



# Creating opportunity for young people

The DfES's grant scheme for National Voluntary Youth Organisations 2002–2005

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## Contents

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Executive summary</b>                                 | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Key findings</b>                                      | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Recommendations</b>                                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>The DfES role and context of the scheme</b>           | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Combating social exclusion</b>                        | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Standards of achievement</b>                          | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Quality of practice and the youth work curriculum</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>                         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Notes</b>   | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Further information</b>                               | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Annex. List of NVYOs inspected</b>                    | <b>21</b> |

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## Executive summary

This report evaluates the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) grant scheme for National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NVYOs), which ran from April 2002 to March 2005. The DfES invested £18 million in grants to 87 organisations during the course of the programme. There were two key objectives: to tackle social exclusion amongst young people aged 13 to 19 and to raise the standard and quality of practice in youth work in voluntary organisations. NVYOs received an additional grant through the DfES's Transforming Youth Work Development Fund (TYWDF), specifically to build links with Connexions, introduce self-assessment and improve management information.<sup>1</sup>

Over the three years of the scheme, inspectors visited 56 organisations, selected to reflect the broad range of work undertaken and the different types of NVYOs receiving grants. The report evaluates the different aspects of the programme: the effectiveness of strategies designed to tackle social exclusion and to raise young people's achievement; the quality of practice and the curriculum; and the contribution made by leadership and management to the standards achieved. It includes case studies and examples of good practice to illustrate the breadth and quality of the work seen.

The report concludes that the grant scheme has been effective in meeting most of the DfES's objectives. It has helped to raise standards of achievement and improve the quality of practice in youth work. NVYO programmes successfully engaged very many young people, who made good progress in their personal and social development. The scheme focused effectively on social inclusion through programmes aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Youth workers provided good leadership and guidance. Collectively, NVYOs provided a broad and rich curriculum. However, too few opportunities were taken to enable young people's work to be accredited. The objective to strengthen partnership arrangements between Connexions and the voluntary youth sector was met only in part. Joint planning with other partners, including local authority youth services, was also underdeveloped.

The NVYO headquarters provided clear strategic direction. The report concludes that the management of the NVYO programmes was satisfactory overall, but a significant minority of organisations had insufficient managerial capacity to ensure that policies and procedures were applied consistently at local level. Limited investment in information and communication technology (ICT) and administration meant that many NVYOs lacked the necessary support systems to monitor and evaluate their work effectively. NVYOs continue to face difficulties in recruiting and retaining paid staff and volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> The Transforming Youth Work Development Fund was launched in 2002 with the intention of providing additional funding to enhance the quality and capacity of youth work. This fund has now become the Transforming Youth Work Performance Improvement Fund which government offices manage on behalf of the DfES.

The report recommends that the DfES should encourage more effective joint planning between NVYOs, local authority youth services and Connexions; it should also provide guidance and practical support on self-assessment, as well as further opportunities for NVYOs to share and disseminate good practice. Youth work programmes should take greater account of the needs of the most challenging young people. Workers require support to develop further their skills in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and managers should not make demands of volunteers and part-time workers which are beyond their levels of skill, experience and the time they have available. NVYOs should encourage more young people to take up opportunities for accreditation. Management processes, including quality assurance, require development.

## Key findings

- ❑ The grant scheme has been effective in meeting most of the DfES's objectives. It has helped to raise standards of achievement and improve the quality of practice in youth work.
- ❑ NVYO programmes successfully engaged very many young people, aged 13 to 19 years and they made good progress in their personal and social development. Young people facing particular personal difficulties were confident in seeking advice and support from youth workers.
- ❑ The scheme focused effectively on social inclusion through programmes aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. However, some NVYOs failed to tailor their work sufficiently to meet the needs of the most challenging young people.
- ❑ Youth work sessions were generally well organised with an appropriate balance of educational and recreational activities. Youth workers provided good leadership and guidance. On a few occasions, they failed to plan and monitor their work effectively.
- ❑ Collectively, NVYOs provided a broad and rich curriculum. In the best work, accreditation was integrated well in many activities and young people were successful in gaining qualifications and awards. Across the scheme as a whole, however, too few opportunities were taken to enable young people's work to be accredited.
- ❑ Effective links and joint work with Connexions were only partially achieved. Smaller organisations struggled to build sufficient capacity to develop the relationships to which they aspired and Connexions were not always responsive to the approaches made to them. Joint planning with other organisations, including local authority youth services, was also underdeveloped.
- ❑ NVYOs often attract experienced staff of high calibre, but the continuity of some programmes was at risk from difficulties in recruiting and retaining them. This is a long standing issue.

