

Attitudinal Barriers to Engaging Young People in Positive Activities

Literature and Communications Review

EdComms



Research Report No
DCSF-RR140

*Attitudinal Barriers to Engaging
Young People in Positive Activities
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Key Findings and Recommendations

The aim of this project is to generate insight from existing evidence to underpin the creation of a communications plan to support the delivery of Aiming High objectives. To develop this communication strategy, DCSF has commissioned Customer Insight work through the COI to build an evidence base and hence advance their understanding. The three areas of inquiry are:

- Understanding of barriers and motivators to participation
This is fundamental in order to develop meaningful messages to overcome these barriers
- Understanding of young people's attitudes to services
In particular, what young people value in youth services and what language is the best to talk to them about these services.
- Developing insights on parents' views on participation
It is important to know how much parents know about activities in their areas and how much they know about their value and benefits for their children.

To address these objectives, the research was structured in two stages; firstly, a literature review on the barriers and facilitators to participation and, secondly, a review of communications initiatives aimed at promoting positive activities to young people. This chapter outlines the main findings in these areas of inquiry and Edcoms's recommendations for taking forward DCSF's work.

Balance of evidence and research insight

There is no single, comprehensive study of barriers and enablers to participation in structured group activities, or 'positive activities', based on research developed in the United Kingdom. Rather, a number of pieces of research include insights relevant to the work's objectives.

However, this is not the case in the United States. Research in this country has focussed in depth on the question of attitudinal barriers to the participation on young people in positive activities. This might suggest that valuable lessons for the UK can be learned from this work. However, the differing socio-economic and policy contexts led to a decision to exclude from this review research evidence from outside the UK.

UK studies on positive activities have tended to focus on the benefits they have on the development of young people rather than on the attitudinal barriers to engagement. When research projects on the attitudinal barriers to positive activities are available, they generally refer to volunteering or sports. The evidence on barriers to participation to arts, outdoor and uniformed activities is even less prevalent. This is a gap in our understanding to be filled.

- *We recommend that the DCSF and COI conduct primary research into the barriers to structured out-of-school group activities in general.*

Physical barriers

Although the primary focus of this report is to investigate the attitudinal and behavioural barriers to participation in activities, acknowledging practical barriers is an important step to establish the context within which this study takes place.

Positive activities, volunteering in particular, are perceived by young people as time consuming. Those from poorer backgrounds and with many siblings find lack of time particularly problematic. Young people have to juggle different priorities and often feel they simply cannot fit positive activities into their daily routines.

Lack of cheap transport can also be a barrier to participation, particularly for those living in rural communities and for young disabled people. Cost is another common problem. High prices can further contribute to perpetuating inequalities between different groups of young people.

The feelings of young people about the locations of activities are also important. Young people should feel some kind of ownership over the venue in which the activity takes place. It is, however, important to choose neutral locations to avoid associating a certain activity with a certain subculture. This links with worries about safety from young people and their parents, particularly relating to certain areas.

Inappropriate timings are also a barrier. Activities should be provided when young people are out of school. Activities held in late afternoons, evenings, weekends and summer and winter holidays can lead to increased take-up. Monitoring the use of TV, internet and videogames can also be effective in making young people aware of how much time they are spending in sedentary activities.

Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers can be divided in two groups: internal if they come from within the individual and external if they originate from the opinion of influential figures in young people's lives.

Internal barriers

The general feeling among young people is that there is not enough to do. Various pieces of evidence confirm the perception that there are not enough activities on offer for them. Further, they do not think that there are enough locations that give them a sense of belonging and ownership.

- *We recommend that the DCSF develops an approach to providing information to young people that makes it both more accessible and more easily understood and absorbed.*

Confidence is influential in determining participation. Often, those excluded from positive activities fear rejection, have low self esteem, have limited aspirations and lowered expectations. Evidence shows that tackling aspiration and giving opportunities to young people early in their lives will have a positive impact on their participation during adolescence.

- *We recommend that a communications campaign designed to promote positive activities targets young people as early as possible in order to develop their sustained engagement over time.*

There is no consensus on the importance of rewards to participation. Some rewards may be appreciated, but not necessarily in the form of money. Opportunities to travel or to meet people, as well as enrichment of one's CV can be powerful incentives, as can subsidising transport costs. This shows that monetary rewards are not the only avenues.

Positive activities have the most beneficial effect when the engagement is perpetuated over time. Committing to an activity for a prolonged period is therefore ideal, but sometimes young people struggle to do the same thing for a sustained period. Offering different incentives and motivators at different stages of the involvement can help prolong their engagement.

- *We recommend that the DCSF develops communications approaches that aim to engage young people in positive activities in the long-term rather than for a brief period.*

External barriers

The role that external figures (parents, friends, youth workers, role models, teachers and schools) play in the life of young people can become barriers to or enablers of their participation in positive activities. Family support, in particular, is an essential enabler while the lack of it is an important barrier. This relates to socio-economic issues, too, as those with poorer backgrounds tend to be less supported and encouraged by parents to take part in positive activities. To counterbalance the lack of supports by parents in some young people's lives, adult role models are important. They help young people to choose how to become involved and to support them through enduring activities. Some evidence highlights that role models with a similar socio-economic, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds can wield more influence. Other evidence disagrees, claiming that strong and effective support by adults is valuable regardless of background.

- *We recommend that role models occupy a prominent position in communications activities designed to promote uptake among young people.*

Access through school can engage economically disadvantaged students in positive activities. It can also improve the image of school as a 'cool' or 'fun' place. Those excluded from schools or hostile to them, however, might refuse to participate in anything relating to an institution that they do not trust. It follows that there is no golden rule. The role of school is important and delicate, and any organisation keen to collaborate with schools, even if only using their premises, should be aware of the potential pitfalls.

- *We recommend that, if the DCSF chooses to involve schools in the promotion of positive activities, the delicate role of schools is considered.*

Positive activities, especially volunteering, have some challenges in their image among young people. Volunteering is sometimes perceived as the realm of white, middle-class, middle-aged women. Efforts have recently been made to change this image and they have been successful. Involving young people in decision-making, planning and peer advocacy are powerful approaches to changing the image of certain positive activities.

Despite this, there is no evidence of an image problem among structured group activities per se. Rather, certain activities are perceived as the realm of those with certain demographic characteristics. Friends and their opinions are important to young people. Negative peer pressure therefore influences young people's perceptions of an activity and this can be an important obstacle to participation.

Levels of engagement

Different motivators and enablers can work at different levels of engagement. It is important to develop a succession of messages aimed at involving young people, to be followed by other messages to make sure they remain engaged and, finally, to try to teach them valuable skills that can be good for their personal or career development and that can be transmitted to others.

- *We recommend that communications designed to promote positive activities are initially made attractive by highlighting short term, but expected, benefits. Positive activities could be marketed as something fun to do, a new place to socialise, and relief from boredom.*

Once young people are involved in (or re-engaged) in an activity, further motivation can be given by providing opportunities to engage in otherwise inaccessible activities. Travelling, playing in an important competition, trying an expensive or locally unavailable leisure activity, or learning something new can be powerful ways to motivate engagement. The presence of role models and the progressive creation of a positive rapport with the young person can be a source of further motivation in participation.

- *We recommend that communications designed to promote positive activities develop secondary 'hooks' to maintain engagement. Exposure to otherwise accessible activities and the development of a relationship of trust with a positive role model can be valuable in doing so.*

A longer-term motivator, which provides high levels of added value, can be the perspective of learning new skills that can be good for job or leisure related issues.

- *We recommend that these approaches are followed by another layer designed to give further motivation. Training courses, UCAS points, leadership and management experiences are examples of where benefit can be highlighted at this stage.*

By structuring a communications campaign that takes young people through these different stages, barriers can be overcome. Having fun and extending social opportunities can reduce lack of confidence; new activities and new positive figures a young person can identify with can raise aspirations; and chances to learn new recognisable skills can reduce the feeling of disempowerment.

Minority groups

Although young people belonging to minority groups are affected by the same attitudinal barriers as their peers, they can be faced with some other issues that further limit their chances to participate in group activities. Disabled teenagers suffer from bullying and can sometimes feel unwelcome at leisure facilities. While special provision and more competent staff are desired, they still want to be treated as young people.

Ethnic minorities can also face specific barriers relating to language, lack of cultural representation and perceptions that certain activities are 'not for them'. Parental views and religious objections can be a problem too, especially for Muslims.

- *We recommend that communications activities take account of these different ethnic considerations and frame positive activities in messages that fit with religious teachings. For example, volunteering among Muslims can be seen as part of a duty to help your community.*

Gender also plays a significant role. Certain activities are perceived as more or less 'boyish' or 'girly'. Sports, for example, often better fit the idea of masculinity than femininity. The competitiveness and violence perceived as inherent to sports are seen as in line with male identity. Both boys and girls think that the opposite sex gets more opportunities for positive activities.

