant progress since it was launched by Gordon Brown and Sir Alex Ferguson in 2001. With nearly a hundred more projects added to the original 24 it has consistently demonstrated a capacity for engaging young people in positive activities and then using that engagement as a basis for broader social development. The programme has been consistent in its language, approaches and actions. At the same time it has pioneered fresh approaches to work with some of the most disadvantaged young people in our country which are now recognised as models of good practice.

Positive Futures has also been committed to finding the most appropriate ways to highlight the impact of the wide range of diverse local projects that make up the national programme and finding new ways to communicate these to partners, funders and the young people and communities it serves. Crucially, through the programme's state of the art, web-based monitoring and evaluation systems, this approach has enabled Positive Futures to capture the finer detail of young people's engagement and progression and also the programme's fit with a wide range of government policy agendas.

I am enormously grateful to everyone involved in the programme for working so hard to make it such a success.

Vernon Coaker MP

Introduction and methodology

1

Launched in 2001, Positive Futures is a national sports and activity based social inclusion programme, funded by the Home Office Crime and Drug Strategy Directorate with additional investment from the Football Foundation. Now midway through its third phase of funding and managed on the Home Office's behalf by Crime Concern, the programme operates through 121 local projects in England and Wales. Its principal aims are to help young people living in some of the most deprived communities avoid an involvement in offending behaviour and substance misuse by engaging them in activities and creating routes back into education, volunteering and employment.

In the original *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* strategy document¹ the programme was characterised as a 'relationship strategy' concerned to build supportive relations with young people on the back of their engagement in positive activities and to develop mutual respect and trust between participants and project workers. More recently this definition has evolved to include a clearer distinction between the diversionary approaches employed by other activity based programmes and Positive Futures' emphasis on a developmental model which involves:

Using activities as a gateway to personal development

Open ended outcomes

High quality engagement

Long term, open access provision

Flexible, locally defined delivery models

Mutual respect

Focus on participant interests and needs²

¹ Home Office (2003) *Cul-de-sacs and gateways: Understanding the Positive Futures approach*, London: Home Office

² Crabbe, T. (2006) *Knowing the Score: Positive Futures Case Study Research Final Report*, London: Crime Concern.

From this earlier work it is clear that those projects which have most fully adopted this kind of approach are the ones which have enjoyed the greatest success in retaining young people's engagement.

It is sustained activity that contributes to young people's personal development and has the potential to impact upon their wider patterns of behaviour. Within this overall context though it has also been recognised that participants' engagement and attendance may vary over time and that a long-term approach to analysing or charting the programme's progress is therefore essential.

This necessity has been recognised by Positive Futures which, following the lessons drawn from earlier case study research reports, began piloting the use of a new monitoring and evaluation framework developed by Substance³ in summer 2005. The framework, which was piloted with nine projects, was designed with a number of principles in mind. These included a belief that any evaluative framework to be adopted by the programme should be more participatory in nature and seek to achieve fresh and inclusive means of assessment and learning. There was also a belief that it should reflect both the process of change associated with Positive Futures and the views and aspirations of those most directly affected by it. This was to be achieved through the collection of previously neglected forms of evidence and wider youth work oriented models of assessing participant progress. Finally, the importance of ensuring a compatibility with project partners' information needs was recognised through the placement of the Every Child Matters outcomes framework at the heart of the structuring and analysis of this evidence.

The intention was to provide a useful and practical tool for helping projects organise their work which would break with conventional understandings of monitoring and evaluation as a burdensome requirement with little local value. As such, the new framework is concerned not just to capture 'outcomes', but the nature of the work and the efforts of projects to embrace the Positive Futures approach through the building of relationships with participants. In this sense, projects' ability to engage with the system is itself intended to provide an important indicator of their ability to deliver the work.

³ www.substance.coop

This report then will make use of a number of different kinds of ‘evidence’ captured by the Substance Project Reporting System (SPRS) as outlined in Table 1 below.

Evidence	Description
Statistics	Programme statistics are the aggregate statistics from across the Positive Futures program. These are generated by the inputting of participant, partner, funding and scheme details by individual projects, through the SPRS. This generates accurate and verifiable data relating to the number of participants on a project as well as the length and frequency of participation, demographic information and details of partners and funders etc. The SPRS automatically generates both project and programme level statistics.
Engagement	Projects make periodic assessments of the degree to which individual young people are engaged. An ‘Engagement Matrix’ was provided to help with this assessment, which can be found in Table 7. From the baseline established for this report we will be able to monitor how well the projects and the programme as a whole are doing in helping young people develop over time.
Schemes & Activities	Schemes are reasonably discreet programmes of work that projects undertake. These may be based around a specific activity (such as football) or particular issues (such as health) and may run over a specific time period or be open ended. Projects record descriptions of the different types of scheme they provide, attendance at them and the range of activities within them.
Qualitative Evidence	The SPRS provides an online ‘files function’ which allows projects to upload qualitative material. This ranges from photographs, audio recordings and video clips, to scanned documents or web pages and links. When projects do this, they are asked to: a) ‘tag’ the file against elements of the ECM agenda; and b) provide keywords to describe its relevance.
Tag Clouds	‘Tag clouds’ are generated by the SPRS to provide a graphic representation of the relative frequency that files have been associated with ECM criteria and other activities and outcomes.
Case Studies	Case studies are compiled by the projects within the SPRS. These are ‘built’ using a system tool which ‘stitches’ together text and qualitative files. They enable projects to describe more fully their activities, particular sessions or the progress and challenges faced by particular individuals or groups.

Table 1: Evidence captured by SPRS

The new monitoring and evaluation framework was rolled out nationally from October 2006 and projects each submitted their first annual report through the online Substance Project Reporting System (SPRS) at the end of March 2007.

With a coherent, consistent and sustainable programme-wide monitoring and evaluation framework in place these reports will provide the core data for the wider evaluation of the programme and much of the data from the first round of reporting will be presented in this document. However, it must be recognised that since projects have only been using the system for a period of six months it would be unrealistic, and is not the intention here, to present a definitive assessment of the programme's achievements or the progress of participants at this point.

Rather, what we intend to do is use the initial picture of Positive Futures that emerges from this first round of evaluation to establish some foundations from which to move forward. Critically, we intend to outline:

The programme's fit with different strands of government policy
The ways in which projects have attempted to meet these agendas
The baselines against which to assess future project and participant progress.

This approach will enable us to provide a basis for a full assessment of the programme's effectiveness in our 2008 Annual Report, following the completion of the next annual reporting round at the end of the current funding period. This report will be directed and structured through a focus on the relationship between Positive Futures and six key areas of government policy, each of which maybe of interest to a range of government departments:

Crime and substance misuse prevention

Every Child Matters

Community cohesion

Sport and physical activity

Youth work

The third sector

With the programme's funding having been primarily provided through the Home Office we will begin with a focus on the crime and substance misuse prevention agenda and, more specifically, the ways in which Positive Futures might protect against the risk factors associated with offending behaviour.

Positive Futures: Tough on the causes of crime?

2

When the new Labour government was elected in 1997 one of its manifesto commitments was to be 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'⁴. This suggested that a strong commitment to *criminal* justice would be balanced by a programme for *social* justice and a desire to address the underlying causes of criminality. In this way it has been argued that the Government has attempted to resolve philosophical disputes between notions of welfare and punishment by refocusing our attention on to the *prevention* of offending, particularly amongst children and young people⁵. It is in this context that a succession of evidence to show how 'risk' and 'protective' factors have been understood to influence outcomes for young people has come to the fore.

⁴ <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml>

⁵ Muncie, J. (2002) 'A new deal for youth?: early intervention and correctionalism', in G. Hughes, E. McLaughlin, & J. Muncie (eds.) *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: New Directions*, London: Sage

Longitudinal studies tracking children's development over time have plotted some of the most significant predictors of future offending and found a cumulative effect, in that, on aggregate, the greater the number of risk factors to which a child is exposed, the greater the likelihood of future offending behaviour⁶.

It must be noted though that exposure to such risks cannot provide definitive evidence of an *individual* young person's propensity to offend later in life.

Nevertheless, for many government interventions the evidence has proved compelling enough to ensure a focus on such 'risk' factors in terms of their capacity to highlight those sections of the population who will have the highest collective propensities for involvement in offending behaviour. Indeed, from the very outset, Positive Futures itself embraced this perspective through projects', albeit varying, commitment to a Youth Justice Board inspired 'targeted' approach based on a focus on a 'Core 50' of 'at risk youth' in each location⁷.

⁶ Farrington, D. P. (2003) 'Key results from the first 40 years of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development', in T. Thornberry & M. Krohn (eds.) *Taking stock of delinquency: An overview of findings from contemporary longitudinal studies*, p. 137-183. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum

⁷ See Crabbe, T. (2006) *In the Boot Room: Organisational contexts and partnerships, 2nd Interim National Positive Futures Case Study Research Report*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University. Available at www.substance.coop

Crucially though, the term 'risk', whilst implying the possibility of an undesirable outcome also suggests the potential for avoidance. In 2005 this point was formally recognised through a broader policy response focused on the ways in which young people might be protected from these risk factors with the publication of *Risk and Protective Factors* which stated that:

The risk factors for youth offending and substance abuse overlap to a very large degree with those for educational underachievement, young parenthood, and adolescent mental health problems. Action taken to address these risk factors (and to increase levels of protection) therefore helps to prevent a range of negative outcomes. Moreover, because these outcomes are closely related...this broad-based approach to prevention offers the greatest prospect of securing lasting reductions in offending behaviour⁸.

Over time, whilst Positive Futures has sought to distance itself from claims of any direct causal relationship between activity provision and crime reduction, the focus on 'protective factors' has come to be more central to the approach.

Indeed the DfES report *Offenders of the Future?* highlights four broad types of protective process, each of which might be regarded as central to a Positive Futures approach:

Reduce the impact of, or exposure to, risk

Reduce chain reactions to negative experience

Promote self-esteem and achievement

Provide positive relationships and new opportunities⁹

⁸ Communities that Care (2005) *Risk and Protective Factors*, London: Youth Justice Board

⁹ McCarthy, P., Laing, K. & Walker, J. (2004) *Offenders of the Future? Assessing the Risk of Children and Young People Becoming Involved in Criminal and Antisocial Behaviour*, DfES Research Report No 545, London: HMSO

Strong support for the programme's fit with these processes is beginning to emerge from the broad range of evidence presented by projects in the 2007 annual Positive Futures reporting round.

First of all the returns from the SPRS reveal that the programme has had considerable success in retaining the involvement of participants.

Category of participants	No. of participants
Number of young people involved in Positive Futures	29,617
'Starters' – First attended in last 12 weeks	11,759
'Involved' – Attended for longer than last 12 weeks	11,581
'Stopped' – Not attended in last 12 weeks	6,277

Table 2: Participant involvement in Positive Futures Oct. 2006 – March 2007

Whilst large numbers continue to join the programme, with almost 40% having become involved in the three month period leading up to the reporting deadline, a further 39% had already been involved for a period of three months or more whilst only 21% of those known to projects had not attended over the same period.

In terms of the activities that they have been involved in there is also strong evidence of activity provision acting as an introduction to a broader range of engagements with young people focused on education and support.

Issue based sessions	No. of sessions
Accredited courses	464
Support, information and advice	359
Educational sessions	240
Substance misuse education	182
Other youth work	140
Total	1385

Table 3: Non activity based sessions Oct. 2006 – March 2007

Amongst the 111 projects submitting an annual report, of the activity provision that was specified, almost 1400 sessions could be regarded as providing some kind of direct educational or social support.

Outside of the ongoing relationship building, guidance and advice provided in the context of activity based sessions, this demonstrates a commitment to providing regular direct access to structured alternative education and support which might be seen to ameliorate the risk factors related to offending behaviour.

This, and indeed the projects' own recognition of the significance of their work, is also reflected in the broader range of qualitative evidence uploaded to the SPRS which has been 'tagged' against relevant categories from the Every Child Matters outcomes framework. The following chart shows the relative frequency with which documents, photographs, media files and other qualitative material were associated by projects themselves with the different aspects of the Stay Safe category.