- ❑ The management of programmes was satisfactory overall. NVYO headquarters provided clear strategic direction and most resources were deployed efficiently to achieve the objectives of the scheme.
- ❑ Weaknesses in operational management, identified in the 1999 – 2002 scheme, continue. A significant minority of NVYOs have insufficient managerial capacity to ensure that policies and procedures are applied consistently at local level. The expectations placed on volunteers and part-time staff by NVYOs were too demanding and took insufficient account of the skills, experience and time available.
- ❑ Limited investment in ICT and administration meant that many NVYOs lacked the necessary support systems to operate effectively.
- ❑ Monitoring and evaluation by a minority of organisations were exemplary, but there was a lack of rigour across the scheme as a whole and self-assessment was not embedded fully. NVYOs were generally weak in judging the overall effectiveness of the strategies designed to increase access and participation by young people.

## Recommendations

1. To improve the quality of provision in the 2005–2008 scheme, the DfES should:
  - enable effective joint planning between NVYOs, local authority youth services and Connexions
  - provide guidance and practical support to help NVYOs maximise the potential of self-assessment
  - provide further opportunities for NVYOs to share and disseminate good practice.
2. NVYOs should:
  - ensure that youth work programmes take account of the needs of the most challenging young people
  - support youth workers to develop further their skills in planning, monitoring and evaluation
  - encourage more young people to take up opportunities for accreditation of their activities
  - provide more guidance and support for implementing policies and procedures at local level
  - tailor expectations of volunteers and part-time workers to match their levels of skill, experience and available time

- ensure that management information and quality assurance systems are robust.

## The DfES role and context of the scheme

3. The NVYO grant scheme ran from April 2002 to March 2005. The scheme had two key policy objectives:

- to combat social exclusion and inequality through targeting priority groups
- to raise the standard of youth work undertaken by organisations.

The DfES invested £18 million over the three years, a 50% increase in funding on the previous scheme. Grants were awarded to 87 individual organisations and 9 joint projects and ranged from £13,000 to over £860,000.

4. Most groups were funded under both strands of the programme. In the first two years of the scheme, NVYOs also received an additional grant from the DfES Transforming Youth Work Development Fund (TYWDF) specifically to:
  - build links with Connexions
  - introduce self-assessment
  - improve management information.
5. The DfES managed the scheme by allocating initial grants, receiving progress reports and providing professional guidance. The scheme sought to increase support for existing NVYOs and introduce new organisations to the programme. Both these objectives were achieved successfully. In the latter part of the programme, the DfES introduced professional expertise through a secondment to support the introduction of self-assessment by NVYOs. This approach worked well, providing a source of informed dialogue and advice for individual organisations and a mechanism for sharing good practice.
6. NVYOs overall are characterised by diversity and vary significantly in their size and structure. Many have developed specialist programmes, for example in sport, art and conservation, while others focus on single issues such as homelessness or health.
7. Youth work takes place in many different settings. Some are led by professionally qualified, paid staff; other work is provided by specialist

volunteers or young people themselves. Much activity takes place through local groups affiliated to national networks, but often remote from their strategic headquarters. A growing number of NVYOs work with vulnerable young people as part of a wider mission, for example, faith groups and campaign charities. Others carry out strategic functions such as providing training for member organisations and developing quality assurance frameworks and curriculum resources.

8. Overall, the NVYO grant scheme has been effective in meeting most of the DfES's objectives. It has helped to raise standards of achievement and improve the quality of practice in youth work.

## Combating social exclusion

9. NVYOs successfully engaged very many young people aged 13 to 19. The most effective organisations had clear strategies to focus their work on social inclusion and tackling disadvantage, meeting the needs of priority groups, for example young people on the margins of crime and those at risk of disengaging from formal education.
10. Grants enabled NVYOs to support young people with specific needs well, for instance through assisted transport schemes, childcare, mentoring and interpreters. Some organisations redesigned well established programmes to reach more young people. Many programmes operated flexibly and included weekly sessions, short courses and residential activities. Across the scheme as a whole, new groups, including young parents and those from minority ethnic groups, gained access to exciting opportunities and support.