- *We recommend that communications activities highlight the fun and social opportunities of sport and outdoor activities, rather than their competitive aspects.*

LGBT teenagers are put off by the scarcity of art, books and plays with sexual minority characters. Participation in sports and outdoor activities can be shunned due to embarrassment resulting from a lack of privacy in changing rooms.

Communication

This section draws on the evidence from past communications campaigns. It goes on to make further practical recommendations on communicating with young people.

Audience

Young people from minority groups and experts on communication agree that positive activities should be promoted as mainstream provision to all young people, irrespectively of their demographics. Treating positive activities as one programme for one audience has also the potential of downplaying the stereotypes related to certain types of activities.

- *We recommend that young people are treated as one audience who can benefit from positive activities, despite the attitudinal differences among various groups of young people.*

A plurality of communication techniques is most likely to reach those with particular barriers.

- *We recommend the use of a combination of different messages and media to reach all types of young people collectively.*

Messages

Evidence shows the importance of developing background research to understand what the core interests are and what young people are attracted by.

- *We recommend the development of messages rooted in the distinct advantages of positive activities, rather than one generic message on positive activities being a 'good thing'.*

Despite this, an overarching slogan has the advantage of helping the creation of a recognisable brand. The language used should be simple and not condescending. To avoid this, it is better not attempt to use 'youthspeak'.

- *We recommend avoiding the mimicry of youth language and instead the use of simple and plain language.*

Messages effective in the past were designed to convey a sense of control and empowerment by using phrases such as 'it's your choice' or 'it's up to you'.

Media

There are a variety of media that can be used to convey messages. Young people are media savvy and they consume a wide range of media. Using a combination of channels will help to address young people from different angles and maximise the impacts of messages.

Magazines, blogs, text messaging and viral marketing should be taken in consideration when communicating to teenagers. Websites are the main sources of information, but need to be interactive, creative and their design modern and constantly updated. There is widespread agreement that word of mouth and local face-to-face communication to young people and their parents remain pivotal.

Marketing and promotion

Celebrity endorsements work, but true passion for the issue and practical involvement in a project are essential. Otherwise, the presence of a celebrity is judged as fake and the effects can be counterproductive.

Being creative is important, but that does not only mean creating a great website. Messages can be embedded in TV programs, new gadgets can be created and new flexi card systems can be implemented, to mention a few.

- *We recommend that the DCSF considers developing an umbrella logo for positive activities that could become a symbol of trust, commitment and identity.*

The location of advertisements should be carefully chosen. Advertisement should contain easily understood information and be available in a variety of formats.

- *We recommend that, while events should be held in neutral places, advertisements should be targeted at where young people hang-out.*

Involving young people

Youth-led projects are where young people are able to influence decisions, policies and services. Such involvement means that young people will plan, manage and evaluate projects, as well as benefit from them. Involving young people in key decisions allows them to enjoy some degree of autonomy and ownership, but also helps them to develop more realistic perceptions of their control over external factors.

Peer advocacy is suggested by many sources. The evidence suggests that there is nothing more efficient than harnessing friendship, one of the most important values for young people, to recruit others to positive activities.

- *We recommend that the DCSF involves young people in all stages of the development of a communications strategy to promote participation in positive activities.*

Key Messages

One of the key findings of this report is that the evidence base needed for the development of a communications campaign is somewhat lacking. Despite many powerful insights into the attitudinal barriers facing young people that have the potential to engage in some form given by the evidence, it cannot be safely said that the evidence presents a complete picture. To gain a full understanding of attitudinal barriers across different groups and activities will require primary research.

However, from the available evidence, it is still possible to construct tentative recommendations of what could be key messages. This section identifies these messages for two broad audiences into which we have the most significant insight at present; young people and adults.

1. Messages to young people

1.1 “Try something new”

Impact: Trying a new sport or an outdoor activity is fun and a good way to meet people and learn new things.

Why: There are many possible activities you could join. You can also add to your CV by taking on new activities and responsibilities. Employers appreciate when you are engaged in something outside school.

How: Go to a youth centre or contact your Council to get informed about what is available in your area. Most leisure places offer a free taster session. Try it and if you do not enjoy it, tell the organisers why you do not like it and how it could be improved.

1.2 “You decide”

Impact: You really have a choice in what to do and how to do it. You can be as involved as you want and dedicate as much time as you wish.

Why: Young people who participate in activities can feel much more confident and are less likely to be bullied¹. Making important decisions and participating in group work is fun: nobody tells you what to do, it's up to you and your friends to decide.

How: Join an activity and ask the youth workers to be as involved as possible in the planning, managing and evaluation of the activity. They will be happy to see you wanting to be involved.

1.3 “It's learning but it's not school”

Impact: You can learn a lot of new skills by volunteering, playing new sports, learning arts, music and drama techniques. This is so different from school, though. It's up to you to decide what to learn and how to develop your skills and, most importantly, it's fun.

Why: Teachers have to be tough to make sure everybody learns to master some core skills. Positive activities are just the opposite: everyone can develop the skills they love the most and youth workers are there to help you reach your potential, not to tell you what to do.

¹ Nfp Synergy (2007) Typical Young People: a study of what young people are really like today London: Nfp

How: Schools may provide information on positive activities, or offer some of their buildings as a site for activities. But don't be suspicious! Even if the activity might be held in a school facility, it is really not school.

2. Messages to parents

2.1 “Good for them, good for others”

Impact: Positive activities are as important for your child's development as school itself. While bringing benefits to your child's behaviour and overall wellbeing, most of the time your child also gets the chance to help others and make a difference - by volunteering, or coaching younger children or helping disabled peers.

Why: Young people participating in positive activities get along better with their parents². At the same time they have much more fun than in school. All religions see helping your own community as a duty.

How: Contact your local Council and ask what's on offer in your local area. Help your child decide what activity they would enjoy the most.

2.2 “Good for the present, good for the future”

Impact: Employers are more likely to hire someone who has been involved in other activities apart from school. At the same time, out-of-school activities relieve boredom and make your child more social, integrated and active.

Why: Activities sustained for a longer period of time bring about the most positive results³. This is recognised by experts, youth workers and employers. Make sure your child develops a passion and builds it up for a long time.

How: Help your child decide which activity would be the best for them. Consider their present and their future.

2.3 “Your encouragement counts”

Impact: The cost of positive activities is a problem for young people⁴. If you encourage them to start an activity and help them cover the cost of it, they will be more inclined to participate.

Why: The role of parents is pivotal in determining and encouraging young people's participation in positive activities. Research has proved your encouragement leads to greater and sustained involvement⁵.

How: Suggest possible activities and be supportive. If the young person is not put off by it, offer to help by driving him or her to attend these activities or offering some small but important help, like washing the sports kit.

² *ibid*

³ Feinstein, L. et al. (2005) *Leisure Context in Adolescence and Their Effects on Adult Outcomes* page 23

⁴ Wikeley, F. et al (2007) *Educational relationships outside school: why access is important* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁵ Smith, D. (1999) 'Poor marketing or the decline of altruism? Young people and volunteering in the UK' in *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 4 (4): 375

1. Background

In recent years, the Government has placed emphasis on positive development of young people that can be achievable not only through education in schools but through positive experiences in leisure time out of school. Research has highlighted the fact that taking part in out of-school-time activities during childhood and adolescence can influence the transition to adulthood and young people's future outcomes⁶.

Evidence has shown that what matters is not the nature of the activity per se, whether a teenager is playing basketball or fundraising for a local charity, but it is the level of structure in the delivery of the activity which is important⁷.

This is the reason behind the choice to study 'positive activities' together rather than relying on different studies on the benefit of or the barriers to participation in volunteering, sports or artistic activities. This umbrella term referring to structured group activities is useful to understand the nature of involvement of young people in group activities beyond the specificity of a particular leisure activity.

The term 'positive activities' includes sports, creative activities such as dance, drama and music, volunteering, engagement in the local community (eg. Youth Opportunity Fund), outward bound activity (eg. Youth Hostel Association - Do it for Real), Brownies / Guides, Cubs / Scouts, traditional youth clubs, Duke of Edinburgh awards, Prince's Trust, and many, many others.

Despite the breadth and variety of activities, a quarter of young people do not participate in any positive activities. This group disproportionately include those at risk of the poorest outcomes⁸. The DCSF is intentioned to work to increase the access to positive activities to make sure that potentially all young people can take part in one or more positive activities.

Aware of the many problems that can arise between wishing to take part in an activity and actually being able to do it, the DCSF published the report 'Aiming High', which addressed these concerns to make sure young people have greater access to the type provision they want. Practical issues that impede participation like cost, transport or time have been considered. However, the DCSF believes that further motivational and attitudinal barriers still exist to accessing youth activities. They also believe that effective communications will be dependant on understanding what messages will overcome these barriers most effectively as well as what messages will work best in motivating young people to access the services on offer.