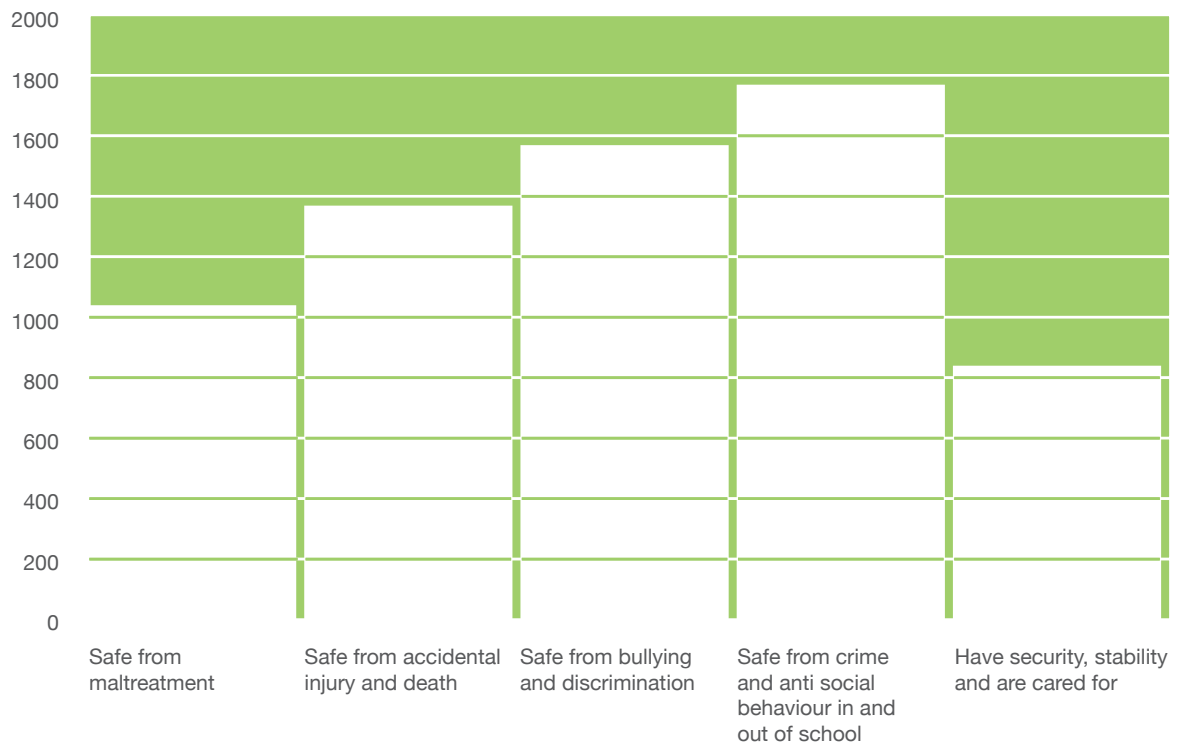


Figure 1: Positive Futures and Stay Safe

It is worth noting that the most prominent of these categories relate to the protection of participants from crime, anti-social behaviour, bullying and discrimination whilst a further 1094 files uploaded to the SPRS were tagged against the 'Choose not to take illegal drugs' outcome. This positive engagement with the 'Stay Safe' agenda and the programme's original commitment to impacting on crime and substance misuse is further reflected in the range of partners involved with the programme. The two most common partner agencies are the Police who are represented on 70.2% of project steering groups and Youth Offending Teams who are represented on 66.6% of project steering groups. DAATs are also represented, in name, at almost half the projects but in practice are likely to be represented at all projects through police and YOT representatives. 25% of projects also had a representative from a YIP or YISP.

Partner	Frequency	% of projects
Police	125	70.2
Youth Offending Team	85	66.6
DAAT	70	48.2
YIP/YISP	34	25.4

Table 4: Project partners from the criminal justice sector

What has begun to emerge from this kind of evidence is a sense of Positive Futures' role within a broader framework of initiatives targeted at protecting both young people and the wider community from the consequences of offending behaviour.

Rather than reflecting a dichotomy between structural responses to the 'causes' of criminal behaviour on the one hand and a focus on the individual on the other, programmes like Positive Futures appear to represent a key element within a 'layered' response that embraces both and which is represented in Figure 2.

At the broadest level sits the criminal justice system which provides the statutory legal framework directing responses to criminal behaviour and which might be characterised in political vernacular as being 'tough on crime'. Outside of this framework lies the broad range of initiatives aimed at establishing a sense of social justice, social inclusion, collective efficacy and neighbourhood renewal which seek to create fresh opportunities within disadvantaged communities and to ameliorate underlying structural inequalities. Whilst often targeted at deprived neighbourhoods through initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities (NDC) this 'layer' of intervention is essentially socially oriented in the sense that it seeks to impact upon entire localities rather than specific individuals or groups within them.

Positive Futures then, whilst often adopting an open access approach towards participation, might be seen to contrast with this approach through its focus on participant engagement and progression. It is more concerned with providing individual support through the building of relationships and development pathways which it is hoped will protect against the risk factors that are understood to impact most heavily on children living in the localities targeted.

This model is also borne out by the extent to which the evidence of what Positive Futures projects provide in their support to young people can be mapped against the risk factors identified in the Youth Justice Board (YJB) report *Risk and Protective Factors*¹⁰.

¹⁰ Communities that Care (2005)
Op. cit.



Figure 2: Locating Positive Futures within the response to youth offending

One of the family

'Steven', who lives on a notorious estate in one of the poorest wards in the country, got involved with Positive Futures in 2006. He is well known on his estate, with a reputation strengthened by his family's associations with crime and when he started coming to the football sessions he had the other participants' respect and knew it.

In May 2006 it was announced that the football team would be playing in 2 tournaments in the summer, one in Wales and one in Ireland. From then on the group had to make it a priority to be at training 2 nights a week but it was at this point that 'Steven' began to arrive late, leave half way through sessions and never turn his phone off. It emerged from others in the group that he had started dealing drugs on the estate.

Nevertheless he attended the 5 day tournament in Wales the following July and performed very well, with good discipline on the pitch and support for his team mates. Over a coffee with one of his closest friends he felt able to open up about his situation and quickly revealed that he had been given the opportunity to earn what he saw as easy money by his sister's boyfriend. He went on to reveal that he didn't want to deal drugs anymore but couldn't see a way out, explaining that once you start you are expected to keep going.



A week later at the tournament in Ireland he was like a different person. Rather than adopting his usual 'cool' demeanour he took part in all the silly antics of the group and would often be found having fun and fooling around with the other lads, almost as though he had regained his childhood. He had made a decision to stop dealing and told his sister's boyfriend about his choice. He revealed that he felt like a free man not having to watch his back and worrying about the police.

However, it is not always possible to escape your circumstances and when he returned to the estate, trouble erupted and 'Steven' was accused of being part of it. Whilst he insists that he was on the periphery, 'just a look out', he was 'tooled up' and others saw his weapon. A file was being built on him and his family members by the Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) team and a whole raft of penalties ensued which resulted in an ASB Contract. The project worked with the ASB team to present a more balanced view and showed them how much progress 'Steven' had made. This was taken on board and a mixture of hard and softer tactics were employed to get the message across.

In the meantime the project set about identifying opportunities for further training and employment. After an unsuccessful interview at the local Connexions it was clear that more creative measures were called for. Through a friendship network it was established that a local Property Developer who had volunteered for Positive Futures and driven minibuses was willing to take a chance on 'Steven'. His progress was phenomenal and after a few weeks the employer had reported that not only does he have the right attitude, he actually has aptitude for the work and is becoming more and more useful. If it continues it could mean an increase from three days to five, and a decent wage with training both on and of the job.

Recently 'Steven' popped in to tell a story of how he had been stopped by the local Inspector. The Inspector commented that he had not seen him around, and when 'Steven' hurriedly tried to explain, the Inspector laughed and said 'I know, I am delighted. Positive Futures told me what you are doing and we are so happy for you lad, carry on, nice one'. When he is not working, 'Steven' is still involved with football matches with the Police, and is set to join an NRF funded residential programme for very hard to reach young people involved in crime, ASB or with Anger issues, as a Positive Role Model.

Whilst the YJB report itself identifies a number of ‘effective programme strategies’ and the particular risk factors they address, Positive Futures provides an example of the ways in which a single programme or project can address these factors ‘across the board’. In Table 5 below we have attempted to identify the ways in which Positive Futures might impact upon each of the risk factors identified by the YJB.

Whilst each project does not address all of the risk factors identified here, there are examples of each of these contributions across the Positive Futures programme as a whole. With further evaluation of the impact of individual project interventions against each of these criteria, it should be possible to prepare guidance to projects on how to provide a coherent framework of protection against each of the identified risk factors.

YJB risk factors	PF protective factors
Family	
Poor parental supervision and discipline	Surrogate supervision and discipline
Conflict	Supervised, ordered environments
History of criminal activity	Involvement of former offenders
Parental attitudes that condone anti-social and criminal behaviour	Intergenerational work, and peer mentoring
Low income	Free/low cost activity in locality
Poor housing	Alternative places to go
School	
Low achievement beginning in primary school	Alternative markers of achievement
Aggressive behaviour (including bullying)	Protection from and challenge to aggressive behaviour
Lack of commitment (including truancy)	Alternative education
School disorganisation	Structured activities

Table 5: Risk and protective factors relating to Positive Futures (cont. on next page)

YJB risk factors	PF protective factors
Community	
Living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood	Investment of resources
Disorganisation and neglect	Active community development
Availability of drugs	Alternative sources of excitement
High population turnover, and lack of neighbourhood attachment	Reasons to stay
Personal	
Hyperactivity and Impulsivity	Activity based management of impulse
Low intelligence and cognitive impairment	Alternative sources of development
Alienation and lack of social commitment	Positive involvement
Attitudes that condone offending and drug misuse	Drug education and peer mentoring
Early involvement in crime and drug misuse	Early intervention
Friendships with peers involved in crime and drug misuse	Alternative peer networks

Table 5: Risk and protective factors relating to Positive Futures

Positive Futures: Where Every Child Matters?

3

The focus on facilitating young people's progression through an emphasis on support rather than coercion is now a cornerstone of government policy following the publication of Every Child Matters (ECM): Change for Children¹¹. This policy document suggests a 'new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19', the aim of which is for every child to have the support they need to:

Be healthy
Stay safe
Enjoy and achieve
Make a positive contribution
Achieve economic well-being

In this context an elaborate outcomes framework has been developed in order to facilitate the ability of children's and young people's services to evidence their success against this agenda. From the moment of its publication it was clear that Positive Futures projects were exceptionally well placed to address this framework.

At a structural level, they are all involved in the kind of collaborative working and information sharing that ECM demands whilst at the delivery level projects meet a whole variety of elements of the ECM outcomes framework.

The programme has been quick to recognise its fit with this agenda and so has ensured that the ECM outcomes framework lies at the heart of the new monitoring and evaluation system. The SPRS embraces a tool with which to upload and 'tag' a wide variety of evidence against different elements of the ECM outcomes framework. Furthermore, it provides the facility to track the journeys of individual participants whilst also enabling the recording of specific outcomes and qualifications.

¹¹ DfES (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, London: HMSO

Having placed assessment of the programme against the ECM outcomes at the heart of its approach, not surprisingly, Positive Futures has also produced specific guidance on the programme's fit with this agenda. Indeed this guidance asserts that the programme:

enshrines the five ECM objectives in everything it does, from inspiring its young people to make the most of their lives, to working with other like-minded organisations to ensure there is joined-up thinking at every level¹².

¹² Crime Concern (2007) *Every Child Matters – a guide*, London: Crime Concern, p. 3

This bullishness is in many ways borne out by the results of our evaluation which reveals that over 3,000 files containing qualitative evidence were entered into the SPRS between October 2006 and March 2007, each of which was tagged in terms of its contribution to different elements of the ECM outcomes framework.

In total over 26,000 associations of evidence were made against this framework which are represented in Figure 3 below in the form of a 'tag cloud'. The illustration shows those categories 'tagged' against qualitative evidence more often in larger fonts.