### *Examples of good practice in combating social exclusion*

*Young people at risk of exclusion from school benefited significantly from their involvement with the Up2Us project run by **Endeavour Training**. Headteachers commented positively on the effectiveness of the work in helping to re-engage young people into school through programmes that developed their personal and social skills. Groups often comprised a complex mix of young people with different learning needs and low levels of academic achievement alongside those who were more able and articulate but who had difficulty in responding in formal settings.*



*The **British Red Cross** Kapital project brought together unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers with local young people. The young people, who were present as Millennium Volunteers, provided sensitive support to the new arrivals. They had received training in befriending and put new skills into practice. The project also provided humanitarian education of a very practical and effective kind. The young refugees welcomed the session: they were sociable, keen to learn English and communicate with the local young people.*

11. Many organisations adopted project-based approaches and worked with smaller numbers more intensively than in traditional open youth work. The success of these strategies depended largely on the rigour of needs assessment. Some youth workers failed to adapt their methods sufficiently and continued to focus only on the needs of established groups. A significant minority of NVYOs were overly ambitious in setting targets at the start of the scheme. While there was often anecdotal evidence about the success of individual projects in tackling exclusion, NVYOs were weaker in judging the overall effectiveness of strategies which had been designed to increase access and participation across their organisation as a whole.

## Standards of achievement

12. Overall, young people's achievement in NVYO programmes was very good. Standards were good or better in well over half the sessions observed by inspectors. Many young people made considerable progress in their personal and social development and spoke positively about their involvement. They achieved well in a variety of settings, including the outdoors, performing arts, skills-based courses and alternative curriculum programmes. They demonstrated a strong commitment to their local group through their regular attendance. Young people facing personal difficulties were confident in seeking advice and support. In one quarter of sessions, young people made only modest gains. Achievement was unsatisfactory in a small minority of sessions.
13. Good achievement was underpinned by positive relationships between young people and youth workers, providing a strong foundation for learning. In many programmes, young people developed new skills which helped them to act with greater self-confidence and maturity. Topical discussions fostered good listening and decision-making skills, where young people were encouraged to put forward ideas and take account of those of others. In problem-solving activities, participants developed an understanding of teamwork and negotiation, particularly in the face of conflict or setback which demanded patience and self-control.
14. Young people's involvement in planning and reviewing their work helped them to describe what they had learned and recognise the progress they had made. This was particularly marked where individuals had overcome significant hurdles, such as ill-health or homelessness, and were taking

positive steps forward. In the best examples, young people freely sought advice from youth workers to help them make informed choices. With appropriate guidance, they also learned how to set and review goals which were achievable but which also provided sufficient challenge to broaden their horizons and sustain their motivation.

15. When given the opportunity, young people readily took part in decision-making within their project or organisation. They adopted positions of trust with skill and enthusiasm and learned how to present a persuasive argument. However, in some peer education programmes, the expectations placed on young people were sometimes disproportionate to the training they were given and, as a result, they did not always execute tasks successfully, particularly those that required good interpersonal skills as well as specialist knowledge. On a few occasions, the young people themselves were overly ambitious in their plans and lacked the confidence to challenge the disruptive or unresponsive behaviour of their peers. Too often in these cases, intervention and support from adult supervisors were inadequate.
16. Young people were successful in programmes leading to formal qualifications and awards and worked diligently to complete their portfolios to a high standard. For some, gaining a qualification through youth work had been a defining achievement and a catalyst to continue in, or return to, formal education. Not all youth work activities are designed to lead to accreditation, but in the best examples, workers were adroit in building such an option where and if appropriate. Indeed, particularly successful NVYOs used the DfES grant to develop existing good practice, for instance by using the accreditation frameworks provided by the Open College Network, Youth Achievement Awards, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and National Vocational Qualifications.
17. In the least effective sessions, young people were unclear about the purpose of activities. Even those who had attended over a period of time had little experience of influencing programmes. They were involved only superficially in planning and evaluating activities, relying on youth workers to take the lead. They were not always able to identify the progress they had made. The following are six examples of good achievement in: performing arts, outdoor education, alternative curriculum, group work and discussion, skills-based programmes and community action.