In planning communications to support the delivery of Aiming High, DCSF has identified the need:

- To publicise the full range of opportunities and investment for activities and facilities in order to meet demand from young people themselves, their parents and the community
- To ensure that young people have the information they need to make the most of their free time by taking part in positive activities and access the services on offer to them locally
- To ensure that young people believe there is a 'place to go' in their local area and that it is 'for them' so that they make use of the facilities on offer for them

⁶ DCSF and TM Treasury (2007) *Aiming High: a ten year strategy for positive activities* page 3

⁷ *ibid*, page 21

⁸ *ibid* page 61

EdComs has been commissioned by the DCSF through the COI to develop this piece of research on the evidence on barriers and enablers to participation in positive activities. The research includes a substantial section on communication, given its pivotal role to address young people, especially those currently not engaged in any positive activities.

2. Objectives

The overarching aim of this research project is to provide the evidence and understanding to support a Customer Insight process designed to deliver on the needs of Aiming High Communications.

To fulfil this overarching aim, the research project will have two main objectives:

- **Drivers and barriers to participation:** this part will provide a comprehensive overview of what is currently known about barriers and motivators to participation in positive activities for young people. A distinction will be made when dealing with barriers:
 - Physical (or practical) barriers - This refers to those barriers that physically bar young people from taking advantage of opportunities for positive activities, such as a lack of public transport. This also refers to barriers that are practical or logistical in nature, such as the lack of opportunities in the locality or the high costs of a leisure activity. This is an area in which DCSF already has a strong understanding resulting from previous research.
 - Attitudinal (or behavioural) barriers - This refers to those barriers that result from attitudes held by young people or those people whose opinion they value: parents, youth workers, teachers or friends. They include barriers that come from within the young person, such as lack of confidence, or those influenced by other people's opinions, such as the perception that a particular activity would be viewed unfavourably by their friends. This is an area in which DCSF has a less granular understanding at present.

The research will therefore focus primarily on uncovering evidence on attitudinal rather than physical barriers, while acknowledging that physical barriers are significant. The research will also take account of the probability that some attitudinal barriers will manifest themselves as physical in practice, such as the unwillingness of a parent to drive their child to a particular activity due to a negative view of the area where the activity is held.

On contacting key stakeholder, EdComs will make clear that DCSF is not duplicating previous work on physical barriers and is instead focusing on attitudinal barriers. The analysis of these types of barriers will lead to the second objective of the research: the understanding of what messages will help to overcome potential attitudinal barriers. The review of evidence on what messages work with young people and through which channels they are conveyed better will be the focus of the second part of the report:

- **Communications to young people** - This part will provide summaries of evaluations of existing communications activities designed to promote positive activities to young people from both local and overseas projects. This would include the sharing of learning from evaluations of work to promote youth services to young people to identify examples of good practice.

Given the nature of evaluations of communication strategies (often private documents very seldom shared with the public) the research will try to overcome the scarcity of information in this area by pulling examples of communication strategies aimed at young people from overseas case studies, too. When possible, however, evidence from the UK will be given more prominence.

3. Methodology

This section focuses on the methodology used to fulfil the objectives of the study. Adequately investigating the area of perceptual barriers to young people engaging in positive activities presented a particular set of challenges, of which the central one was ensuring that all the pertinent research in the area was gathered and assessed within the available timeframe. Only by doing so would the research objectives be fulfilled.

There are two distinct sections to this project as described in chapter 2, which we approached with similar methodologies. Rather than repeating similar explanations twice, we will describe the methodology once, highlighting when necessary the small differences between the two. These sections therefore ran concurrently. The approach we followed consisted of three stages in both sections as well as a fourth unplanned stage that followed the interim review meeting with DCSF and COI stakeholders:

- Desk Scoping
- Contact with Stakeholders
- Assessment and Rating
- Interim review point: booster interviews

3.1 Desk Scoping

The first stage of the research process focused on investigating into the existing evidence.

This included searching the following sources:

- Searches of journal articles, books and conference proceedings. This involved consulting the following resources:
 - SAGE Journals Online
 - Google Scholar
 - Google web search
- Website searches and enquiries with relevant NGOs and governmental organisations, both in England and the UK
- Searches on the archives of the British Library and the London School of Economics Library, among the largest social sciences libraries in Europe

This scoping exercise provided a range of sources of qualitative, quantitative and secondary research. These included sources from Government departments and agencies as well as key stakeholder organisations. We used our own searches to extend the preliminary list provided in the research brief.

As relevant reports were identified through these avenues, the references within these reports were followed as a way of further identifying relevant research reports. The references from DCSF's list of sources included in the brief were used as a starting point for further investigation.

3.2 Contact with stakeholders

During the commissioning of the research, it became apparent that a search for existing evidence for both the literature and the communication review would benefit from the input of experts in these areas. DCSF's staff members agreed to construct a list of key stakeholders for EdComs to contact with a specific set of questions. DCSF provided a list of four contacts while Edcoms suggested other expert contacts.

To facilitate this process, EdComs constructed a letter to be distributed to all contacts as well as topic guides to be used in conversations, both developed in consultation with DCSF and COI. The topic guide was reserved for distribution by EdComs once direct contact had been made. The letter and topic guide are included in the appendices to this report. This approach allowed us to speak with the great majority of the contacts in the time allowed.

This process yielded a number of insightful pieces of evidence on barriers and drivers to participation in some types of positive activities, with documents on volunteering being dominant. The interviews also revealed a large number of further expert contacts that potentially had knowledge of existing research. This allowed us to use a 'snowballing'⁹ approach to identify the likely sources of pertinent information and to contact them.

We conducted interviews with individuals from the following organisations or institutions:

- UK Youth
- 4Children
- National Children Bureau
- Changemakers
- Youth Task Force
- British Youth Council
- V informed
- 1 Million
- Salmon Youth Centre
- Bolton Lads and Girls Club
- University of Glamorgan

The interviews themselves have not been used as evidence in the literature review, but as a resource to complete the scoping.

⁹ Snowballing is a common practice in social science research where research subjects are recruited through existing research subjects. For desk research, this means having possible future interviewees identify further potential interviewees with expertise in certain areas. In this study, this extended to identifying not only individuals but also institutions and organisations that might provide useful research evidence.

3.3 Assessment and rating

The desk scoping and stakeholder contact phases were successful in uncovering a wealth of relevant and reliable information on barriers and enablers to participation and, to a lesser extent, to communication practices. A vital next step was to consider in detail the reliability and relevance of each source to make a judgement on whether each was suitable for inclusion in the final reporting stage.

This assessment was outlined in a scoping table presented to DCSF at an interim review stage. This final report takes account of the relevant and robust reports examples of these further sources.

3.4 Interim review point - Booster interviews

On 14 July 2008, approximately half-way through the communication and literature reviews, EdComs presented the interim findings of the research, in an interim review, as agreed at the commissioning stage. The purpose was to check progress of the project, explore the findings of the research up to that point, and confirm a way forward for the next phase. EdComs gave a presentation to DCSF which outlined a suggested structure for the final report, the findings in the existing evidence base and the gaps in it.

As a consequence of the review point, we agreed to contact a number of other experts specifically on communication, as the evidence collected in this area had been limited. We conducted interviews or exchanged material via email communication with members of the following organisations as well as central and local government bodies:

- National Centre for Volunteering Youth Service
- DCMS
- Participation Works
- Blackpool Council
- UK Youth
- KidsCompany
- YouthNet
- Fairbridge
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award

EdComs, COI and DCSF representatives also agreed to include in the report pieces of evidence on communication that were not methodologically impeccable, given the nature of communication research, often in the form of memos, recommendations or reviews rather than rigorous academic articles.

3.5 Final outputs

There are two final outputs from this research project. A final presentation was given at the DCSF on 31 July 2008 and this full written report was handed by the third week of August. The presentation, given before the delivery of the final written report, focussed on the key findings from the research and the rationale to support these findings for both literature and communication reviews.

This report sets-out the key findings and recommendations on barriers, motivations, message development, media choice, marketing and promoting as well as good practice in communications in the areas of interest.

4. Balance of evidence

Before the main body of this report will present the findings on the barriers and enablers to young people's participation in positive activities, this chapter will describe some preliminary findings that constitute important premises to better understand the analysis in the following chapters. This chapter will describe the international framework useful to understand how the UK research places itself in the international market; it will also deal with the abundance or scarcity of evidence relating to different types of positive activities. The chapter will go on to explain why it is harder to come across documents on the barriers and enablers to participation rather than reports on the positive effects of participation to positive activities. This chapter will refer to the evidence found for both the literature and the communication review.

4.1 UK evidence base

As discussed at the Review Point meeting, the evidence relating to the barriers and motivations to become involved in positive activities is limited. After speaking to more than twenty experts and making extensive searches on numerous research databases, we conclude that there is no single research report that has focused exclusively on the attitudinal barriers to young people between 13 and 19 being involved in positive activities.