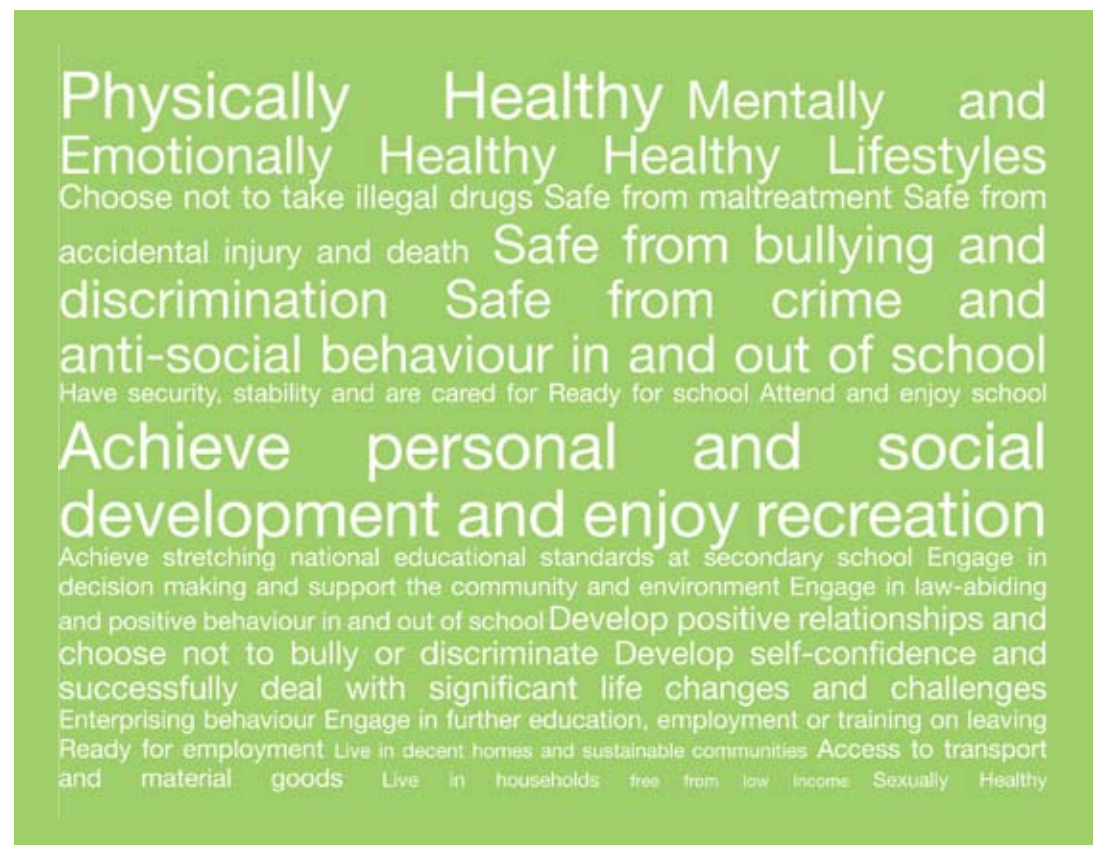


Figure 3: Positive Futures and Every Child Matters 'tag cloud'
NB tag clouds present an aggregated visual representation of all the 'tags' or keywords that projects have assigned to evidence uploaded to SPRS. The size of the 'tag' reflects greater volumes of occurrence. We have only included words that appeared more than 12 times in the SPRS in any of the tag clouds presented in this report.

What this image reveals is the centrality of three areas of the ECM framework – ‘be healthy’, ‘stay safe’ and ‘make a positive contribution’ – to projects’ understanding of what they are delivering. Given the programme’s foundations within the provision of appropriate and attractive activities with which to engage young people it is a little surprising that the ‘enjoy and achieve’ strand is not more prominent across the full range of sub categories, although the specific category of ‘achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation’ is the second most ‘tagged’ overall. Furthermore, the evidence presented here already reveals the extent to which Positive Futures is making strong contributions across the full range of ECM outcomes, with the lowest number of ‘tags’ for any of the 24 sub-categories used being 89 and the largest being the 2,154 for Physically Healthy.

Positive Futures is making strong contributions across the full range of ECM outcomes

Projects were also asked to enter their own keywords in ‘free text’ boxes about the qualitative evidence they entered. This re-emphasises the strength of the programme across a range of fields which are shown in relative importance in the ‘tag cloud’ presented in Figure 4 below. In this novel representation, words which relate to notions of enjoyment, achievement and positive contributions feature much more prominently.



Figure 4: The Positive Futures ‘tag cloud’

This evidence of links across all ECM components has been highlighted as good practice in the DfES guide to targeted youth support which quotes Keith Moore, Director for Children and Young People and targeted youth support pathfinder sponsor for Gateshead:

The trick is to see links across all the Every Child Matters components alongside a commitment to prevention¹⁴.

¹⁴ DfES (2007) *Targeted youth support – a guide*, www.ecm.gov.uk/IG00206

Further evidence of Positive Futures' understanding of this broad approach is also provided by the range of partners engaged in the programme, many of which are represented at around half or more of the projects, as demonstrated in Table 6 below.

Type of partner	Frequency	Percentage of projects
Other local authority departments	150	71.0
Police	125	70.2
Youth Offending Teams	85	66.6
Alternative education providers	126	59.6
Childrens and Youth Services	83	57.9
Connexions	68	56.1
Sports and recreation delivery agencies and venues	160	55.2
DAATs	70	48.2
Community Associations	115	47.4
Other partners	86	45.6
Schools	109	44.7
Leisure Services	60	38.6
Youth groups	73	37.7
YIP/YISP	34	25.4
Health Authority/PCT	29	22.8
Housing Associations	30	18.4
Social Services	17	14.0
Fire Service	13	11.4
Corporate partners	20	10.5

Table 6: Positive Futures project partners

In many respects the very location of projects in disadvantaged areas suffering from significant problems related to themes highlighted by ECM ensures a close fit between the programme and this agenda. In this sense it is possible to provide alternative representations of the relationship through the use of mapping technology whereby the residential postcodes of participants and location of venues used by projects can be mapped against particular indices of deprivation. In Figure 5 below these data have been mapped in relation to health deprivation by super output area in the locality of one Positive Futures project. The areas shaded darker green score higher on the indices of health deprivation and by plotting the participants and venues associated with the project it is possible to reveal how it is delivering in areas with the most significant problems¹⁵.

¹⁵ Single dots may represent multiple participants.

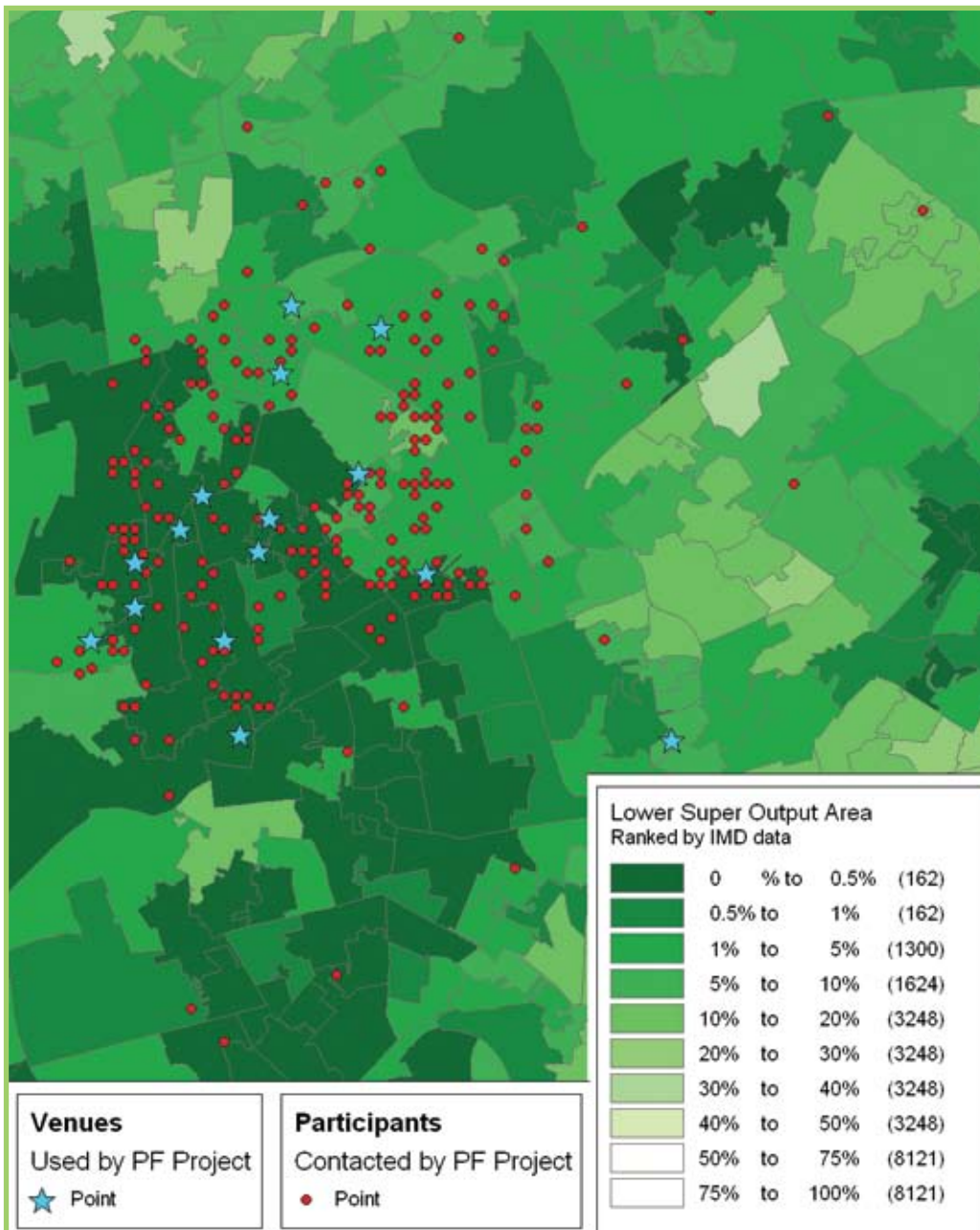


Figure 5: Positive Futures participants and Indices of Deprivation (Health)

Projects also revealed the detail of their own contributions to this agenda through the qualitative case studies that they produced in relation to different elements of the ECM outcome categories, two of which we showcase here.

Make a positive contribution

The Girls Group is run in partnership with the local Youth Inclusion Project. Recently, the group learned face painting skills with a view to engaging with younger people in the area. During the summer of 2006 this led to their involvement in a Surestart fun-day to mark the project opening. On the day, the 6 girls who took part worked as a team, communicating well and scheduling in breaks for each other and staff. It was such a success that they have now been asked to take part in another fun-day being run for the opening of a local community centre.



The event was truly an inspiration to these girls, most of who are out of education or only attend on a part-time basis. It helped to build their self esteem so much that, after discussions with the girls, a bid was submitted to Awards for All to develop the work. The bid was successful and will allow the work to be developed to include a wider range of activities, ultimately leading to the completion of their silver Youth Achievement Award.

They will now cover issues including:

Organising a community project

Art and crafts

Personal health and safety

Independent living

Drama and dance

These are all issues the girls wanted to cover, with a view to volunteering in sessions for younger children in the area, including the project's own junior Youth Club, the work of the Youth Crime Officer who visits local primary schools as well as other play groups. Indeed the girls have already planned and started work on a Summer Fete, for which they will be designing the publicity, raising funds from local sponsors, running stalls and producing products and resources for the stalls.

Achieve economic well-being

Preparing young people for work is something that another project attempts to address through a number of initiatives. The process is often slow and fraught with complexities but when it works there is little that is more rewarding as revealed by 'Odo's' journey:

Sport & Learning Course (Feb 03 - Aug 03)

Health And Safety At Work / PSHE Workshops (Citizenship, Social Skills, Drug Awareness & Sexual Health) / Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA) / First Aid

Sport & Learning (Sept 03 - June 04)

Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA) / START IT (2nd version) / First Aid / Food Hygiene / PSHE workshops (Citizenship, Social Skills, Drug Awareness & Sexual Health)

NVQ Level 2 Training Course 1st Year (Sept 04-Sept 05)

Soccer Parent / Level 1 Key skills in Application of Number / Level 1 Key skills in Communication / Level 1 Key skills in Information and Communication Technology / Child Protection and Best Practice / FA Emergency Aid Course / FA Level 1 Certificate in Coaching Football / Industry and Organisation Awareness Level 2 / NVQ Level 2 in Coaching, Teaching and Instructing

Trainee Course 2nd Year (Sept 05-sept 06)

FA Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Football (inc. First Aid, Child Protection & Laws of the Game) / OCR Level 1 Certificate for IT Users / Create an E-presentation / OCR Level 1 Certificate for IT Users / File management and E-document production

A Training & Education programme such as the one offered by the Sport & Learning project (pictured below) can equip an individual with qualifications but there is still a gap between this point and employment opportunities. As such once a young person has been trained the project recognises the importance of offering volunteer and employment opportunities and 'Odo' is now working up to twelve hours each week, joining the seven members of the twelve person Positive Futures team who have come through such initiatives.



Positive Futures: Building communities?

4

What the stories produced by Positive Futures projects begin to demonstrate are the ways in which an individually based approach towards personal support and development built on projects' capacity to engage young people has the potential to generate useable and culturally appropriate 'social capital'. In recent years this concept, as espoused by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*¹⁶, has come to dominate theoretical thinking about the social potential of sport and leisure programmes¹⁷. Focusing on the sport of ten pin bowling, Putnam observes that the American leagues of his own youth, which were characterised by *teams* of players, are no longer the dominant form of participation and that people now increasingly 'bowl alone' with established friends and family. In support of his thesis he uses evidence to reveal a marked decline in social connectedness, or 'social capital', over the past half century. For his critics though, social capital cannot be understood in isolation but is indelibly linked with social background and context such that it has two decisive features: on the one hand it is a tangible resource derived from family, friendship or other kinds of social networks whilst on the other, it has a symbolic dimension, which contrives to hide networks of power associated with familiarity¹⁸. As Blackshaw and Long put it:

¹⁶ Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster

¹⁷ See Nicholson, M. & Hoye, R. (Eds.) (2008) *Sport and Social Capital*, Oxford: Elsevier: Butterworth-Heinemann

in terms of sport and leisure policy, [this]...has the effect of normalising the marginality of the poor who are treated as inferior and denied the kind of trust that they could manage public resources for themselves. This in turn not only limits their opportunities for social mobility, but also naturalises their feelings of inadequacy¹⁹.