### **Performing arts**

*Young people at the Club Zone project of **British Gospel Arts** learned to write their own songs in preparation for a public performance. The quality of singing was good; it improved as the young people grew in confidence over the course of the project. They learned about three-part harmony and could sing offbeat to add more depth and flavour to their performances. Young people worked hard to improve the sound and demonstrated both determination and enjoyment. In listening to recordings of their work, they were able to see just how far they had progressed.*

### **Outdoor education**

*On an **Army Cadet Force** programme, young people worked well together, crossing a stream with only limited equipment to build a bridge. They demonstrated patience in the face of cold, wet and generally difficult circumstances. Senior cadets displayed good leadership skills, encouraging the group to listen to each other's ideas before putting them into practice. Young people encouraged and helped one another to overcome obstacles and complete the set tasks. They gained self-confidence and new skills in map reading and problem-solving.*

### **Alternative curriculum**

*During an introductory session in hospitality and catering training at a local further education college, young people from the **Prince's Trust xl Network** learned about the facilities, uses of equipment and health and safety. They followed instructions and recipes carefully and took time to present dishes attractively. They changed into smart clothes to serve the buffet to invited guests and adjusted well to the demands of meeting and relating to a wide range of adults.*

### **Group work and discussion**

*In a session on personal values, the standard of contributions from **Explorer Scouts** was very high. The first talk on war was thoroughly prepared and well researched. A young woman spoke with confidence and answered questions knowledgeably. Unit members were accustomed to listening to each other and contributed sensibly. The two people who spoke on euthanasia had prepared a range of definitions, scenarios and case studies, including one which had featured in recent news. Many drew on knowledge from work at school, citing facts, for example, from their history or biology courses.*

**Skills-based programmes**

*The knowledge and skills gained by young people were impressive, even at the halfway stage of the computer course at the **Fairbridge** centre. Most participants were familiar with computers, but none had used the software before. They were now able to produce designs, import and manipulate images, and scan and navigate the Internet with ease. If unsure, they were sufficiently confident to experiment or ask each other. Legal issues were acknowledged, for example the need for release forms should they wish to use images of someone else. The group was courteous and cooperative and worked conscientiously.*

**Community action**

*The enthusiasm and confidence of the young people from the **Changemakers** Young Advocates scheme helped them to achieve success in their chosen community projects. Young Advocates had a good understanding of the wider work of Changemakers and took advantage of the opportunities offered, for example in the 'YSpeak' and 'YAct' programmes. They gained valuable experience of leadership regionally and nationally and were confident in presenting their opinions. Young people's involvement in decision-making at all levels of the organisation was a significant strength.*

## Quality of practice and the youth work curriculum

### Quality of practice

18. The quality of practice was good or better in three quarters of the sessions seen, in a wide range of settings and in different types of work, including music and drama projects, centre-based programmes, uniformed organisations and volunteering schemes. The best sessions were well organised, providing a stimulating mix of educational and enjoyable activities. Youth workers provided effective leadership and guidance to the young people. Appropriate behaviour contracts and ground rules were often developed and helped to create a sense of shared responsibility and mutual respect.
19. Youth workers generally knew young people well and had a good understanding of the issues they faced. However, this was sometimes based more on an intuitive feel for the local area or the group rather than on a systematic assessment of need. The quality of practice was unsatisfactory in one in ten sessions where, almost always, youth workers did not plan and monitor their work effectively.
20. In the most successful programmes, youth workers ensured a clear focus on learning. They had high, but realistic, expectations of what young people could achieve and guided them effectively to reach their goals. They helped young people identify areas for development and appropriate

targets. Young people received timely advice and information which helped them reflect on their options and next steps. Workers also managed groups well, varying their methods to maintain pace and interest.

21. Young people's leadership and volunteering projects were well organised and provided good opportunities for young people to assume greater responsibility and authority within NVYOs. Workers were skilful in harnessing the enthusiasm and drive of those who wished to make a positive contribution, for example through voluntary work, committee membership or community service.
22. Where specialist activities were undertaken, for example in sport, performing arts and environmental projects, paid and voluntary youth workers were well qualified and drew appropriately on their subject knowledge and expertise. Occasionally, however, there was a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced workers. Delays in recruitment or the long term ill-health of key staff meant some programmes were slow to start or the range of activity was curtailed. Workers were sometimes reluctant to take action or report when projects ran into difficulties.
23. Paid and voluntary youth workers worked effectively together in local teams. Occasionally, the respective roles and contributions of youth workers and other professionals, for example activity instructors and teachers, were not sufficiently well defined. Youth workers generally had good informal networks within their local communities, such as with other voluntary organisations or the police. However, collaboration with Connexions, a priority of the scheme, was much more uneven and developed largely on the basis of individual initiative or personal contact. In a few cases, NVYO workers had no contact with Connexions at all.
24. The quality of referral and information sharing between organisations was inconsistent. For example, in projects for young people at risk of exclusion from full-time education, links with schools were not always in place to ensure good communication about young people's needs and progress.
25. Across the scheme as a whole, too little attention was given to recording and monitoring. Most youth workers sought regular feedback from young people on what they enjoyed about particular activities, but fewer used the opportunity to reflect more critically upon learning and outcomes. A significant minority of volunteers and part-time workers simply did not have time to complete the full range of preparatory and administrative tasks which were expected of them.