What we did find, however, was a large number of research pieces that touched upon this topic, despite it not being their main research objective. Several reports focused on the barriers to participation in one particular activity (especially volunteering and sport). Other focused on positive activities in general, but their main area of interest was the effects that participation has on the positive development of the young person, rather than the causes of why some people participate and other do not. The next sub-chapters will look at each of the issues touched upon in this section in more details.

4.2 International evidence base

Scholars from the United States have historically been more interested in this area of study. In particular, Joseph L. Mahoney and Jacquelynne S Eccles have written extensively about positive youth development, the role of positive activities and the causes affecting participation of young people in these¹⁰.

The journal 'New Directions for Youth Development' dedicated a whole issue to this topic in Spring 2005 (Issue number 105). In this edition, the journal published a collection of articles focused on research question similar to ours. *To Participate or Not to Participate* by Borden et al, outlines in its introduction the aim of learning 'about the processes through which adolescents initiate their participation in (out of school time) programmes and either persist or drop out, particularly for youth who are traditionally underserved by such programmes, such as ethnic minority youth'¹¹.

The availability of this international evidence base suggests that there might be valuable evidence from which the UK can learn. Despite the breadth of information that we could have gathered by focusing our research on studies like the ones mentioned above, we decided to be prudent in applying findings based on a different cultural, political and social background

¹⁰ See for example:

Mahoney, J. L., Parente, M. E., & Lord, H. (2007). 'After-school program engagement: Developmental consequences and links to program quality and content' in *The Elementary School Journal*, 107, 385-404.

Mahoney, J. L., Larson, R. W., & Eccles, J. S. (Eds.) (2005). *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

¹¹ Borden, L. M. et al (2005) 'To participate or not to participate: That is the question' in *New Directions for Youth Development* Vol.105:33

to a UK context. Our judgement was that, although more cumbersome, focusing on many UK studies that partly touched upon our topic of interest rather than on a few overseas completely relevant pieces would avoid the risk to draw conclusions from premises that might have not applied at all to British young people. For these reasons, this report will look like a jigsaw puzzle, putting together bits and pieces of several studies shaping a complex but robust understanding of the barriers and motivators to participation in positive activities.

One of the conclusions of a piece of research on outdoor learning, clearly confirms this point:

*“A good proportion of the research in this review originated from beyond the UK and there is a particular need for more UK-based research into a number of aspects of outdoor learning as well as into the sort of fears and concerns that young people can bring to different kinds of learning situations beyond the classroom”.*¹²

4.3 Cause and effect

When looking at UK-based evidence, we encounter a further issue. A large majority of the work on positive activities in general or specifically on sports, volunteering, arts, uniformed or outdoor activities focuses on the effects these activities seem to have on the development of a young person. A solid literature exists on the effects that positive activities during adolescence have on the physical wellbeing or school performance¹³, on reduction of crime and risk of offending¹⁴, on increased civic engagement¹⁵, on career opportunities, positive relationship with parents¹⁶ and on other types of effects.

The abundance of research on the effects rather than the causes of participation can be explained by the relatively straight forward methodological development necessary to provide substantial evidence to ‘prove’ the effectiveness of a programme. Most of the research on the effects of positive activities compares and contrasts two or more groups of apparently similar young people; controls for factors such as income, ethnicity or parental influence; and then shows that those involved in a programme achieve better results than those not involved. Our scope, however, was not to prove that positive activities were good for young people. The Government’s intentions to tackle the barriers and inequalities related to access to positive activities already entails an understanding that they have a positive influence on the young person.

The findings reported in the following chapters, often come from research pieces primarily focusing on some of the effects of positive activities. In the majority of these documents, however, we could find a line, a paragraph or at times a subchapter touching upon the issues of barriers and motivators to access and participation.

¹² NFER (2004) *A review of research on outdoor learning* Shrewsbury: Field Studies Council

¹³ Feinstein L. et al (2005) *Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes* (online only)

¹⁴ Arts Council England (2005) *The Arts and Young People at Risk of Offending* London: Zeta

¹⁵ Nfp Synergy (2007) *Typical Young People: a study of what young people are really like today* London: Nfp page

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¹⁶ *ibid* page 23

4.4 Terminology

The term 'positive activities' rarely occurs in the evidence base. The exception is when it is used in local or central government documents. Sometimes, the term 'organised out-of-school activities'¹⁷ or 'out-of-school-hours activities'¹⁸. Other times, interesting articles evolved around the context of leisure activities¹⁹. Although not conceptually coincident with 'positive activities' (volunteering and the Prince's Trust, for examples count as positive activities but are not exactly leisure activities), some of the conclusions were interesting for our purpose.

The majority of studies that we found that were originated in the UK, focused on young people aged 13 to 19 and touching upon the causes and not only the consequences of participation, were mostly centred on volunteering. In this area we found a number of interesting recent research pieces (all from the past decade and most of them from the last 3 to 4 years). The reasons behind the predominance of research on barriers and motivator to volunteering can be found in a strong focus by the Government in the past ten years to involve both adults and young people in volunteering. The Russell Commission has written extensively about the participation of young people in volunteering, including 'A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement'²⁰. The presence of specific third sector or for-profit research companies specialised in research on volunteering, like the Institute for Volunteering Research, is also a source of frequent and up to date findings on this topic.

Another reason is that, as we will see in the next chapters, volunteering has suffered an 'image problem' more than any other types of positive activities. While sports or leisure activities are easier to market and the presence of a good and cheap facility is often enough to attract large participation of young people, volunteering groups have found bigger barriers to participation. For this reason, more research has been commissioned to tackle an evident and widespread presence of barriers to volunteering.

4.5 Implications

Given the premises above, we could have opted for structuring this report going through the barriers and enablers to participation activity by activity. We could have had a large section on volunteering, another one on sports and smaller chapters on youth clubs, outdoor activities, arts, music and drama, uniformed groups etc. This would have had the advantage of providing a simpler analysis, specific to different activities that sometimes witness unique barriers or motivators. This task would, however, have proved to be repetitive and would have lacked an important cross-theme analysis element. For these reasons we decided to follow a theme by theme approach in this report. When analysing barriers and their respective motivators, we will focus on general principles determining or hindering participation in positive activities. Of course, when a barrier or enabler will be shown to relate to only, say, sport or volunteering, we will make it clear. In order to facilitate the understanding of which types of activities the evidence comes from, at the beginning of each chapter we will provide an 'evidence base' overview, flagging the key documents and areas of research particularly influential in that specific section.

¹⁷ Wikeley, F. (2007) *Educational Relationships Outside Schools* York: York Publishing Service

¹⁸ Yeowart, C. and McKenzie, D. (2007) *After the bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people* London: New Philanthropy Capital

¹⁹ Feinstein L. et al (2005) *Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes* (online only)
Shelley, P. (2002) *Everybody here? Play and leisure for disabled children and young people* London: Contact a Family

²⁰ Russell Commission (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* UK: Stationary Offices Limited

4.6 Conclusions

There is no single comprehensive study of barriers and enablers to participation in structured group activities (i.e. positive activities) based on research developed in the United Kingdom. Rather, a number of pieces of research have, among their conclusions, some points that are relevant to our objectives.

Conversely, in the United States research has focussed on our area of interest in much more depth, but the different socio economic and policy context led to the decision not to base our research on these studies.

UK-based studies on positive activities tend to focus on the positive benefits they have on the development of the young person, rather than on the causes of participation or exclusion from those activities. When some pieces of research on access and participation to positive activities are identified, they usually refer to volunteering or sports while the evidence on barriers to participation to arts, outdoor and uniformed activities is almost inexistent.

5. Physical Barriers

This chapter looks at the physical barriers that prevent young people from taking part in positive activities. Lack of time, money or transport or the lack of safety in the area where the activity is held, or a sedentary life style, can come in the way of young people wanting to take part in an activity. Often these barriers are interlinked: high cost of an activity is connected to the transport cost. Safety is also connected to transport and the location. We have, however, divided the chapter in small sections, each revealing the evidence relating to one barrier.

Despite the aim of this report being to investigate the existing literature that reveals the attitudinal barriers to becoming engaged in positive activities, it is important to set the context in which this research takes place. Much valuable work has already been conducted on the physical barriers to young people becoming involved in positive activities. This chapter gives an overview of this evidence. The evidence on physical (or practical) barriers is extensive. 'Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities' published in July 2007 by the DCSF and HM Treasury addresses many of these practical barriers.

5.1 Evidence base

The evidence of this chapter comes from a variety of sources, focussed on different types of positive activities. Sources on volunteering are dominant (Institute of Volunteering Research, 2007; Ellis, 2004; Vinformed, 2007; COI and Russell Commission, 2001 and British Youth Council, 2008), although this chapter will also provide evidence from sports and physical activities (Brunton et al, 2006), arts and culture (Scottish Executive, 2004), on leisure (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007 and COI & Opinion Leader, 2007), on youth clubs (Blundell, 2007) and generally on public spaces for young people (Worpole, 2003).