In this context what maybe significant about the more effective Positive Futures projects is their efforts to engage disadvantaged young people through a respect for the cultural contexts in which they live, whilst also striving to open new avenues of opportunity and transition gateways.

Whilst conventional policy 'speak' might 'translate' the ways of living and thinking of marginalised groups into its 'own' language, effective Positive Futures projects operate as 'cultural intermediaries' which understand young people on their own terms whilst also acting as a 'go-between' providing access to the 'mainstream'²⁰.

In this sense, at their best, they are able to open up possibilities, provide guidance and, crucially, demystify mainstream society rather than merely provide a fleeting cache of 'social capital'.

¹⁸ Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*, London: RKP.

¹⁹ Blackshaw & Long (2005) 'What's the Big Idea? A Critical Exploration of the Concept of Social Capital and its Incorporation into Leisure Policy Discourse', *Leisure Studies*, 24 (3): 239 – 58

²⁰ Crabbe, T. (2007) Reaching the 'hard to reach': engagement, relationship building and social control in sport based social inclusion work, *International Journal for Sport Management and Marketing*, 2, 1/2

Working it out

'Tony' was referred to Positive Futures through Connexions in September 2006. He had been expelled from two schools in the past year and has been diagnosed as suffering from ADHD, OCD and Autism. When he came to the project he was not receiving any medication to control his disorders.

He had been told about the project and came down to a gym session voluntarily and was given an induction to show him how to operate the equipment safely. When he started the session he only wanted to work on the exercise bikes, as he felt too intimidated to use anything else, stating "people are watching me and I don't like it".



Nevertheless he started to attend the gym session on a regular basis and soon became more confident, despite it taking some time for him to get used to performing in front of people. In order to build up his confidence staff began participating in the sessions with him to give him some competition and incentive. Gradually 'Tony' became more active and started to talk about his life.

This often included discussions about school and he explained that he'd "been kicked out of two schools already coz I kept smacking people". Indeed 'Tony' often showed signs of anger towards other young people of a similar age even when with the project. So he was invited to attend a boxing session to help him with social interaction in a structured environment where it was explained that it would be beneficial to get to know the other boxers.

He is now the most regular project attendee. He arrives early to the gym so he can start on time, he also arrives early to the boxing session to help the coach and staff set up the sports hall. The number of activity sessions has now increased to 3 sessions and 'Tony' attends them all, helping the other young people who are new to the scheme.

He is also having regular one to one sessions with staff to address wider domestic issues and his education. This has contributed to him applying to attend a special school, about which he is positive, feeling that the social skills he has learnt at Positive Futures will help him make new friends and cope with being back in full time education. His mum has also reported that since he became involved with Positive Futures there has been a dramatic change in his behaviour. He is now more confident, feels better about himself and his future and is less aggressive towards his peers.

In the context of Putnam's distinction between bonding (ties between like people) and bridging (inter-group) forms of social capital, evidence of the programme's capacity to open social gateways is provided by the wider commitment to driving participants' engagement forward in this way. Based on a range of indicators the SPRS identifies five 'levels of engagement' for young people attending the projects. These, in effect, provide a proxy assessment of the programme's contribution to participants' bonding and bridging capital.

Level 1 Disengagement	Level 2 Curiosity	Level 3 Involvement	Level 4 Achievement	Level 5 Autonomy
Sit out and ignore activity	Watch activity	Join in with others	Complete tasks	Gain relevant qualifications
Encourage disputes	Dip in and out	Respond to instruction	Communicate with staff outside of activity	Initiate ideas
Distract others	Ask questions	Talk about experiences	Make positive statements re. work	Help plan and run activities
Walk out	Listen to staff and peers	Enjoy good relations with others	Celebrate work publicly	Advise and educate peers
Make negative comments	Comment on activity	Share facilities	Make connections beyond the project	Praise work of others
Destroy/damage facilities	Talk to others about activity	Handle conflict and confrontation with maturity	Receive accreditation	Manage conflict between others
	Try activity on own	Attend regularly		Volunteer
				Gain employment
Other ²¹				

Table 7: Substance engagement and progression matrix. Based on learning from youth work progression models and the engagement matrix developed by Darts. See Hirst, E. & Robertshaw, D. (2003) *Breaking the cycle of failure – examining the impact of arts activity on attending Pupil Referral Units in Doncaster*, Doncaster: Darts

As participants move across different levels of engagement from the resistant, disconnected and self constraining disengagement of Level 1 to the self directed and empowered autonomy of Level 5, they connect more strongly with wider and wider circles of contacts. In this way and as illustrated in Table 8, for those who remain engaged, Positive Futures can help to build both breadth and depth into project related friendships, networks and opportunities rather than just access to 'more people'.

²¹ Projects are encouraged to add additional appropriate indicators

Engagement	Breadth of contact	Depth of contact
Disengagement	Participants	Fleeting, hostile
Curiosity	Participants, delivery staff	Transitory, interested
Involvement	Participants, delivery staff, volunteers & office staff	Ongoing, engaged
Achievement	Participants, delivery staff, volunteers, office staff, partners & funders	Celebrated, committed
Autonomy	Other projects, colleges & employers	Mutually rewarding, respectful

Table 8: Engagement and social capital

The engagement levels recorded by projects during the initial period of operation of the SPRS provide some encouraging signs, with clear evidence of participants' engagement with the programme moving in a positive direction.

Over 6% of participants moved up 1 level and nearly 2% moved up 2 levels during the reporting period. However, given that projects had only been using the SPRS for six months and many of the new participants will only have had one engagement level set at the time of reporting, we would prefer to regard this data as providing a programme wide baseline against which to assess progress through subsequent reporting periods.

5

Positive Futures: Raising participation?

There has long been strong support for Positive Futures within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which recognised the contribution of sport to tackling social exclusion in its *PAT 10* report to the government's Social Exclusion Unit in 1999²³. Most recently the former Minister of State for Sport Richard Caborn gave a ringing endorsement of the programme stating that he 'would like to see [it] rolled out to every community in the country'²⁴.

Indeed Sport England, which has responsibility for the promotion of grassroots and community sport, were one of the original partners in Positive Futures. Yet whilst the Minister for Sport has been clear in his support for the programme in terms of the contribution it can make to a wide range of government policies, the rationale for Sport England giving greater support lies in the contribution it can make to the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for which it is responsible. In *Knowing the Score* we attempted to outline some of the social benefits of sport by highlighting the ways in which it can provide spaces in which participants may:

Enter unfamiliar locations and meet new people

Talk and reflect upon relationships and performances

Be encouraged by coaches and peers to take personal and mutual responsibility, thus refining their sense of both individual potentials and mutual dependencies

Experience strong and open inter-generational contact, thus fostering more respectful forms of interaction

Be encouraged to recognise the importance of partnership, consensus and reliance on others through their own experience

Feel able to freely submit to the 'rules of the game' and the time-limited disciplinary regimes of particular sports²⁵

²³ DCMS (1999) *Policy Action Team 10: Report to the Social Exclusion Unit – Arts and sport*, London: HMSO

²⁴ http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Minister_Speeches/Richard_Caborn/dcmsspeech_richard+caborn_longest_serving_minister.htm

²⁵ Crabbe, T. (2006) Op. cit. p.17

However, the DCMS Sport Division, to which Sport England reports, does not have specific targets around the use of sport to address broad social agendas beyond the issue of childhood obesity. Its Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets relate primarily to the raising of participation levels.

More specifically PSA Target 3 requires, by 2008, an increase in the number of people who participate in active sports at least 12 times a year of 3 per cent, and an increase in the number who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity level sport, at least three times a week of 3 per cent. A further shared PSA Target between DCMS and DfES, through the PE School Sport and Club Links (PESCLL) scheme, commits to providing all young people with access to two hours of high quality sport outside of school hours.

Whilst Positive Futures is not a sport development programme or primarily concerned with participation rates per se it is worth considering the contribution it makes to this agenda.

In a context where Sport England's 'Active People' data reveals the extent to which people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in sport and physical activity, the impact of programmes targeting areas of disadvantage must be taken into account.

Sport England's Active People Survey found that Regular participation in sport and active recreation, as defined by PSA Target 3, varies across different socio-demographic groups in the following ways:

National average	21.0%
Highest socio-economic groups	25.1%
Lowest socio-economic groups	16.3%
Black and other minority ethnic groups	18.6%

Table 9: Participation in sport and active recreation

Source: Active People Diagnostic

When considered in terms of organised competitive sport the findings are even more stark, with 93% of those interviewed who had either never worked or were long term unemployed not having participated in the last twelve months.

All	85.00%
NS SEC 1: Higher managerial/professional occupations	76.80%
NS SEC 1.1: Large employers/higher managerial occupations	76.30%
NS SEC 1.2: Higher professional occupations	80.40%
NS SEC 2: Lower managerial and professional occupations	83.40%
NS SEC 3: Intermediate occupations	88.50%
NS SEC 4: Small employers and own account workers	84.00%
NS SEC 5: Lower supervisory and technical occupations	85.20%
NS SEC 6: Semi-routine occupations	89.70%
NS SEC 7: Routine occupations	89.30%
NS SEC 8: Never worked and long term unemployed	93.30%

Table 10: Not taken part in organised competitive sports in last 12 months

Source: Active People Diagnostic

In this sense the location of Positive Futures projects in areas amongst the 20% most deprived in the country, provides a significant opportunity to enhance participation rates amongst those sections of the population who are currently least engaged.

Critically, whilst Positive Futures is not a sport development programme, it does make contact with large numbers of young people in these localities. It does so principally through use of a range of sports and physical activities but crucially, and in contrast to many diversionary activity programmes, seeks to sustain young people's engagement with those activities. Through the course of the six month period from October 2006 to April 2007 Positive Futures projects recorded the following headline participation statistics:

Total number of sports based sessions	12,624 ²⁶	²⁶ A further 3340 sessions were recorded with unspecified activities
Total number of young people involved	29,617	
Total number of attendances	244,670	Table 11: Participation in Positive Futures activities
Total contact hours with young people	517,086	

Perhaps even more significant is that 76% of those currently engaged by the programme have been in contact for periods in excess of 12 weeks. This demonstrates the potential that the programme has for sustaining young people's involvement which is critical to any impact on the government's PSA targets for participation in sport and physical activity.

From participation to performance

'T' was born and raised in Aston. He had been part of a gang that hang around the local shops outside of school hours and generate nuisance in the area. He was taken in by a community football club commissioned by Connexions to deliver on Positive Futures. 'T' was not really a special player but was a regular attendee despite being one of the more difficult and troublesome participants to work with. In 2005 he was assigned a Mentor and began receiving coaching from the advanced coaches thanks to further Connexions NRF funding.

On many occasions the project considered suspending him following damage to property, bullying and other poor behaviour but at the same time the standard of his football improved. This was recognised when he went to West Bromwich Albion for trials although he was not selected in the context of his inability to attend on time and his lack of proper equipment. After this setback 'T's behaviour worsened and he became associated with the locally notorious 'Johnson Crew', was suspended from school and started getting in to trouble with the police.

This year the project increased the work it was doing with him which resulted in an improvement in his attitude and a greater determination to move forward with his football which was rewarded with a further opportunity to attend trials with West Brom... In December 2006 he walked into the offices and announced he had been signed by the club!



Although the gender bias, with 74% of Positive Futures participants being male, is a continuing concern, the range of activities that participants are engaging with provides further evidence of a determination amongst projects to be imaginative in their efforts to reach out to non traditional participants and many projects have achieved a far better gender balance. In some cases girls and young women are in the majority, providing important learning for others to utilise.

Activity	Number of Sessions	% of Sessions
Football	5288	28.39
Multi-Sports	1440	7.73
Other Sports	1287	6.91
Basketball	1180	6.33
Health and Fitness	885	4.75
Other Activities	712	3.82
Issue Based Session	565	3.03
Dance	511	2.74
Accredited Course	464	2.49
Outdoor Pursuits	429	2.30
Boxing	360	1.93
Support, Information and Advice	359	1.93
Arts and Media	305	1.64
Swimming	262	1.41
Educational Sessions	240	1.29
Music/Djing	229	1.23
Substance Misuse Education	182	0.98
Youth Work	140	0.75
Self Defence	100	0.54
Cricket	95	0.51
Residentials	80	0.43
Water Sports	41	0.22
Netball	34	0.18
Unspecified	3340	17.93

Table 12: Range of activity sessions delivered by Positive Futures

Increasingly this range of activity is being complemented by efforts to both reward performance and encourage participants to gain coaching qualifications themselves, thus generating greater capacity in target neighbourhoods for the provision of activities and lasting commitments from those gaining qualifications.

Table 13: Recorded qualifications by Positive Futures participants.