*Examples of good practice in youth work*

Youth workers from the **YWCA, England and Wales** skilfully engaged a challenging and lively group. They created a relaxed but industrious atmosphere and were careful to prevent potential conflict, dealing swiftly with tensions as they arose. Using the 'Getting Connected' and 'Access to Opportunities' programmes, workers had supported young people with literacy difficulties to gain their first formal qualifications.<sup>2</sup> Many of the young women at the project had also been encouraged to get involved in campaign work about issues which affected them, such as domestic violence and abuse.

At the **National Youth Music Theatre** Pathways project, which comprised singing, dance and drama, group leaders encouraged young people to direct the course of the sessions. Effective planning ensured a good balance between enjoyment and developing skills. A well managed dance session introduced young people to the importance of warm-up exercises and physical activity and explored the expressive aspect of dance by choreographing a football crowd in slow motion. Workers successfully introduced discussion to challenge opinions and stereotypes.

**Dawcliffe Education Foundation's** homework club successfully targeted young women in the Brixton area where there were very high levels of deprivation. Many came from single parent households with little history of sustained employment or success at school. Staff and volunteers created a welcoming and purposeful atmosphere within a popular community centre. Well organised sessions provided social activities and homework time. The staff team was committed and approachable. They met regularly to review the work, discuss and record the progress of individuals and plan future activities.

Over the three year scheme, more than 2,000 young people from the **National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs** completed the Skills for Life programme and gained certificates of achievement. In one session, participants quickly learned basic communication techniques as well as the important role played by facial expression, gestures and other non-verbal communication. Competent and vibrant tutoring reinforced a positive view of the skills, talents and contributions of people with a disability. The highly interactive nature of the session improved the dynamics of the group markedly and broke down the reticence between some of the members.

On the **Focus** residential, the volunteer team coordinator demonstrated very effective leadership by channelling the energy of one young person, allocating him the role of note taker for the whole group. The volunteers collaborated well as a team, working alongside young people and ensuring each made a contribution to discussion and planning. Young people were encouraged to express their hopes and aspirations.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Getting connected' and 'Access to opportunities' are accreditation programmes designed specifically for youth work and informal education settings which recognise young people's personal and social development.

## Youth work curriculum

26. Collectively, NVYOs provided a rich and broad curriculum. Programmes were most successful when they derived from a detailed analysis of need and encompassed clear strategies for delivering the work. In some instances, projects were designed to meet the needs of particularly hard to reach groups, for example young carers or young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Other NVYOs continued to play to their strengths by focusing on a specialist theme or aspect of the curriculum, for example, political education through youth councils, literacy education through journalism or spiritual development through faith groups.
27. The most effective programmes successfully involved young people in designing, developing and managing them, thereby securing a high degree of commitment to and responsibility for them. While providing fun and social interaction through meeting others, the programmes also offered opportunities to develop skills, alongside acquiring knowledge and understanding about a wide range of topical issues such as the environment and cultural diversity.
28. The quality of curriculum guidance, schemes of work and specialist resources was generally good. They provided workers with useful tools and ideas to adapt to local circumstances. However, too many NVYOs provided insufficient coaching and practical support for less experienced staff for them to translate curriculum policy into practice. For instance, across the scheme as a whole, too few opportunities were taken to enable young people's work to be accredited. Some workers lacked the skills and confidence to incorporate more formal processes, such as criteria-based assessment, into their day-to-day practice. This remains a significant issue.