5.2 Time

There is a widespread perception that positive activities, and volunteering in particular, are time consuming. Ninety-three per cent of 14 to 21 year olds who took part in a survey, conducted for the Institute of Volunteering Research, who were not then participating in volunteering but interested in starting, mentioned the lack of spare time as a barrier. A survey by HOCS found that those wishing to volunteer quoted studying (20%) and work commitments (13%) as impediments²¹. Positive activities are just one of many competing demands on young people's time.

This lack of time appears to be related to financial issues. The same survey found that time spent volunteering could have been spent working and making money²². This echoes findings from research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on educational relationships outside of school. Young people from large families, especially those from lower socio-economic groups, share responsibility for the care of younger siblings. This gives them even less time to enjoy positive activities²³.

²¹ Quoted in Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 16

²² *Ibid* page 16

²³ Wikeley, F. et al (2007) *Educational relationships outside school: why access is important* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation page 27

This might suggest that paid work trumps volunteering in the eyes of young people. However, the evidence reveals a more complex relationship. Academic work from Smith showed that those working part-time were more likely to be involved in volunteering (43%) than those not working (27%)²⁴. This suggests that sometimes not having time could be an excuse to hide the fact that positive activities, and volunteering specifically, are 'often not viewed as a worthwhile activities or ones to get something out of'²⁵.

The British Youth Council recommends that 'volunteering organisations need to make clear that people are not obliged to give up a lot of their time and that opportunities can be flexible'²⁶. The COI and the Russell Commission give a similar advice: promote low commitment activities, for example one-off events, to help young people feel a greater sense of freedom and control over their involvement²⁷.

YouthNet also suggests taster sessions and virtual volunteering as a way to begin. Young people can help out translating, proofreading, mentoring or designing websites and from there take their participation further and start joining structured group activities²⁸. This suggests that low commitment activities can be a route into volunteering that might then evolve into more stable engagement.

5.3 Transport

The evidence also reveals that transport is a practical barrier to participation, both in terms of availability and cost. Evidence from research conducted by the National Youth Agency across the UK showed that the lack of accessible transport was a significant physical barrier. This lack was consistently cited as a fundamental barrier to accessing the activities in which young people wanted to participate. In rural locations in particular, transport is infrequent and sometimes expensive for young people.²⁹

This finding is repeated in research looking at participation in sport. Academic work from Yeowart and McKenzie found that distance from facilities and lack of means for self-travel in rural areas affected young people's participation in physical activities³⁰. A particular problem in rural areas is that children often rely on school buses to return to their homes immediately after school. Out of school hours, this option is not available. This can impede young people's participation as alternative forms of transport are likely to be expensive unless subsidised³¹.

For these reasons, the British Youth Council suggests that volunteering organisations make available adequate transport and facilities for all volunteers. They suggest gathering funds to cover safe transport costs to and from volunteering activities, particularly minibus or taxis when accessibility is an issue³². The report suggests that particular care is shown in providing taxis for the disabled people needing them^{33 34}.

²⁴ Smith, D. (1999) 'Poor marketing or the decline of altruism? Young people and volunteering in the UK' in *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 4 (4): 374

²⁵ Ellis, A. (2004) *ibid*, page 17

²⁶ British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming barriers to youth volunteering* slide 24

²⁷ COI and Russell Commission (2006) *Branding Youth Volunteering* slide 26

²⁸ YouthNet (2008) *Create...Recruit...Involve...* page 1

²⁹ National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 3

³⁰ Brunton, G. et al, (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6)

³¹ Yeowart, C. and McKenzie, D. (2007) *After the bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people* London: New Philanthropy Capital Page 8

³² British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming barriers to youth volunteering* slide 24

³³ *Ibid*, slide 29

³⁴ The issue of particular attitudinal barriers affecting identifiable groups, such as disabled people, is addressed in more detail in section 6.4 of this report.

5.4 Cost

A commonly cited barrier to engagement in positive activities is cost. Access to positive activities is linked to inequality as children feel that they miss out if they or their families cannot afford to do things³⁵. Young people are highly aware of costs and of the financial possibilities by which they or their families are constrained. Evidence published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation draws the conclusion that 'young people on free school meals are less likely to be participating in organised out of school activities'³⁶.

Overcoming the cost barrier is a high priority for organisations operating in the positive activities space. For New Philanthropy Capital, the way to reduce inequality of access is to provide funds and subsidies for different kinds of positive activities. Their report, '*After the Bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people*' makes the case to donors that their financial support will increase levels of uptake among young people.³⁷

Another approach to reducing costs is to develop youth-led funding schemes, an approach embraced by the Government in recent years with the introduction of the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund, as well as support for YouthBank. Approaches such as these distribute place budgetary decision-making in the hands of young people, giving them the power to decide how money is spent on youth services in their areas. Some third sector organisations have taken a similar approach. The V charity, for example, has introduced the vcashpoint scheme³⁸ that puts funding in the hands of young people so that they can act on their local concerns³⁹.

5.5 Buildings and facilities

Research shows that there is a high level of desire to be involved in positive activities. However, the quality of the facilities and buildings where the activities are provided is paramount. A survey of 1,000 children in Leicester found that 94% of them wanted to spend more time out of the house. Another survey in Northamptonshire confirmed this, when 80% of 9 to 16 year olds claimed to prefer being out than staying at home⁴⁰. However, young people are often dissatisfied about the quality of both indoor and outdoor facilities. For example, 81% of 15 to 16 year olds in the UK are dissatisfied about outdoor play facilities. This is higher than any other European country⁴¹.

A series of consultations that the National Youth Agency organised among young people and officials of the HM Treasury and the DfES concluded that 'one of the strongest messages from the dialogues with young people has been the importance of well maintained and well resourced facilities'⁴².

³⁵ COI and Opinion Leader (2007) *Report on findings from the DCSF 'Time to Talk' Consultation Activities* page 97

³⁶ Wikeley, F. et al (2007) *Educational relationships outside school: why access is important* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

³⁷ Yeowart, C. and McKenzie, D. (2007) *After the bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people* London: New Philanthropy Capital

³⁸ For more information check www.vinspired.com/vbuzz/campaigns/171/

³⁹ Vinformed (2007) *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns* page 11

⁴⁰ Worpole, K. (2003) *No particular place to go? Children, young people and public space* UK: Groundwork page 6

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 5

Mark Blundell, director of the Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey, often quoted as an example of successful organisations providing positive activities⁴³, identifies buildings as one of the two key elements for good youth provision. 'The more a building contains, the more it offers to young people. There is also an issue of quality: respect is given when a building is of a quality to be proud of. In a computer analogy, buildings represent the hardware of the operation' and the staff constitute the software⁴⁴.

5.6 Location and safety

The location of a sport centre, youth club or leisure place is another important factor that can act as a barrier or enabler of participation. 'Positive Futures', a national social inclusion programme, has created centrally-funded initiatives at the very centre of disadvantaged areas suffering from significant social problems. The location of the programme is essential to create a sense of belonging among the targeted young people.⁴⁵

Location is an important influencer for all groups, not just those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. If a programme is seeking the participation of young people from diverse backgrounds, geographical areas or socio-economic status, it is advisable to choose a 'neutral' location. For example, having a youth club in a certain estate or park area strongly associated with youth crime could deter those who do not see it as part of their experience⁴⁶. Some parents might also be adverse to the idea of sending their children to areas that are perceived to be unsafe.

Young people themselves might feel unsafe in certain locations. A report from COI and Opinion Leader revealed that most young people 'only think of their home and the homes of their friends as safe places for them to go to'⁴⁷. A report from the Institute of Volunteering Research confirms that 51% of those not volunteering but wishing to do so were worried about personal risk⁴⁸.

5.7 Scarcity of activities

The evidence also shows that, at present, many of the positive activities on offer to young people do not take place at convenient times. As might seem obvious, those activities offered on late afternoons, evening, weekends and summer holiday are most favoured by young people. However, it seems that many providers follow an office-time schedule. This often means that activities are not available at times when young people would most benefit⁴⁹.

This does not just apply to volunteering. The same applies to arts and culture. Research by the Scottish Executive concluded that evening and Sunday opening of art galleries can encourage more participation from under-represented groups⁵⁰. Research on positive activities conducted by Opinion Leader revealed that 'both adults and young people think that giving children and young people more activities after school and at the weekends will help to keep them out of trouble'⁵¹.