²⁷These figures undoubtedly represent an underestimate in a context where the programme has only recently emphasised the importance of accreditation and as some projects are not yet making full use of the associated function within the SPRS

Category of Young Person	Number²⁷
Sports and activity performance	442
Academic/vocational	416
Sports coaching	272
Other	238
Total	1368

Indeed a number of projects have now begun to create the environment in which young people can themselves use these skills to take responsibility for the organisation of activities as illustrated in the following case study.

Everybody dance now

8 girls taking part in the weekly dance sessions provided through Positive Futures recently organised a fund-raising weekend to generate money for the project. The target was to raise £1000.

The group, who called themselves Fusion, sat down with staff from the project to organise the weekend which comprised of 3 mini events targeting different groups within the local community. Throughout the discussions, the girls had to think about various issues such as budget, marketing, ticket sales, programmes, numbers for each event and staffing. Whilst they all went well the girls also had to learn about the problems associated with organising activities such as people not turning up, people forgetting money, and trying to control lots of young children!

The showcase, was a real community event. A chance to show family and friends the dances that the older girls had recently performed at the British Isles Street Dance event, and a chance for the younger members of the troupe to gain their first experience of performing on stage. Between the staff and the 8 girls, 170 tickets were sold at £4.00 per head. During the performance the girls were also selling raffle tickets, for prizes donated by various people.

In total the weekend raised £930.00, just £70.00 short of the target and will be spent on taking a group from the troupe to perform at a West End theatre in September 2007. Since then the same girls have decided to apply to the Youth Opportunity Fund and are now regularly making decisions in collaboration with the staff. They have emerged as role models for the rest of the group with three of them now working for Positive Futures and another two volunteering.



6

Positive Futures: A new approach to positive activities for young people?

Whilst in previous reflections on Positive Futures the long history of the use of sport to address social problems has been noted²⁸, given the programme's emphasis on personal rather than performance development it is vital to consider its emergence in the context of a wider range of social disciplines than sport alone. Almost fifty years ago, at the outset of the 1960s, the *Albermarle Report* was published²⁹. This highly influential piece of work helped set in motion a process of reform and rapid expansion of youth services which appeared to be motivated by what we would now recognise as a recurring popular concern with problematic behaviour by young people. The Report spoke of 'a new climate of crime and delinquency' which was regarded as being 'very much a youth problem' and, more particularly a problem associated with 'working class' youth³⁰.

By way of response the Report emphasised the importance of a developmental approach which, in keeping with the mood of the times, talked of offering 'individual young people...opportunities of various kinds...to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit'³¹. What was striking about this outlook was its emphasis on a model concerned with the *individual* development of young people as opposed to a broader sense of collective or state led transformation which had characterised social policy in the immediate post war period. Interestingly this perspective was itself wrapped up in a wider emphasis on the role of recreation in 'promoting the physical, intellectual and moral development necessary to turn the teenager into the responsible adult citizen'³².

²⁸ Crabbe, T. (2006) Op. cit

²⁹ Ministry of Education (1960)
The Youth Service in England and Wales, London, HMSO

³⁰ Ibid. p.17

³¹ Ibid. p.36

³² Ibid. p.103

However, whilst we might recognise the pertinence of this outlook to much contemporary thinking it is something of a paradox that the issues Albermarle set out to tackle were wrapped up in wider social and economic changes which lay well beyond the parameters of short term state intervention. These changes related to an amalgam of post-Second World War social, political and economic shifts which prompted a cultural transformation characterised by ‘new freedoms, new levels of consumption and new possibilities for individual choice’³³. Within the resultant ‘consumer society’ social class has come to be seen as less of a barrier to personal fulfillment but, consequently social inequality is now also more easily perceived as an individual matter. As the recently published IPPR report *Freedom’s Orphans* suggests:

For those with the capacity to take advantage of these changes, typically the affluent, expanding opportunities led to improved outcomes. But for those without, events left them further behind than ever³⁴.

In the context of the enduring fears about the state of Britain’s youth that this realisation has prompted, an almost unprecedented level of interest in the future of youth work and initiatives targeted at young people has recently emerged. Perhaps for the first time since the early 1960s there is a general recognition - extending across the political spectrum - that the ways in which we, as a society, understand and engage with young people are in need of urgent review. Not surprisingly, some of the positions articulated and associated changes in practice have not gone unchallenged given that once sacred principles are now being brought into question.

Youth work as a ‘discipline’ might classically be defined as the personal and social development of young people through informal education. Whilst there are different forms of youth work - such as outreach, activity based, faith based etc. - several common principles are generally seen to underpin and distinguish it from other forms of social intervention. Conventionally these have included voluntary, collective participation by young people within their free time and the development of negotiated relationships between young people and youth workers, within which young people are able to exercise a degree of power.

³³ Garland, D. & Sparks, R. (2000) ‘Criminology, Social Theory, and the Challenge of Our Times’, in D. Garland & R. Sparks (Eds.), *Criminology and Social Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.16

³⁴ Margo, J. & Dixon, M. with Pearce, N. & Reed, H. (2006) *Freedom’s Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World*, London: IPPR

These principles have recently faced a significant challenge from developments within wider policy arenas. For whilst youth work has traditionally been associated with the development of young people's potential on the basis of their present needs, this contrasts with 'problem-based interventions with individuals which derive from a deficit model...and... respond to youth as a 'risky' time of 'becoming' rather than as a time of 'being'.³⁵

The tension surrounding this development relates to the point that interventions which respond to young people as a 'problem' necessarily imply a degree of targeting which conflicts with the principles of universalism and voluntarism associated with conventional styles of youth work.

The acuteness of this contradiction was exposed by the publication of the Government's *Transforming Youth Work* report several years ago³⁶. This initiative promised greater resources for youth work, but on the basis of a model of accountability related to recorded and accredited outcomes - in contrast to the informal educational models more traditionally associated with youth work. This approach has since been reinforced by the guidance surrounding Every Child Matters and the related youth policy initiative 'Youth Matters' which have transformed the policy contexts in which youth work is to be delivered.

Interestingly, rather than this being the last word on the matter, in some respects these developments fuelled the debate which has continued to evolve and is increasingly moving to the centre of the political stage. Indeed it is out of this context that the highly influential *Freedom's Orphans* emerged to provide a broader based analysis which ultimately argues that youth policy needs to be rethought on the basis of 'a more fundamental shift in our thinking'³⁷.

The report acknowledges that a disproportionate level of anti social behaviour, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol use can be found amongst young people from lower socio-economic groups.

This, they suggest, can be related to trends within the economic structure from the late 1970s onwards which left young people more dependent on their own initiative and the possession of personal and social skills required for successful employment within the burgeoning service sector.

³⁵Spence, J., Devanney, C. & Noonan, K. (2007) *Youth Work: Voices of Practice*, Leicester: National Youth Agency

³⁶DfES (2001) *Transforming Youth Work: Developing youth work for young people*, London: HMSO

³⁷Margo, J. et. al. (2006) Op. cit. p.xi

Making the link back to childhood, perhaps the key point it makes is that:

Better-off children are much more likely to attend constructive, organised or educational activities, which research shows are associated with greater personal and social development, while poorer children are more likely to spend time ‘hanging out’ with friends or watching TV – activities associated with poorer personal and social development.³⁸

From this perspective, the emphasis is now placed firmly on the need for provision of structured meaningful support extending beyond much of the remit of conventional practice within statutory youth services. Specifically in terms of the provision and purpose of positive activities for young people the report has called for: ³⁸ibid., p.viii

The direction of funding towards **long-running** constructive activities that promote regular attendance

Structured activity programmes with clear **end goals** and defined roles for young people

An element of **compulsion** to young people’s participation in positive extra-curricular activities

The opportunity to participate in a **choice** of structured, positive activities free from barriers to participation

Mapping to identify gaps and funding to develop the **facilities** and provision of positive activities in areas in which they are not available

Support for charities and **third sector** organisations that work to develop young people’s personal and social skills and set up conflict resolution schemes

Strategies to promote **collective efficacy**, rather than merely relying on increasing trust and social capital.

In some ways these findings build on the earlier IPPR study *Passing Time*, which invoked the notion of ‘a ‘Sure Progress’ or ‘Sure Futures’ programme for teenagers which would echo the Sure Start model and...combine activity with a range of support, advice and interventions’³⁹. Whilst no such national scheme has been forthcoming, the parallel with the distinction between a ‘diversionary’ and ‘developmental’ Positive Futures approach highlighted in *Knowing the Score* and illustrated in Table 14 below is clear.

³⁹ Edwards, L. & Hatch, B. (2003) *Passing Time: A report about young people and communities*, London: ippr

Diversionsary Approach	Developmental Approach
Providing alternative ‘beneficial’ activity to anti-social behaviour, substance misuse etc.	Using activity as a gateway to ongoing personal development
Fixed outcomes as targets (e.g. reduction in crime figures)	Open ended outcomes (e.g. the ‘distance travelled’ of participants)
Mass participation as indicator of success	Quality of engagement as indicator of success
Belief in intrinsic value of the activity itself (e.g. sport, physical activity)	Focus on value of wider personal development which might be facilitated by the use of activity rather than a belief in the activities intrinsic value
Short or fixed term delivery	Ongoing, open ended delivery
Structured schemes of work or programs of coaching	Flexible, organic, local development and readily adaptable activities
Authoritarian, based on discipline	Mutual respect, based on trust
Doing something programme leaders think is worthwhile	Doing something the young person thinks is worthwhile

Table 14: Distinguishing Positive Futures from diversionary approaches

From diversion to development

This evolution of Positive Futures towards a more sophisticated model of crime prevention is well illustrated by developments involving one project located within an NDC area in the East Midlands. In July 2001, the area was awarded Sport Action Zone (SAZ) status with a condition that there needed to be a sports regeneration consultation to clearly identify the needs within the locality and how best placed sport would be to support those needs. The consultation revealed concerns about:

Vandalism, anti social behaviour and nuisance

Bored youngsters on the streets

The level of crime, especially burglary and car crime

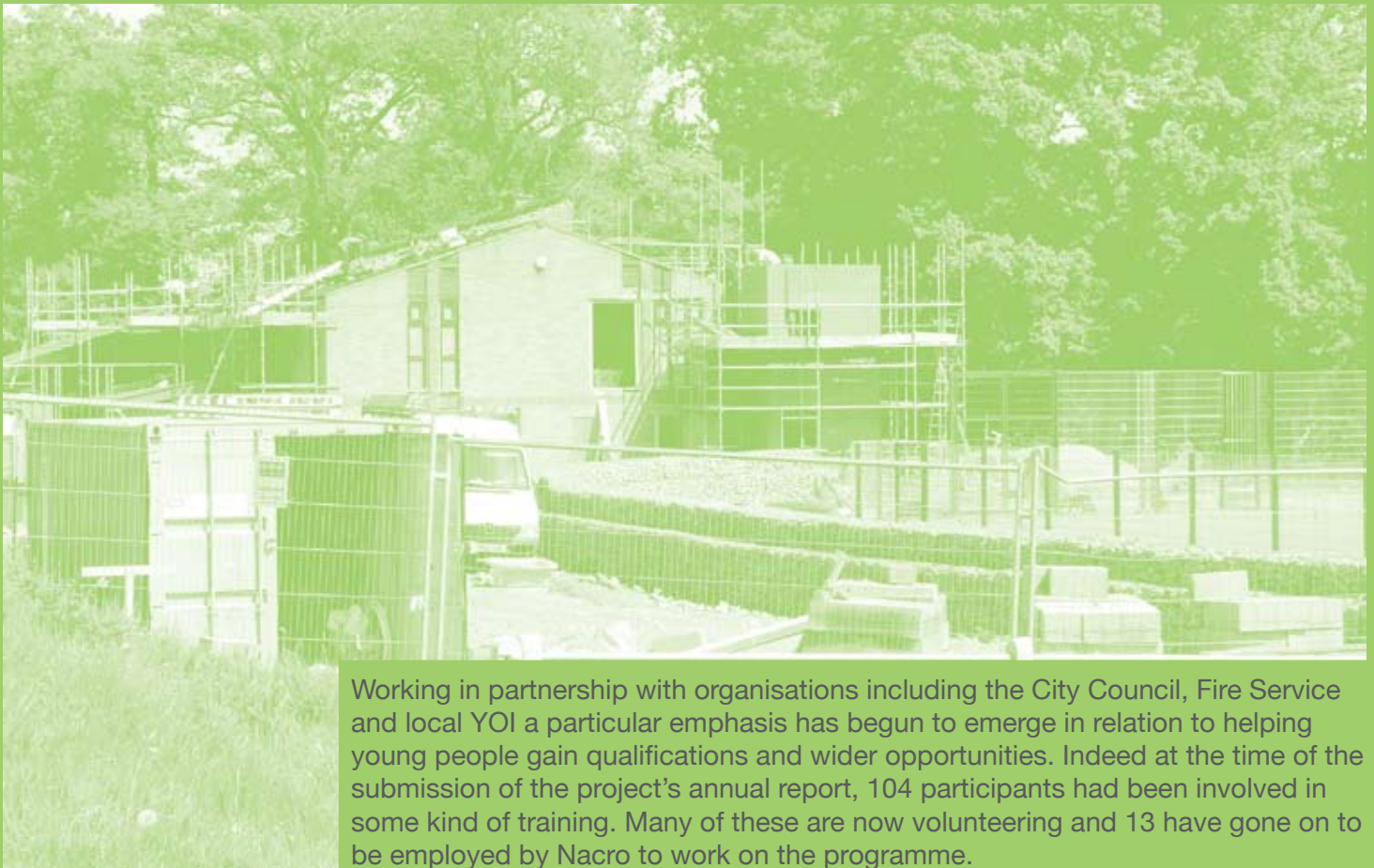
Burnt out cars and buildings

The fear of crime at home and on the streets

Domestic violence

Concerns about policing

The SCORE 4 Sport Programme evolved out of this consultation process and was initially devised as a diversionary approach driven by a need to reduce crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour by engaging directly with young people to reduce the potential for boredom. Supported by the physical improvements enabled by NDC investment and bringing together funding from the Football Foundation, Positive Futures and Positive Activities for Young People the project has now broadened its approach.