### *Examples of good curriculum development*

*The **UK Youth Parliament's** annual programme of activity centres on the election of youth parliament members in local authorities, the parliament sitting and work on implementing the manifesto. Members of the parliament also participate in high profile consultation events and campaigns, as well as projects in their own communities. The curriculum is successful in fostering political awareness and the development of active citizenship at local, regional and national levels.*

***Leap Confronting Conflict** programmes have clearly identified outcomes for young people. Trainers have much expertise in conflict resolution and mediation techniques and the curriculum provides a rich source of activities which are used creatively to raise young people's awareness about gang culture and other issues. Courses help young people develop practical skills and greater understanding of strategies to deal positively with the challenging situations they encounter.*

*The work of the **Development Education Association** includes a conference, 'Young Planet', designed to raise the profile of global issues in youth work and encourage young people to become more actively involved. Young people attended a series of workshops, including 'globalisation and poverty', 'lobbying and advocacy' and 'world music'. Participants were encouraged to think about themselves in a wider context, consider the impact of their actions on others and the positive contribution they could make to global issues.*

***Groundwork UK** programmes use a range of practical outdoor activities to build young people's skills and confidence. They worked on tasks such as assembling and painting garden furniture for a local primary school and building doors for a poly tunnel they had constructed earlier in the programme. These contributed towards a qualification in horticulture. In another example, young people undertook much needed environmental work at a scout campsite, cutting branches, improving paths and planting trees to increase visibility and improve safety.*

## Leadership and management

29. The management of the NVYO programmes was satisfactory overall. Established NVYOs managed their DfES grant effectively and integrated it well into their existing provision. This was less the case with the small number of larger organisations and charities which had adopted youth work as one of a number of activities. In such instances, naïve assumptions were made about the ease with which youth work approaches could be developed. Too often, staff worked in isolation and without sufficient professional guidance. Managers had insufficient understanding of the difficulties faced by workers in recruiting and retaining vulnerable young people on programmes.
30. NVYOs' headquarters provided clear strategic direction for the work and contributed to national research and specialist advice. Their guidance was influential in a range of youth-related policy areas, such as health, education and criminal justice.

### *Case studies illustrating policy development*

***Frontier Youth Trust**, in partnership with the Young Men's Christian Association and the Church Army, used their NVYO grant to develop a range of new curriculum resources to support workers in faith-based settings who wanted to incorporate a spiritual dimension to youth work. They also contributed to national debate in this area and, through youth councils, helped to ensure young people played a key role in developing policy.*



*The development of the **Scout Association's** Explorer Scouts programme arose from careful long term planning. It achieved a good combination of flexibility and variety. There was an appreciation of the need for particular leadership styles to ensure that young adults were engaged successfully. Managers created an optimistic climate at national and regional levels. Volunteers were aware that the movement was changing and needed to adapt in order to continue to attract young people.*

31. There was a firm commitment to equality of opportunity. Most NVYOs had clear policies on inclusion and diversity, although they paid insufficient attention to monitoring the impact of such policies. Appropriate action was taken to ensure that statutory requirements were met. Some organisations appointed specialist staff and provided training to many paid and voluntary youth workers to raise awareness of child protection and health and safety issues.
32. The 2002–2005 scheme showed some of the same weaknesses in operational management as those identified in the previous scheme. For instance, a significant minority of NVYOs had insufficient managerial capacity to ensure that policies and procedures were applied consistently at local levels. The quality of work was almost always better where organisations had the resources to support staff and volunteers and where experienced workers were able to coach less experienced peers. Organisations gave quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation lower priority where they had only limited management capacity. In cases where national officers tried to manage change and development from a distance, for example through a federated structure of independent member organisations, this was not always successful. In some cases, those responsible for achieving the DfES's objectives and targets at an operational level did not always understand them fully. A few local groups also guarded closely their independence from strategic headquarters and tended to regard national directives as interference.
33. Follow-up monitoring visits showed that most NVYOs took prompt action to tackle significant weaknesses identified by inspections. Curriculum guidance, support for staff, target-setting and performance management improved. They developed stronger corporate approaches and policies which clarified roles, responsibilities and reporting arrangements for key staff. Most progress was made where action plans detailed a clear timetable for improvement and there was regular monitoring.

*Case study illustrating managing change*

*The chief executive of the **National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs**, supported by the national committee chair, led an effective programme of significant change and improvement. New policies and procedures were introduced, supported by designated lead roles in the national staff team. A comprehensive action plan was put in place which responded to each of the key issues raised in the previous monitoring inspection. This provided a clear focus and an agenda for improvement across the organisation as a whole.*

34. Many NVYOs involved young people effectively in decision-making. Grants were used well to support, for instance, the development of local user forums, trustee advisory groups, youth councils and national members' conferences. NVYOs with large or complex structures faced particular challenges in ensuring common approaches and good communication. For organisations with little history of youth work, moves to give young people real influence represented a significant departure from traditional adult-led approaches.