⁴³ Mentioned, for example, in *Aiming High*, page 51

⁴⁴ Blundell, M. (2007) *Programmes in Youth Centres* online only http://www.wcmt.org.uk/public/reports/209_1.pdf

⁴⁵ Home Office (2007) *Positive Futures: Putting the pieces together* page 25

⁴⁶ Fairbridge (2008) *Engaging young people in positive activities* page 3

⁴⁷ COI and Opinion Leader (2007) *Report on findings from the DCSF 'Time to Talk' Consultation Activities* page 138

⁴⁸ Institute for Volunteering Research (2007) *Young People Help Out* page 4

⁴⁹ DCSF and TM Treasury (2007) *Aiming High: a ten year strategy for positive activities* page 45

⁵⁰ Scottish Executive (2004) *A Literature Review of the Evidence Base for Culture, the Arts and Sport Policy* page 150

⁵¹ COI and Opinion Leader (2007) *Report on findings from the DCSF 'Time to Talk' Consultation Activities* page 138

5.8 Sedentary lifestyles

Although Worpole's work, cited above, revealed that the overwhelming majority of young people claim to wish to spend more time out of the house, societal trends are towards more sedentary lifestyles among the young. A complex series of factors including perceived dangers in the outside environment and the increased popularity of media use at home have curtailed levels of activity out of the home⁵².

Academic work from Brunton et al has examined programmes successful at improving physical activity and participation in sport among the young. It concluded that successful interventions were those that provided equipment to monitor TV and video game use. Young people might not realise the large amount of time spent on videogames or watching TV or using the internet, until they have kept a record of these activities.⁵³

5.9 Conclusions

Through the analysis of all of these practical barriers we can conclude that often what seems to be a physical barrier is actually an attitudinal or perceptual barrier. Lack of time, danger, scarcity of facilities or opportunities are sometimes only perceptions and not real barriers. Also, problems relating to cost and transport are sometimes overstated, when certain positive activities centres provide for save transport and subsidised fees. The important message is that whether these barriers are real or just perceived, an efficient communication campaign should be developed to reassure young people that their fears are sometimes unjustified. This, of course, has to be combined with increased effort to provide opportunities for accessible, cheap and high quality activities.

The evidence expressed in this chapter shows us that positive activities are perceived as time consuming. This is particularly true of volunteering. Those from poorer backgrounds and with many siblings find a lack of time particularly problematic. For this reason, some suggest that positive activities should be promoted as endeavours that do not entail giving-up a lot of time. Providers might offer taster sessions, one-off events and opportunities for virtual volunteering to overcome this barrier.

A lack of cheap transport can also be a barrier to participation, particularly for those living in rural communities and for young disabled people. Cost is another common problem. High prices contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities between different groups of young people.

It is important to carefully choose the location where the activities are held: young people should feel at home as far as possible. It is, however, important to choose neutral locations to avoid associating a certain activity with a certain subculture. This links particularly with worries about safety for young people and their parents.

Further, the evidence shows that activities can be offered at times inconvenient to the target audiences, for example, many of them occurring in school time. Activities should be provided when young people are out of school time. As such, they should be provided in the late afternoons, evenings, weekends, as well as during summer and winter holidays.

⁵² Biddle et al (2004) 'Physical activity and sedentary behaviours in youth: issues and controversies' in *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, Vol. 124, No. 1, 29-33

⁵³ Brunton, G. et al, (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) page 4

6. Attitudinal and behavioural barriers

The previous chapter identified a series of physical barriers to participation. It concluded that there are numerous such barriers that reduce the likelihood of young people becoming involved in positive activities. However, it is unlikely that all the barriers encountered by young people are physical. It seems likely that there are other barriers to involvement related to the attitudes of young people and those around them.

Even when a geographical area is characterised by the provision of good quality, reachable and affordable activities, some young people still refrain from taking part in any activity. It is therefore clear that there are other restraints that hold some young people back that will not be addressed only by removing physical barriers such as cost and transport.

This chapter focuses on identifying these attitudinal barriers and related motivators to action among young people found in existing, robust research. In presenting the findings, we might have analysed the internal barriers activity-by-activity. This would have had the advantage of offering a simple structure yet would have been repetitive as research findings applicable across the different kinds of positive activities were repeated. Instead, we have chosen to divide the attitudinal barriers and motivators into 'internal' and 'external' groups.

6.1 Internal barriers

We have defined internal barriers as those that have their roots within the young person. Such internal barriers might be the result of a lack of knowledge and information. Other internal barriers could be a lack of motivation, limited aspirations or fear of rejection. Values also play a role. Young people have many demands on their time from families, schools and their communities. They often do not want to engage in further commitment without short-term reward. The coming sub-sections explore the existing evidence on these themes, and others, in detail.

6.1.1 Evidence base

The evidence we draw on in this section is drawn from a wide collection of robust research. The majority of the evidence comes from volunteering (Children's Society, 2008; British Youth Council, 2007; Russell Commission and Envision, 2008; Vinformed, 2007; Russell Commission, 2005, the Institute for Volunteering Research, 2007 and Ellis, 2004). There is also evidence drawn from research into sporting (COI for DCMS, 2007), musical (Youth Music, 2005), and traditional youth activities (Nfp Synergy, 2007 and Clubs for Young People, 2007), as well as evidence from research on methods of engaging young people in general (McKenrick, 2007; National Youth Agency, 2006; Youth Task Force, 2008; Children's Society, 2008 and Welsh Assembly, 2000) or hard-to-reach groups in particular (Prince's Trust, 2004).

The evidence in this section therefore draws on a wide range of robust evidence gathered from 18 separate reports. While evidence from volunteering contributes the largest number of findings, it is by no means the sole contributor. Rather, this section relies on a collection of evidence from across the area of positive activities.

6.1.2 Knowledge and information

The evidence on young people's knowledge and desire to become involved in positive activities suggests that, when asked, young people express a strong desire to become involved in positive activities. A recent survey conducted among 14 to 18 year olds revealed a high level of desire to become involved with positive activities. Specifically, 55% are keen to receive career development advice, 54% want to learn new things and the same proportion wants to play sports; 42% would like to get involved in the arts and over a third (36%) is interested in volunteering. Only 4% of young people would not want to take part in any⁵⁴.

Academic work from McKendrick extend this argument by suggesting that even those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds share the desire of all other young people to take part in positive activities. He claims that 'the majority of these young people displayed highly conventional attitudes'. His study found no sign of consistent rejection of the work ethic, value of education or opposition culture in relation to social engagement among young people⁵⁵.

However, despite this clear desire, there is widespread evidence that young people are not convinced that there are activities available to them locally. For example, a survey conducted for the Prince's Trust found that 92% of 14 to 25 year olds reported that there were gaps in the provision of services at local level. The same survey found that 47% felt there were not enough activities for young people to do in their local areas⁵⁶. A study by V-informed found that the top local concern for the young people consulted is a 'lack of activities/things to get involved in', with 66% giving it a score of 6 or more, where 10 represents high importance. Strikingly, this was a higher level of importance than was given to 'negative perceptions of young people' which received only 64%.⁵⁷

Work from the Children's Society supports the idea that young people do not see enough activities available to them. It concludes that 'there is widespread agreement that there are not enough structured activities available out of school. Not only are there too few facilities, but those that do exist are often expensive, dirty, vandalised and poorly maintained'⁵⁸. The Welsh Assembly has arrived at a similar conclusion through qualitative research. Welsh young people think that there is a lack of facilities for young people and that they are excluded from adult facilities⁵⁹.

Strikingly, young people perceive this lack of available activities as potential causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. When asked 'what kind of things do you think could prevent young people getting involved in anti-social behaviour?' and given a list of possible solutions, 'more places to go and things to do' was most often cited, with 77% of people recognising its importance. The next most popular answer, 'tougher punishment', was selected by only 42% of respondents⁶⁰.

⁵⁴ Clubs for Young People (2007) *Young People Drawn Towards the Community After School Hours* page 1

⁵⁵ McKendrick et al. (2008) *Dismissing Disaffection* page 150

⁵⁶ The Prince's Trust (2004) *Reaching the Hardest to Reach* page 33

⁵⁷ Vinformed (2007) *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns* page 6

⁵⁸ The Children's Society (2008) *Good childhood, what you told us about lifestyle* page 1

⁵⁹ Welsh Assembly (2000) *Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales* page 27

⁶⁰ Youth Task Force (2008) *Young People's views on portrayal and antisocial behaviour* page 3

A study by the Prince's Trust found that 49% of disadvantaged young people aged 14 to 17 felt there was a gap in the provision of 'things to do'. This figure went up to 64%⁶¹ in the North West and 56% in the South⁶². A study by the Institute of Volunteering Research found that 56% of young people who were not currently volunteering but were interested in doing so cited lack of information on how to get involved as a barrier⁶³.

Regardless of the actual levels of provision in any given area, these findings show a general lack of awareness of the positive activities on offer in localities. This suggests a need for more pertinent information on what is available in the locality. This might be a simple conclusion to draw if it were not for another dimension to information revealed by the evidence. This is that, once found, there can be so much information that it becomes confusing and indigestible. Evidence from research conducted into volunteering shows that young people would welcome easier routes to finding guidance on to what they would be best suited to do⁶⁴.