Working in partnership with organisations including the City Council, Fire Service and local YOJ a particular emphasis has begun to emerge in relation to helping young people gain qualifications and wider opportunities. Indeed at the time of the submission of the project's annual report, 104 participants had been involved in some kind of training. Many of these are now volunteering and 13 have gone on to be employed by Nacro to work on the programme.

The Multi Use Game Area (The Cage) and Youth House being re-developed as part of the Braunstone New Deal and Sport Action Zone

Despite all of the initial outcomes relating to delivery and participant involvement being exceeded, the project now recognises that social problems can not be changed in the short term on the basis of direct activity provision alone. The team are now turning their focus to work with young people who find it harder to 'move on' through the development of a sports based 'Every Child Matters' programme which uses sports mentoring as the engagement tool. The programme will continue to engage large numbers of young people through sports activities but has now broadened its focus in line with a strategy of enhancing protective factors which embraces:

Activity provision

Coach education

Consultation

Volunteering

Holiday programmes

Outreach work

Mentoring

⁴⁰ HM Treasury & DCSF (2007) *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, available at http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/tenyearstrategy/docs/cyp_tenyearstrategy_260707.pdf

These approaches have themselves been borne out by the recently published ten year strategy for positive activities⁴⁰ - itself informed by the *Make Space Youth Review* which has called for ‘a new vision capable of changing the mood and attitude towards young people’⁴¹. Positive Futures would seem to be well placed to meet these new demands, not least in the ways it has resolved the tension between targeted and universal provision which has dogged the current debates.

⁴¹ Make Space (2007) *Make Space Youth Review – Transforming the offer for young people in the UK*, London: 4Children

In many ways Positive Futures pre-empted the concept of ‘progressive universalism’ emerging from these debates through its provision of open access services in localities experiencing forms of disadvantage.

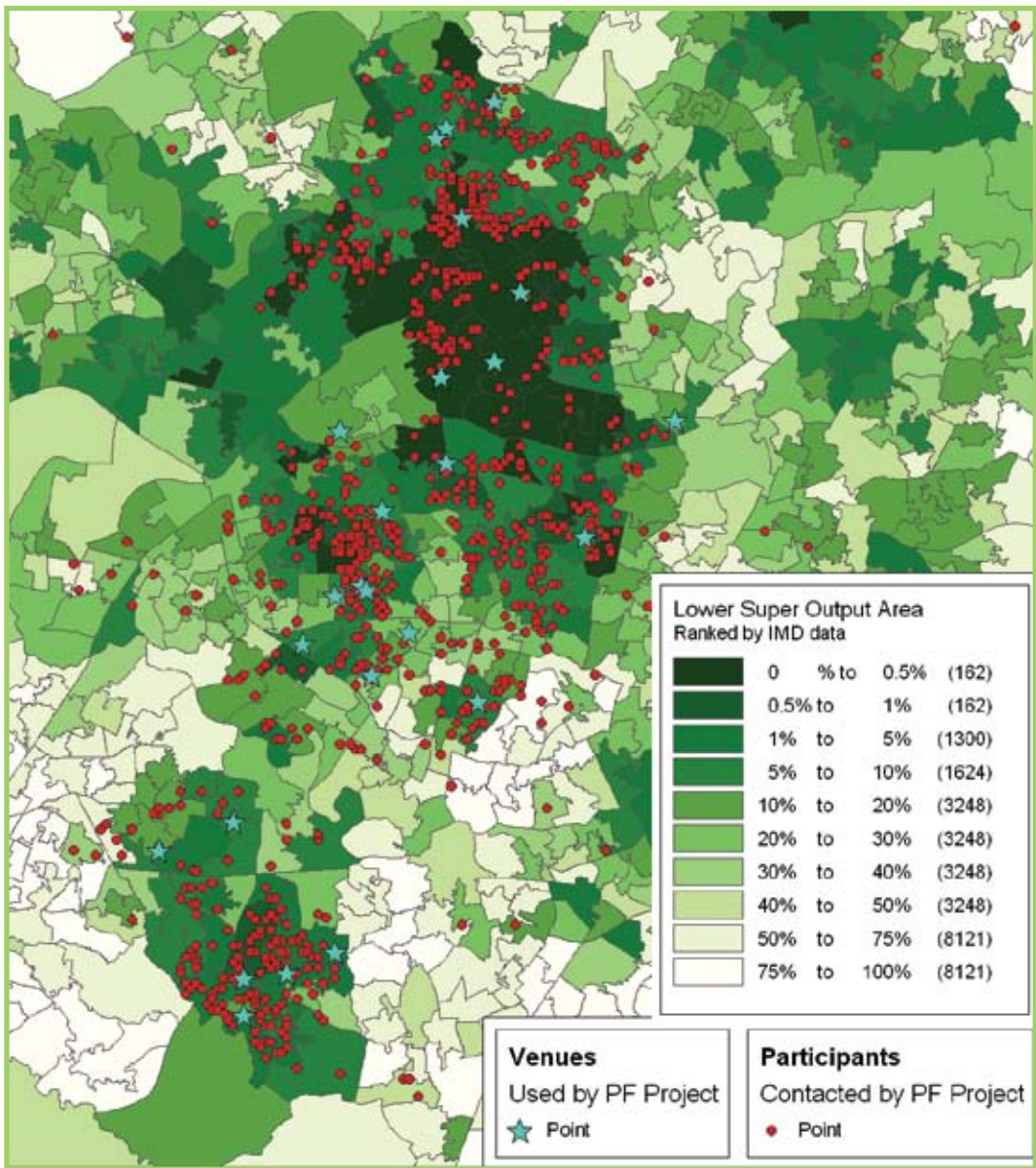


Figure 6: Participants, venues and indices of multiple deprivation.
⁴² Single dots may represent multiple participants.

By way of illustration Figure 6 maps the residential postcodes of participants and location of venues associated with one Positive Futures project in terms of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation as they apply to super output areas in the city. On the map the darker shading reveals super output areas experiencing higher levels of multiple deprivation, around which there are concentrations of activity provision and participants, even though the activities themselves are open access. This approach, although longstanding, itself recognises the IPPR's concern that 'young people who do not have access to the factors that develop their non-cognitive abilities (many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds)...are increasingly vulnerable to failure, while their better socialised peers will increasingly succeed'⁴³.

It is in this context that Positive Futures' success in transforming 'spaces of 'nothing to do' into spaces of 'something to do'⁴⁴ through the provision of ongoing, worthwhile activities with an increasing commitment to building development pathways tied to the ECM and Youth Matters agendas, can be presented as a model of good practice.

In the final sections of the report we will qualify this judgement on the basis of an assessment of the most appropriate organisational forms through which to deliver the programme.

⁴³ Margo, J. et. al. (2006) Op. cit. p. xi.

⁴⁴ Positive Futures (2005) *Staying in Touch: Positive Futures Impact Report*, London: Home Office, p. 29

Positive Futures: Providing a role for the third sector?

7

In *Knowing the Score*, we argued that:

the necessarily ‘non mainstream’, inspirational work of Positive Futures and related programmes might require projects to operate as non-rationalised niches within the wider, and otherwise heavily bureaucratised, domain of sport’. Projects need to be set free to operate at the radical edge of this field of work in order that they can attempt to find ways of engaging with and inspiring those young people who have been alienated by more structured, ‘mainstream’ approaches⁴⁵.

Knowing the Score also presented research evidence to suggest that the statutory sector is more likely to be characterised by a bureaucratic systems approach which limits this capacity and constrains projects through demands for adherence to wider formulaic policies and procedures. In some ways echoing this message, the Office of the Third Sector recently produced its *Social enterprise action plan: Scaling new heights*, which highlighted the ways in which social enterprise can improve public services through the pioneering of new approaches⁴⁶.

In a context where 49 of the 121 Positive Futures projects nationally are hosted by local authorities and a further 4 by Youth Offending Teams and other statutory criminal justice bodies, there is a realisation that this finding could have profound implications for the future direction of the programme. As such we were keen to continue our monitoring of the relative merits of different patterns of organisation and delivery both on a programme wide basis but also through our more intimate ongoing case study work.

⁴⁵Crabbe, T. (2006) Op. cit. p.25
⁴⁶Office of the Third Sector (2006)
*Social enterprise action plan:
Scaling new heights*, London:
Cabinet Office

From our long term engagement with Positive Futures it is clear that there is no one simple, clearly defined, delivery model. Rather, projects are delivered through a wide variety of organisational structures, spanning different departmental contexts within local government, criminal justice agencies, national voluntary sector agencies, community based third sector organisations and others. Furthermore, within these categories there are a wide array of 'styles', some tied into and heavily influenced by specific local strategic agendas and some more free flowing and independent. Nevertheless, it is useful in the first instance to draw out an overview of the relative *aggregate* performance of projects across some of these categories in order to see if there are any easily identifiable key themes. We will present some of these findings before going on to explore them in more detail in the context of our case study research.

In the chart below we have divided the 121 Positive Futures projects into six broad categories which are then assessed in terms of their contribution to a number of programme outcomes relative to the number of projects in each category. Where a category of project, such as 'Criminal Justice', is delivering a greater number of any specified outcome, such as 'schemes', than would be expected from the number of projects recorded as being within this category the bar on the chart reads as positive. Similarly where a category of project is delivering less than might be expected this is recorded as a negative bar on the chart.



Figure 7: Delivery Patterns by Type of Host Agency

What the chart reveals is a general level of consistency across the programme as a whole but with local authority sport and leisure based projects delivering more schemes and sessions to more participants than might be expected and national voluntary sector based agencies delivering lower volumes against the same measures.

In some respects the strong performance of the local authority sport and leisure based projects is to be expected against these criteria given the structures and experience of delivering activities to large groups that these projects have access to. However, in its attempts to distinguish itself from diversionary sports based programmes Positive Futures has long sought to emphasise the importance of quality of engagement rather than quantity.

As such it is useful to consider the extent to which the engagement with young people illustrated above has been sustained by projects within these various categories.

Agency	% of Starters	% of Involved	% of Stopped⁴⁷
All projects	39.7	39.1	21.19
LA Youth Services	35.35 (-4.35)	41.68 (+2.58)	22.97 (+1.78)
LA Sport & Leisure	39.48 (-0.22)	40.07 (+0.97)	20.45 (-0.74)
Other LA	31.97 (-7.73)	52.04 (+12.94)	15.99 (-5.2)
Criminal Justice	30.79 (-8.91)	43.77 (+4.67)	25.44 (+4.25)
National Third Sector	42.49 (+2.79)	29.85 (-9.25)	27.66 (+6.47)
Local Third Sector	41.47 (+1.77)	41.08 (+1.98)	17.45 (-3.74)

Table 15: Length of engagement by type of host agency
⁴⁷'Starters' have been in contact with projects for less than 12 weeks, 'Involved' participants have been attending activities with projects for more than 12 weeks and 'Stopped' participants have not attended in the last 12 weeks.

Table 15 reveals some more pronounced distinctions relating to length of engagement. In this context, the strongest performance comes from the 5 'other local authority' projects and the 42 'local third sector' projects in terms of the relatively low numbers of participants who have stopped attending. On top of the lower numbers of participants involved there must be some concern that the 'national third sector' projects also have the highest recorded numbers of 'stopped' participants.

Whilst this analysis provides a useful summary it is necessary to explore the detail of these findings in the context of specific examples of organisational practice. This has been made possible by the introduction of the SPRS from which these statistics have been drawn but which also contain a wide array of additional quantitative and qualitative data. As well as considering the detail of these reports we have been engaged in additional long term case study research with two projects which has been highly pertinent to this section of the report. Both of these projects had come to be regarded as exemplars of good practice but in the context of very distinct organisational structures: one located within a major local authority and one within a 'third sector' community based organisation.