*Case study illustrating young people in decision-making*

*At **UK Youth**, young people took responsibility for organising and managing the National Members' Group. They adhered closely to committee roles and expected behaviour. They were articulate, positive and passionate about the issues discussed. Many had previous experience of representing others in their local clubs and projects and were able to draw on this in their work at national level.*

35. Resources were deployed efficiently to meet the objectives of the scheme. NVYOs were proficient in attracting and managing a wide range of external funds to complement their grant. Financial management of local programmes was generally sound and almost all NVYOs met the DfES's reporting requirements. In a minority of cases, there were inefficiencies, for example where funds were devolved to affiliated groups through several layers of middle management. There were also examples of projects run well below capacity or with poor retention rates which resulted in higher costs. Some managers took prompt action to redirect resources and renegotiate targets where they were not being met, but this was not always the case. Occasionally, financial concerns diverted too much time from the youth work itself.
36. Many productive partnership arrangements extended and enhanced the work of NVYOs. Larger national organisations often worked effectively with other agencies. Partners valued the flexibility and responsiveness of NVYOs and, in particular, their ability to engage hard to reach groups.

*Case study showing a partnership approach*

*The **National Association of Youth Theatres** (NAYT) delivered much of its work in partnership with other organisations. Provision was enhanced by good partnership arrangements with, for example, youth theatre groups, local authority arts departments and individual theatres. Such collaboration enabled the NAYT to use its resources efficiently, for instance, using theatres as venues for training and promoting events through its community arts networks. Young people valued the opportunity to work alongside different professional artists and other youth theatre practitioners, which provided them with a range of theatrical skills and useful practical tools.*

37. Locally, the picture was far more uneven: many workers simply did not have the time to develop the range of partnerships to which they aspired. Overall, there was insufficient joint planning between NVYOs and their partners, particularly local authority youth services. This led to duplication of effort, for example in training volunteers and developing curriculum materials. Partnership work was generally better when led by local authority youth services.<sup>3</sup>
38. A new policy objective for the scheme was to encourage joint work between NVYOs and Connexions. Such links were only partially achieved and progress in this area was slow overall. The quality of joint work varied considerably across the country. NVYOs were unable to achieve a consistent national approach because of the differing natures, structures and priorities of local Connexions services. Smaller NVYOs had insufficient capacity to develop and sustain local relationships and attend meetings while Connexions were not always responsive to the approaches made to them. The potential of such partnership work was therefore not fully realised.

*Examples of work with Connexions*

*Work with Connexions increased the availability of advice and guidance for young people on **Fairbridge** programmes. This arrangement was of mutual benefit, particularly at difficult transition times when young people moved from the programme to work-based apprenticeship schemes or returned to education. In some centres, Connexions personal advisers were part of the staff team and held regular drop-in clinics where they were accessible to young people who would not otherwise use Connexions centres.*

*The **Tall Ships Youth Trust** aims to bring young people together from diverse backgrounds and has worked successfully with a wide range of partners to support young people who would not normally have the opportunity to take part, such as looked after young people or those supervised by Youth Offending Teams. Connexions played a key role in promoting the scheme to personal advisers, identifying young people who were not in education or employment, supporting their involvement and contributing to the costs.*

<sup>3</sup> See *Effective youth services* (HMI 2445), Ofsted, 2005.

39. NVYOs often attract experienced staff of high calibre, but the continuity of some programmes was at risk from difficulties in recruiting and retaining them. This is a long standing issue. Too many NVYOs relied too heavily on one individual with oversight of the programme or youth work in general. A significant investment was made in training staff and volunteers, who often come from the communities served by local projects. Training sessions which were observed were of a high standard and engaged a wide range of participants successfully, but processes to evaluate the impact of such training lacked rigour.
40. Although progress has been made since the last grant scheme, quality assurance remains an area for improvement.<sup>4</sup> The best quality assurance arrangements included the setting and monitoring of targets, and systems for recording and evaluating the work by staff, managers and young people themselves. In most cases, NVYOs made satisfactory progress in introducing new self-assessment arrangements, a specific requirement of the scheme. However, few NVYOs had established processes for observing youth work regularly and were therefore unable to report confidently on the quality of provision in dispersed units. Self-assessment was not fully embedded in most cases. NVYOs making good progress had often identified a lead senior officer or established a quality assurance group to take responsibility for this area. Feedback from partners and the use of external consultants, as in this example, also contributed to improvement.