6.1.3 Self-confidence, aspiration and disempowerment

There is a large volume of evidence that suggests a lack of confidence and a fear of rejection are common internal barriers. Research conducted on volunteering shows that some young people feel that they have nothing to contribute to and that other people involved will not value their achievements. Ellis's work emphasises that this is felt particularly strongly by disaffected young people and those in the youngest age groups. It goes on to conclude that this is a reflection of a broader feeling of disempowerment and social disapproval⁶⁵.

This finding is echoed by research from Nfp Synergy commissioned by the Scout Association into a different kind of positive activity. While 34% of respondents to the survey said that they have helped out in their community, only 22% felt they made a useful difference⁶⁶. This discrepancy between levels of activity and feelings of impact is evident across all socio economic groups and emerged regardless of the individual's involvement in Scouting. Perhaps, the Scout Association suggests, more young people would get involved if they could participate in fun activities that they feel would genuinely make a difference.

A study by the Welsh Assembly connects lack of self-confidence to the limited aspirations and depressed expectations among those not taking part in any positive activity. Findings from a series of focus groups revealed a perceived division between young people seen as 'achievers' and those with no expectations of success⁶⁷.

This suggests that engagement in positive activities is perceived as something for those who are already achievers. This creates self-exclusion from activities among young people who could benefit most. The Welsh Assembly report suggests that increasing young people's confidence in making themselves heard can lead to higher levels of interest in activities as well as commitment to the democratic process⁶⁸.

⁶¹ For 14 to 25 year olds

⁶² The Prince's Trust (2004) *Reaching the Hardest to Reach* page 48

⁶³ Institute for Volunteering Research (2007) *Young People Help Out* page 4

⁶⁴ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page iv

⁶⁵ *ibid*, page iv

⁶⁶ Nfp Synergy (2007) *Typical Young People: a study of what young people are really like today* London: Nfp page 26

⁶⁷ Welsh Assembly (2000) *Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales* page 28

⁶⁸ *ibid*, page 29

A survey of young people in England commissioned by V asked them what, if anything, was stopping them from getting more involved in the things they cared about. Lack of time was the most cited reason. However, young people also cited not being sure of how to help and belief in their inability to make a valuable offer. For these reasons, V suggests that 'much more work needs to be done to raise awareness of the ways young people can get involved and to make clear the importance and value of their contribution, whatever their skills or experience'⁶⁹.

The evidence also offers us some solutions to this set of barriers. Research from the National Youth Agency examines the issue from another angle. They took a research approach that created opportunities for officials from HM Treasury and the Department of Education and Skills to engage in 'dialogues' with young people aged 14 to 24 across England. These dialogues looked at personal social skills, confidence building and career development. It emerged that many saw sports, outdoor activities and the arts as means of developing confidence and skills. One participant commented that 'most young people don't know what to aspire to. They need to be given the personal skills and confidence to go out and be what they want'. Sports and outdoor activities, in particular, were seen as the most fun and helpful in developing confidence.⁷⁰

Work from McKendrick et al claims that many policies designed to address issues of importance to young people are only instituted once problems become apparent and overt. In this sense, policy-making has traditionally been reactive. Rather, the work suggests that tackling exclusion and raising aspirations earlier can lead to more positive long-term effects. Aspiration, confidence and empowerment should be nurtured from childhood and frequent participation in positive activities encouraged. This way, young people can be convinced that they are worthwhile and will lead to outcomes that they value⁷¹.

Work from the British Youth Council backs this point: it suggests targeting young people (13 years old or younger). This is based on the idea that involvement at a young age will lead to ongoing involvement throughout adolescence and adulthood⁷².

6.1.4 Rewards

Other types of barriers come from the values held by young people. Hard work without reward, for example, can be a barrier to involvement. Many young people already feel committed to activities revolving around school and family that do not offer tangible rewards. As a result, they feel that incentives and rewards are required to truly motivate and encourage participation in other kinds of activities⁷³. This is particularly true of those young people classified as 'disillusioned' and 'apathetic' in the work commissioned by DCMS⁷⁴. A report by the Russell Commission and COI examining attitudes to volunteering concludes that 'many young people openly admit demanding immediate gratification for their efforts'⁷⁵.

Evidence, again from volunteering, shows that the provision of tangible rewards was particularly effective in provoking the engagement of young people in the early stages of a project. They provide a 'hook' that grabs young people's attention and makes them want to find out more. However, the 'opportunity' presented by a certain volunteering activity emerges as a more important motivator in the long term. The work concludes that providing

⁶⁹ Vinformed (2007) *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns* page 7

⁷⁰ National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 3

⁷¹ McKendrick et al. (2008) *Dismissing Disaffection* page 157

⁷² British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* page 24

⁷³ Home Office (by Alan Hedges) (2004) 'Attracting and Keeping Special Constables' in *Community Engagement & Local Policing Desk Research: Final Report*

⁷⁴ COI for DCMS (2007) *Active generation* slide 40

⁷⁵ COI and Russell Commission (2006) *Branding Youth Volunteering* slide 16

'opportunity' is the reason that young people will remain engaged, but that, to provoke engagement, short-term rewards are necessary.⁷⁶

There is, however, mixed evidence about the need for rewards. It is true that young people are more likely than any other group to get involved in volunteering, for example, to enhance their skills (46%) and employability (27%)⁷⁷. This suggests self-interested motivations behind volunteering. However, the same report states that 56% of volunteers said they started because they wanted to improve things and help people.

Ellis develops this point further, claiming that there is a lack of consensus among young people on incentives and rewards. Carefully tailored benefits would remove the perception that volunteers were doing something for nothing and would help volunteers feel valued⁷⁸. However, there was a concern, particularly among current volunteers, that giving rewards would devalue volunteering and reduce people's sense of purpose and satisfaction⁷⁹.

A reward needs not necessarily to be monetary. Incentives, which are particularly important for boys⁸⁰, can take many forms. Research from Envision and the Russell Commission reveals what young volunteers considered to be important rewards. In order of importance, it found that young people valued the opportunity to meet other people, gain UCAS points, be given food in group sessions and be reimbursed for travel expenses. The participants suggested that providers might consider other incentives, such as more events, trips and residential activities, regular competitions with prizes, parties and quizzes. Most young people, however, indicated that they would still have volunteered without the incentives on offer.⁸¹

The British Youth Council also suggests, whenever possible, offering volunteers the chance to work towards accreditations such as Youth Achievement Awards (YAA), Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) or Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) as well as providing them with opportunities to travel and to attend training courses and seminars⁸². Evidence from sport suggests that rewards should also be commensurate with the activity as it might otherwise appear 'random'. It should also be appropriate for the age of the young person. If the reward is perceived as too childish, it can be counterproductive. Also, rewards should, where possible, be exclusive. Opportunities to attend film premiers, for example, might be particularly effective.⁸³

6.1.5 Sustained commitment

Another internal attitudinal barrier relates to long-term commitment. Research from sport highlights the unwillingness of young people to commit to anything for a sustained period of time⁸⁴. Considering that the evidence shows that positive activities are particularly beneficial for the well-being and development of a young person over a period of time, this seems to be a particularly important issue. A study by the Home Office suggests that 'it is sustained activity that contributes to young people's personal development and has the potential to impact upon their wider patterns of behaviour'⁸⁵.

⁷⁶ *ibid* page 37

⁷⁷ Institute for Volunteering Research (2007) *Young People Help Out* page 4

⁷⁸ Youth Action Network, quoted in Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 23

⁷⁹ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 23

⁸⁰ Russell Commission and Envision (2008) *Making Youth Action Work* page 9

⁸¹ *ibid* page 9

⁸² British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* page 25,30

⁸³ COI for DCMS (2007) *Active generation* page 41

⁸⁴ *ibid* page 30

⁸⁵ Home office (2007) *Positive Futures: Putting the pieces together* page 25

Another study by Leon Feinstein et al. looking at the long-term results of those participating in positive activities in their youth, concludes that church-based, uniformed (scout, guides, cadets) and sports activities demonstrate better developmental results in the long-term. Commitment to these types of activities among young people tends to be sustained throughout childhood and adolescence, during which time common understanding of objectives and norms are discussed and set⁸⁶.

Holroyd backs this point by suggesting that 'It is important to keep program numbers small and encourage participation over several years'⁸⁷. Providing different incentives and working on certain motivators at different stages of the involvement of young people in positive activities can be a useful way to keep them committed for longer times. Section 6.3 explains what types of motivators are ideal to motivate entry or persistency in a positive activity.

6.1.6 Conclusions

Whether perceived or real, the general feeling among young people is that there is not enough for them to do. However, those that have had access to information feel overwhelmed. Better and more targeted information is needed to increase knowledge of available opportunities.