The local authority project received funding from the Home Office through the City Council's Leisure Services in June 2003, becoming fully operational the following November. The team has its own dedicated manager but is located within the council's broader management framework, with strong corporate branding and a remit to work across the whole of the authority's administrative domain.

By contrast the 'third sector' agency received funding through the third wave of expansion of the programme, becoming operational in April 2004 and delivering across six wards of a separate city. Initially launched and managed through a community sports centre, the relationship is now quite different as the project has carved out an identity for itself. Indeed it is now viewed as an entirely 'separate' entity from the community centre by local partners and young people.

Despite their respective success in attracting additional investment, over the course of the last year both projects have experienced significant structural changes which have brought the 'barriers and enablers' to effective practice discussed in *Knowing the Score* into sharper focus. It is important here though to draw a distinction between the wider context in which projects operate – the policy initiatives relating to crime prevention, youth provision and joined-up government we have considered throughout this report – and the *inner* context relating to the type of delivery agency in which particular projects are positioned.

This distinction is highly pertinent to Positive Futures in that this is a centrally managed programme delivered on the basis of local partnership arrangements. As such, whilst the 'outer context' maybe more or less consistent across the programme, enabling the development of a clear strategic direction, at the delivery end there is the potential for great variation in structure and, consequently, content and process.

Specifically considering our case studies, for the local authority project change has come as a result of a wider re-structuring taking place across the authority. In this sense it has been imposed from above, forcing the project to adapt. Prior to the re-structure the project sat within the sports development department but within the context of a relatively fluid structure which enabled direct support from the head of Leisure Services. As a consequence of the re-organisation the project now sits within a more straightforwardly hierarchical structure, which is represented in Figure 8. The project manager feels that as a result of this change the team has become increasingly isolated, with departments now 'working in silos', thus negating the partnership benefits of being located within a larger organisation.

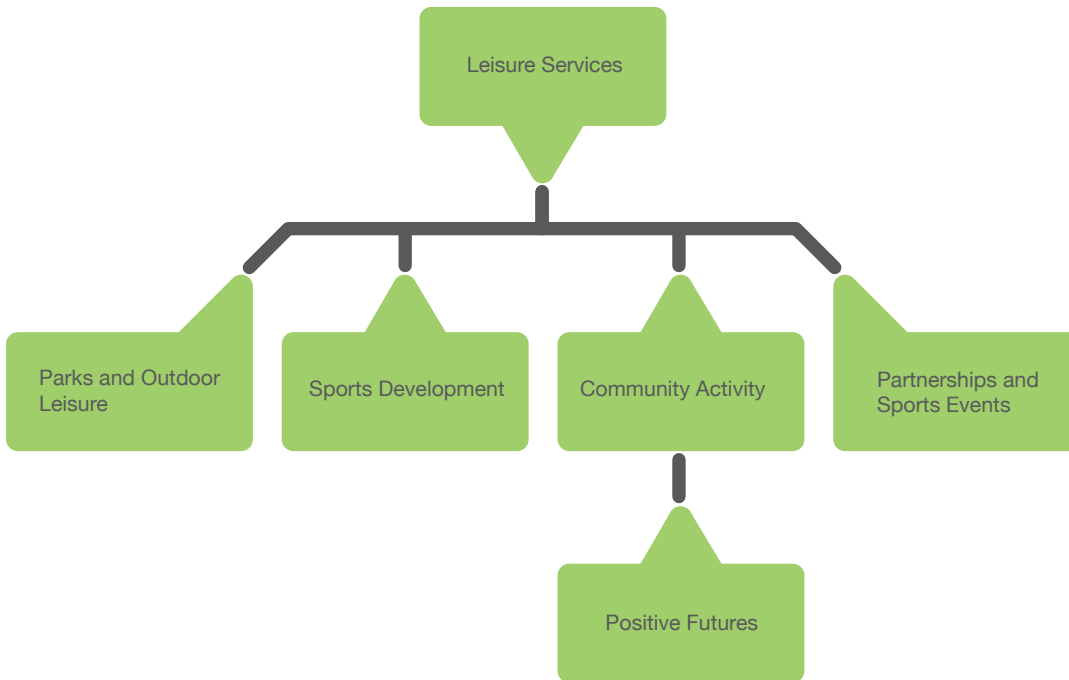


Figure 8: Local authority project management structure from April 2007

In light of this re-structure it is interesting to consider the developments at the 'third sector' project where structural changes have also been implemented over the same period. Initially the team operated within a relatively horizontal management structure which had a nominal head within the community sports centre but in practice invested authority in the co-ordinator who, in turn, delegated authority to a series of area development workers. Due to expansion and changing strategic contexts a new structure has now been introduced. This is more departmentalised, with the co-ordinator delegating a number of core management tasks to a small management team in order to increase her capacity to concentrate on the long-term growth and sustainability of the project.

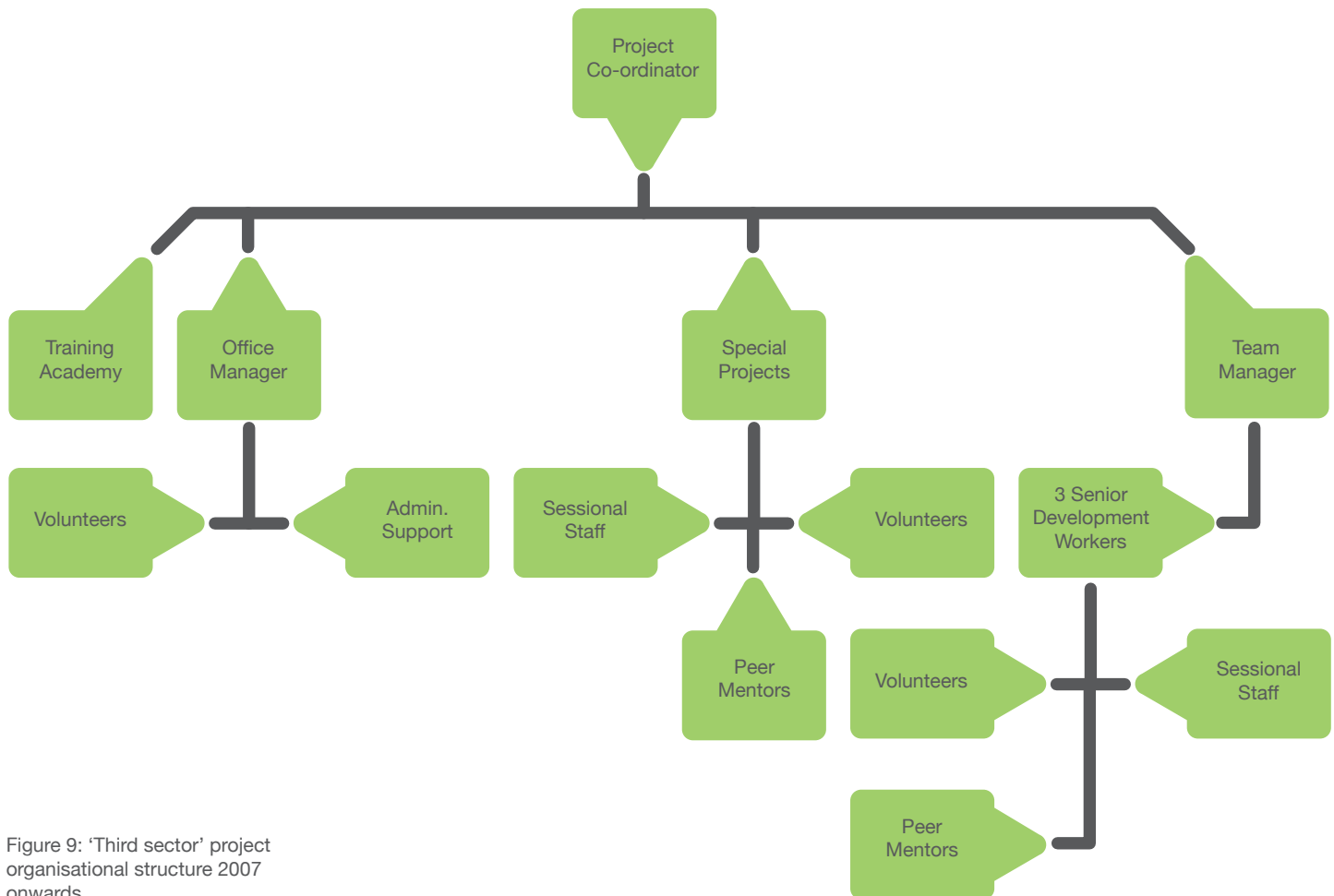


Figure 9: 'Third sector' project organisational structure 2007 onwards

Whilst this project ultimately has another layer of management it is significant and indeed symbolic that these changes are *internal* and have been initiated by the project itself in response to its own developmental requirements rather than having been imposed from 'above' and having to be adapted to.

We were already confident from our earlier work that the organisational characteristics supportive to innovation and growth included structural independence, autonomy and flexibility. This finding has now been re-enforced by our specific observations in this phase of the case study research. The 'third sector' project's relative freedom allied with the absence of an organisational 'buffer', has directly affected the ways in which it considers its development, with a growing focus upon enterprise and self-reliance. This has involved the development of strategic delivery partnerships with other non-statutory agencies, the local management of another programme's monitoring and evaluation process, and the sale of 'products' and 'services' to other social inclusion partners and schools. Three years after being launched 'from scratch', the project is now attracting in excess of £400,000 annual income and in some areas of activity has even raised the prospect of spawning its own new and sustainable independent social enterprises.

Whilst retaining its independence, the project has become a preferred provider of this type of social inclusion youth work in the city. Indeed it has become increasingly clear that the local authority in question requires 'more of the same' from it. There is open recognition that it is better equipped to deliver this type of provision than the authority itself. As such, and in the context of the limits to its own growth, the co-ordinator recently presented to senior officers within the City Council to propose the delivery of a series of training modules which will, in effect, educate the council's own youth and community workers in their approach. The Head of Children's Services is currently considering this proposal which could have significance for both the local approach to community based youth provision but also for the status of Positive Futures and 'third sector' delivery agents more generally.

Interestingly, the local authority based project has attracted broadly similar levels of investment, having secured in excess of £2m of funding over the four years since the project's launch in 2003. However, this undoubted success has itself been wrapped up in a sense of the project's special or unique status within the wider structure of the authority. In some respects the project staff regard themselves as a 'team within a team', with it also being suggested that some senior officers like to think of the project as slightly maverick.

In the short term this gave the team some degree of independence and the freedom to develop new partnerships and initiatives. In the longer run, the pressure of corporate bureaucracy has increasingly come to bear on the project and there is some concern that the initial growth and enthusiasm may ultimately prove unsustainable. Indeed the original strong collective identity within the project is already being challenged by the lack of a shared culture within the wider structure of Leisure Services and the emergence of a series of bureaucratic barriers to the project's organisational autonomy.

In Table 16 below we consider the range of ‘barriers’ and ‘enablers’ emerging from each of our case study projects as they relate to the characteristics of Positive Futures previously identified as desirable in the *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*⁴⁸ strategy document.

⁴⁸ Home Office (2003) Op. cit.

Characteristic	Purpose	Barrier	Enabler
Independent and innovative	Currency and credibility with participants and partners	Local authority governance leading to: Lack of influence Enforced change Inflexible policies and procedures Rigid employment structures Slow decision making A block on further expansion Third sector fadism	Third sector independence enabling: Recruitment through contact networks Entrepreneurialism Speed of action Choice of partners Non dependency of local authority on specific funding stream
Organisationally transparent	To enable monitoring and encourage adaptability	Hierarchical local authority structure leading to a lack of: Awareness of decisions Openness about employment decisions Influence Non accountability of third sector Concentration of power	Local authority checks and balances Third sector reliance on range of funding partners leading to: Awareness of role of evidence Adaptability to shifts in policy and approach
Co-operative and non duplicating	Ensuring extended provision	Local authority desire to retain provision in-house Distinction of PF work from the core business of Leisure Services	Third sector: Partnerships with other youth providers Training of youth workers Embeddedness in neighbourhoods and associated commitment Local authority: Willingness to engage new approaches Ability to co-ordinate with other departments

Characteristic	Purpose	Barrier	Enabler
Providing value for money	Demonstrating PF achievements and securing future funds	Local authority structures leading to: Inflexible budgets Pressure of pay rounds on delivery budgets Directive 'not to expand' Range of reporting demands creating lack of enthusiasm for M&E	Third sector willingness to engage in work that others can't and recognition of the value of reporting and evaluation
Capable of growth	To develop participant pathways	Local authority: Departmental rivalry and internal politics Directive 'not to expand' City wide provision Inhibitive policy and procedures Third sector reliance on key members of staff	Both projects' grasping of the developmental approach to PF Local authority project's access to partners with ready made pathways Third sector project's Rapid expansion Strategic approach to growth Maintenance of consistency and quality Geographic focus
Funding from a range of sources	Sustainability	Primacy of local authority corporate planning	Local authority networks resulting in large-scale successful external funding bids Third sector success in building partnerships

Table 16: Organisational barriers and enablers and the case study projects

Whilst the local authority project has made a marked impact both on the nature of provision of services to disadvantaged young people in the city and on Positive Futures nationally in terms of its 'thought leadership', in some ways this appears to have been in spite of the local authority structure rather than because of it. As long as the authority was prepared to grant the project free license to develop its work, there was consistent growth and dynamism. However, that growth has itself brought the project up against barriers associated with the wider structures and institutional procedures which govern significant areas of activity within the authority.