*Case study on using evaluation to improve provision*

**Groundwork UK** commissioned an external evaluation of one of its projects. An analysis of documentation and end of programme review took place, as well as interviews with providers and stakeholders, interviews with focus groups of previous participants and informal meetings with parents. Changes based on the findings included establishing a post to monitor participants' destinations and developing closer working relationships with schools, Connexions and education welfare services.

41. Monitoring and evaluation by a minority of organisations were exemplary. In the best examples, management information informed strategic thinking and operational practice. However, across the scheme as a whole there was a lack of rigour: much evaluation was impressionistic and, in some cases, overly optimistic. Data collection remained a weakness in many NVYOs. Limited investment in ICT and administration meant that many organisations lacked the necessary support systems and, too often, managers did not have access to the full range of information they needed. High demands were placed on volunteers and part-time staff to provide detailed information, sometimes without the resources to support them. In other cases, local groups failed to appreciate the importance of

<sup>4</sup> *National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grants 1999–2002* (HMI 573), Ofsted, 2003.

regular reporting to keep national records up to date. Too many NVYOs were unable to report reliably on their progress against overall targets or provide a detailed analysis of participation by different groups of young people on their programmes.

## Notes

42. Ofsted monitored and evaluated the grant scheme and reported on the DfES funded work. Over the three years, inspectors visited 56 organisations, selected to reflect the broad range of work undertaken and the different types of NVYOs receiving grants. Monitoring by inspectors took the form of:

- visits to NVYOs new to the scheme during the first six months
- visits to over 130 individual sessions of youth work to judge young people's achievement and the quality of youth work practice
- extended monitoring exercises, conducted over three months, which allowed a more comprehensive analysis of how well an organisation was managing its grant and to what effect
- further reviews of individual NVYOs to assess the effectiveness of action taken where significant weaknesses had been identified.

NVYOs subject to an extended monitoring exercise are listed in the Annex.

43. Evidence was drawn from self-assessments, as well as monitoring and evaluation reports provided by each organisation at intervals of 6, 18 and 36 months.

## Further information

### Publications

*National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grants Scheme 2002–2005; notes of guidance for applicants and application form*, DfES, 2001.

*Inspecting youth work: a revised framework for inspection* (HMI 268), Ofsted, 2001.

*Transforming youth work, resourcing excellent youth services* (ISBN 1 84185 865 X), DfES, 2002.

*National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grants 1999–2002* (HMI 573), Ofsted, 2003.

*Self-assessment for voluntary youth organisations – self-assessment guidance and schedule*, DfES, 2003.

## **Website links**

Connexions: [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Department for Education and Skills (DfES): [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS): [www.ncvys.org.uk](http://www.ncvys.org.uk)

Ofsted: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## Annex. List of NVYOs inspected

Those subject to extended monitoring are indicated by italics.

African-Caribbean Evangelical Alliance  
Army Cadet Force  
Artswork  
*Baptist Union of Great Britain*  
Brathay Hall Trust  
British Gospel Arts Consortium  
British Red Cross  
British Sports Trust  
Community Education Development Centre (ContinYou)  
*Changemakers*  
*Children's Express*  
Church of England Youth Services  
Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council  
Council for Environmental Education  
Crime Concern  
Crusaders  
CYFA Pathfinder Ventures Ltd  
Dawcliffe Education Foundation  
Development Education Association  
Divert Trust  
Duke of Edinburgh's Award  
*Endeavour Training Limited*  
*Fairbridge*  
Focus  
Foyer Federation  
*Friends of Young Deaf People*  
Frontier Youth Trust  
*Groundwork UK*  
*Leap Confronting Conflict*  
Makor Association of Jewish Youth  
Methodist Association  
National Association of Clubs for Young People  
*National Association of Youth Theatres*  
National Council for Voluntary Youth Services / British Youth Council  
*National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs*  
National Youth Music Theatre  
National Forum for the Development of Rural Youth Work  
*National Trust*  
Oasis  
Ocean Youth Trust North West  
PHAB  
Philharmonia Orchestra  
*Princes Trust xl Network*



Sail Training Association (Tall Ships Youth Trust)

Save the Children Fund

Shelter

Skylight Circus

Spurgeon's Child Care

St. John Ambulance Youth

*The Scout Association*

*UK Youth*

UK Youth Parliament

Worth Unlimited

YWCA England and Wales

Youth Action Network

Youth for Christ