This theme is not restricted to Positive Futures and is familiar within the field of street based youth work, with other research revealing the discomfort that project workers have with the imposition of organisational practices and terms of reference that do not match the priorities of front line workers.⁴⁹ It is in this light that we are drawn to the experiences of the third sector project we have worked with. They have demonstrated a model of practice which has enabled their:

Front line workers to retain their integrity with young people
Funders to invest in something not delivered by statutory services
Statutory services to benefit from their learning and partnership work

In this sense we are now convinced that the structure of independent third sector agencies, and social enterprises in particular, provide key advantages in the search for pioneers of new forms of local engagement, regeneration and redevelopment.

Whilst, from our wider analysis of projects' reports it is clear that voluntary sector projects can fail, they are still more likely to have organisational structures which would accommodate the preferred delivery styles for a Positive Futures project. The reports submitted through the SPRS suggest that the statutory sector and local authority Youth Services and Sport and Leisure Services in particular, provide 'safe hands'. From our analysis very few of the projects hosted by local authorities appear to be a complete failure or in imminent danger of collapse. However, whilst there are a handful of easily identifiable failing 'third sector' agencies, it is also clear that those projects which 'blaze a trail' are much more likely to emerge out of this sector. Indeed two thirds of those we would identify as the current flagships are non-statutory sector led projects. Given that Positive Futures was developed as a cutting edge programme with a mission to find new ways to engage with the most marginalised and 'hard to reach' young people this may not be surprising. With this objective in mind it would seem appropriate that structures which lie outside of the mainstream conventions of youth work and activity provision are mobilised.

⁴⁹ Crimmens, D., Factor, F., Jeffs, T., Pugh, C., Spence, J. & Turner, P. (2004) *Reaching socially excluded young people: A national study of street based youth work*, Leicester: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/The National Youth Agency

Whilst local authority based projects have made an enormous contribution to the establishment of Positive Futures as a viable programme and continue to do good work, we are now clear that all projects could gain additional benefits from the greater freedoms and responsiveness to local conditions that the independent or third sector can provide.

At the same time it remains vital that projects are well integrated into local partnerships and Local Area Agreements if they are to prove sustainable and build the appropriate developmental pathways for their participants. As the social enterprise action plan argues:

many [social enterprises] operate in markets where the public sector is the main commissioner of services...for them, it is important that government is an effective partner, with those commissioning public services aware of social enterprises as potential suppliers, and that blockages to best practice delivery are tackled effectively.

This learning may have implications for the approach that the Government takes towards future organisation and funding of the programme which we will address in the final section of this report in which we outline our recommendations.

8

Conclusions and recommendations

As we suggested at the start of this report, its primary purpose has not been to assess the programme's impact, given that we are only mid way through the evaluation cycle. Rather, what we have attempted here is to reveal the capacity of Positive Futures to meet the demands of a range of government agendas. From our analysis, at the programme level, that capacity is not in question.

In terms of **crime prevention**, rather than reflecting a dichotomy between structural responses to the 'causes' of crime on the one hand and a focus on the individual on the other, Positive Futures appears to represent a key element within a 'layered' response that embraces both. Ultimately the programme itself is concerned with building relationships and development pathways which protect against the risk factors associated with offending behaviour.

In terms of **Every Child Matters** Positive Futures projects are all involved in the kind of collaborative working and information sharing that this agenda demands whilst at the delivery level projects are making strong contributions across the full range of ECM outcomes.

In terms of **community development** what is significant about the more effective Positive Futures projects is their efforts to engage disadvantaged young people through a respect for the cultural contexts in which they live, alongside the opening of new avenues of opportunity, wider horizons and transition gateways. At their best, these projects are able to open up possibilities, provide guidance and demystify mainstream society rather than merely provide a fleeting cache of 'social capital'.

In terms of **participation in sport and physical activity** Positive Futures projects provide a significant opportunity to enhance participation rates amongst those sections of the population who are currently least engaged. Perhaps more significant is that 76% of those currently engaged by the programme have been in contact for periods in excess of 12 weeks. This demonstrates the potential that the programme has for sustaining some of the most disadvantaged young people's involvement in sport and physical activity.

In terms of **positive activities for young people**, in many ways Positive Futures pre-empted the concept of 'progressive universalism' emerging from current debates through its provision of open access services in localities experiencing forms of disadvantage. It is in this context that the programme's success in transforming 'spaces of 'nothing to do' into spaces of 'something to do' through the provision of ongoing, worthwhile activities with an increasing commitment to building development pathways, can be presented as a model of good practice.

In terms of the **third sector** it is clear that the structure of independent voluntary sector agencies, and social enterprises in particular, provide key advantages in the search for pioneers of new forms of local engagement, regeneration and redevelopment.

What is less certain from the first round of project reports is the capacity of all 121 projects to meet these policy demands. At their most effective there seems little doubt that Positive Futures projects provide one of the best vehicles with which to engage disadvantaged young people. Alongside these projects lie others with less enthusiasm for the more challenging aspects of the work as well as those who have struggled against organisational barriers to the more innovative approaches required to do this more challenging work.

With much of the strategic vision for Positive Futures outlined in the *cul-de-sacs and gateways*⁵⁰ and *Be part of something*⁵¹ strategy documents in place, now is the time to build on that good work and take on the key remaining challenge to bring all projects up to the standards set by the very best examples. This need is all the more pressing in the context of ongoing discussions around future funding of the programme. In order to facilitate this development we would make three key recommendations:

1. To utilise project reports and SPRS data to inform a Crime Concern led review of project activity to highlight project specific:

Examples of good practice

Areas for improvement

Structural impediments to progress

Potential for facilitation of contributions from third sector delivery agents

⁵⁰ Home Office (2003) Op. cit.

⁵¹ Crime Concern (2006) *Be part of something*, London: Crime Concern

2. A funding arrangement based on the principle of moving projects towards integration into locally sustainable funding frameworks from 2011 onwards, involving:

Continued and additional support for projects demonstrating impact

Support for new pathfinder projects led by well connected local third sector agencies

Stepped reductions in central funding from 2009 onwards

Support for Positive Futures inclusion within Local Area Agreements and other local funding streams

3. A new approach towards central management of the programme involving a regionally organised network of expert practitioners to:

Identify and support appropriate lead organisations and individuals that embrace the Positive Futures ethos

Support the transition of delivery to appropriate third sector agencies

Build up and identify local networks of support and resources

Negotiate Positive Futures into Local Area Agreements

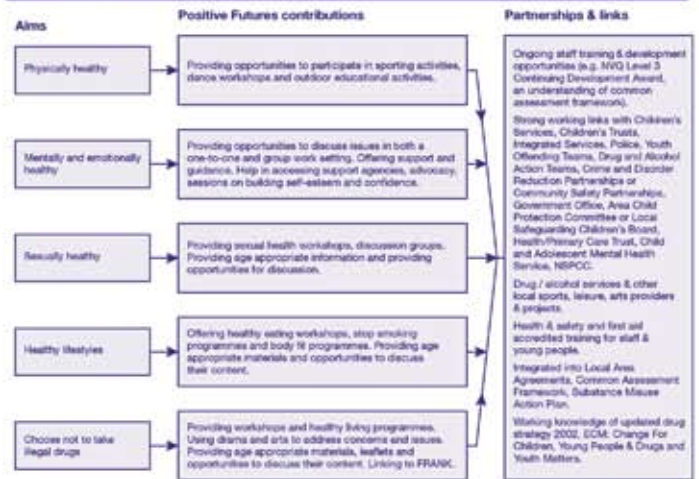
Identify and disseminate good practice from Positive Futures and related programmes

Communicate the 'Positive Futures' approach among projects

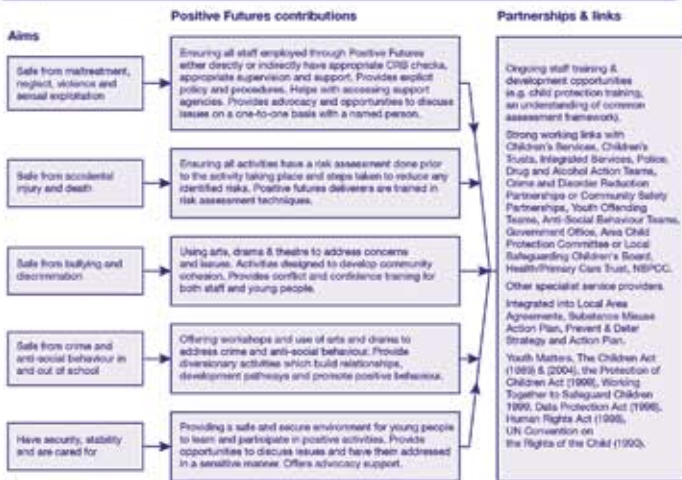
Every Child Matters

The five tables correspond to the five Every Child Matters Outcomes. Each one outlines how Positive Futures contributes to the individual aims, what methods are used and who Positive Futures works with (or aims to work with) to ensure our work is fully linked in.

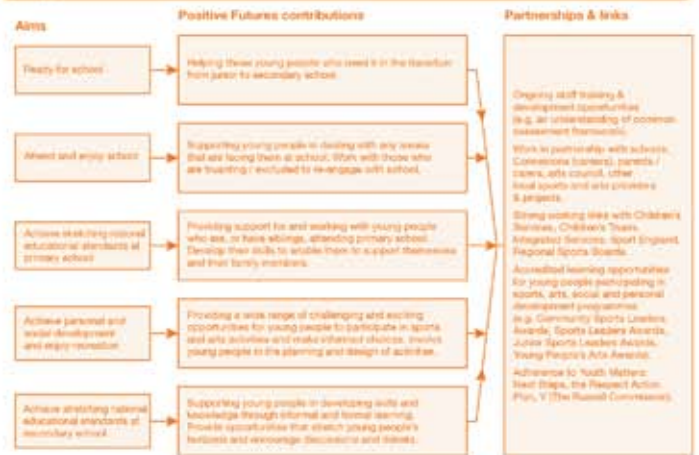
Be healthy



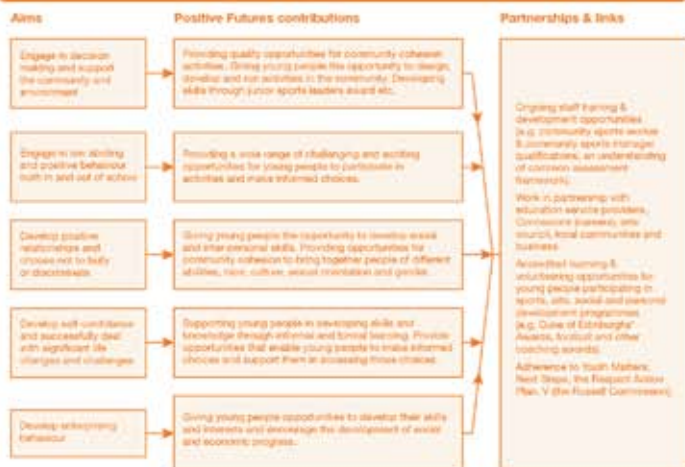
Stay safe



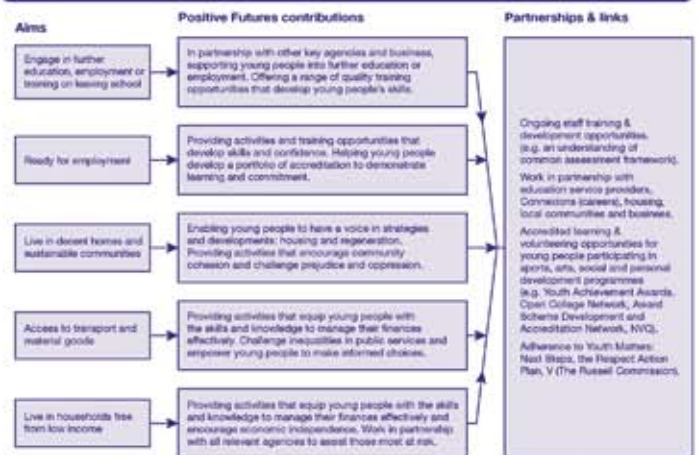
Enjoy and achieve



Make a positive contribution



Achieve economic well-being



substance.

Room 308
Ducie House, Ducie Street
Manchester M1 2JW
+44 (0) 161 244 5418

www.substance.coop