Self-confidence also plays a big role in determining participation. Those excluded from positive activities fear rejection. They generally have low self-esteem, limited aspirations and low expectations. The evidence reviewed in this section shows that giving opportunities and tackling aspiration during childhood will have a positive impact on participation during adolescence.

The varied evidence reviewed in this section does not reveal a consensus on the important question of rewards. Some rewards are clearly appreciated, although these do not necessarily have to be monetary. Young people are motivated in many different ways at different points of their engagement.

Positive activities have the most beneficial effects when engagement is over the long-term. Committing to an activity for a prolonged period is ideal, but young people struggle to do the same thing for a sustained period of time. Offering different incentives and motivators at different stages of the involvement can help the endurance of engagement.

6.2 External barriers

The previous section looked at internal barriers, or those that have their roots within the young person. This section presents the evidence on external barriers, which are those that have an effect on the participation of young people in positive activities but have their roots in the perceptions of other people or institutions. The attitudes of parents, friends, youth workers, role models, teachers and schools have significant levels of influence on the behaviours of young people.

External barriers can include those issues relating to the image of positive activities or of particular activities, like the arts or certain sports. Some young people might refrain from participation because they think that it is not socially acceptable for them to be involved as a result, for example, of their gender, ethnicity, age or socio-economic status.

⁸⁶ Feinstein, L. et al (2005) *Leisure Context in Adolescence and Their Effects on Adult Outcomes* page 23

⁸⁷ Holroyd, R. et al (2003) *Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programmes* Leeds: Leeds University Press page 10

6.2.1 Evidence base

This chapter is also based on sources relating to a variety of positive activities. Some come from documents on volunteering (Russell Commission and COI, 2006; the Institute for Volunteering Research, 2007; British Youth Council, 2007 and Ellis, 2004). Some are focussed on sports and physical activities (Crabbe, 2007; Brunton et al, 2006 and COI for DCMS, 2007). Others are about artistic and musical activities (Youth Music, 2005 and NFER, 2005) and others on positive activities in general (New Philanthropy Capital, 2007; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007 and National Youth Agency, 2006).

This section therefore draws on a wide range of robust evidence gathered from 12 separate reports. Again, evidence drawn from volunteering contributes the largest number of findings but is not the sole contributor. Rather, this section relies on a diverse collection of evidence.

6.2.2 Family support

The role of parents in encouraging young people is fundamental in every area of youth development. Positive activities are no exception. The evidence shows that parents are highly influential and are capable of both encouraging and discouraging participation. An evaluation on different programmes to encourage physical activity carried out by Burton et al concludes that all successful intervention involved parents⁸⁸. A motivator for participation in sport was the presence of a supporting, encouraging and inspiring family alongside their practical support. One of the biggest barriers identified by the same report was parents' lack of direct participation or enthusiasm for sport and exercise.⁸⁹

A separate study from the DCMS examining sports activities for young people highlights that parents are generally enthusiastic and play a vital role as facilitators. They tend to drive their children to venues and might perform roles for the whole team, such as washing kit or driving mini-buses. Some parents are, however, concerned that their involvement could be off-putting for their children and prefer skilled adults to be involved in their place.

Despite this general picture of enthusiasm and support, some other parents are more resistant to youth schemes. This is particularly true of the parents of those young people segmented as 'apathetic/disillusioned' in DCMS's work. Their parents do not expect their children to be 'interested' or 'bothered' and express low expectations for them⁹⁰. In this sense, low expectations can be mutually reinforcing, with parental attitudes coming together will low levels of self-esteem in their children.

The evidence from volunteering tells a similar story. In a report from the Institute of Volunteering Research parental support was one of the most quoted routes into volunteering. Inequality of opportunity is as an issue as young people from higher social grades were the most likely to cite family advice as a way to access volunteering. Among socio-economic group A, 26% cited family advice compared to 6% of group D and 7% in group E as a reason for becoming involved⁹¹. The Russell Commission confirms that, to maximise the participation of young people in volunteering, it is advisable to 'develop collaborative relationships with parents'⁹².

⁸⁸ Brunton, G. et al (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) page 4

⁸⁹ *ibid* page 4

⁹⁰ DCMS (2007) *Active Generation* slides 27-28

⁹¹ Smith, D. (1999) 'Poor marketing or the decline of altruism? Young people and volunteering in the UK' in *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 4 (4): 375

⁹² Russell Commission (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* page 31

6.2.3 Adults and role models

Research from the National Youth Agency shows that accessing positive activities depends somewhat on youth workers. They play an important role in supporting young people to know what is available and to enable them to attend and take part⁹³. In order to help young people build a strong rapport with adults that can be source of positive influence, it is advisable to reduce staff turnover in youth clubs and generally in the adult leadership of positive activities. An incentive for youth workers is to offer continual refreshment through training and continuous staff support⁹⁴.

A youth worker can offer valuable information, advice and support. But she can also become an important figure in the development of the young person, and often a role model. There is widespread evidence from different types of positive activities that role models can inspire young people and motivate them to take part in activities they would not otherwise appeal. Evidence from youth clubs, music, arts and sports shows that young people become involved in an activity that they view as not 'for them' if encouraged to do so through a positive rapport with a youth worker from a similar background⁹⁵.

Crabbe, studying approaches to involve 'hard to reach' young people in sports and youth clubs through fieldwork in housing estates, concludes that successful involvement happens when young people have a strong identification with staff from their areas. 'Those with similar cultural capital can make stronger connections and demand more respect. Especially in estate contexts, where workers are also peer role models, a worker who understand people on their own terms through reference to personal experience rather than policy language can be more effective⁹⁶.

A report by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) evaluating arts projects for young people found that artists were better placed to win young people's trust compared to their teachers. Young people liked artists because they were 'different and non-boring'⁹⁷. Some young people commented that they were inspired by adults who themselves had perhaps done poorly at school but still managed to become successful artists⁹⁸.

A similar suggestion comes from Youth Music. Music organisations that had actively tried to encourage participation among young people from ethnic minority backgrounds had been successful when they provided 'access to musicians of minority ethnic origins, who could provide positive role models for young people'⁹⁹. Work connected to volunteering from the Russell Commission and COI found that inspirational role models are required to directly challenge negative images¹⁰⁰.

Despite these findings, the evidence reviewed in this report is not in full agreement on the question of the level of cultural affinity that role models need to have with those they are attempting to influence. Research findings from Envision suggest that 'being able to inspire and relate to young people is more important in successfully engaging them than [the worker's] background'¹⁰¹.

⁹³ National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 2

⁹⁴ *Ibid* page 5

⁹⁵ Crabbe, T. (2007) 'Reaching the 'hard to reach: engagement, relationship building and social control in sport based social inclusion work' in *International Journal of Sport, Management and Marketing* 2(1) page 37

⁹⁶ *Ibid* page 37

⁹⁷ National Foundation for Education Research (2005) *Serious Play* page 74

⁹⁸ *Ibid* page 74

⁹⁹ Youth Music (2005) *Participation is ensemble music making by young people of minority ethnic origins* presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, 15-17 September 2005 page 74

¹⁰⁰ COI and Russell Commission (2006) *Branding Youth Volunteering* slide 27

¹⁰¹ Envision and Russell Commission (2008) *Making youth action work: the envision programme as a case study of youth volunteering* page 5

6.2.4 The community

The research also gives us insight into the role of the attitudes of communities on levels of participation among young people. On one hand, young people are looking for niches in their cities, towns and villages where they can meet and enjoy activities together. It is important that public spaces are designed for young people to have a sense of 'ownership'. This, it is argued, is a precondition for successful use, care and maintenance of public space¹⁰².

On the other hand, some stress the importance of giving young people organised, supervised activities within the community that will increase their social participation, and potentially introduce them to new aspirational role models¹⁰³. The National Youth Agency promotes the idea of 'a local facility both specific to young people and open to the whole community'¹⁰⁴.

6.2.5 Teachers and schools

The role of schools is manifold. Teachers can advise on positive activities, volunteering organisations and clubs can advertise their programmes through schools and their facilities can be used as venues. A different range of sources highlights the positive role that schools can have as a route into positive activities. Research from Brunton et al, when comparing different strategies to involve young people in sport, states that 'schools are the most frequent site for intervention in encouraging physical activity'¹⁰⁵. There was also evidence that low-income young people with sporting abilities can be contacted through school and steered towards external clubs¹⁰⁶.

A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on access to leisure activities by young people of different socio-economic backgrounds shows how schools are the main sources of organised leisure opportunities for young people on free school meals¹⁰⁷. School-based programmes can also help pupils to see their school in a new light as a place where they can take part in activities they enjoy, exercise their own free choice and interact with adults in different ways¹⁰⁸.

Research conducted by Ellis from the Institute of Volunteer Research highlights that school is an important site for promoting volunteering. She claims that 'the general consensus is that schools should play a more active role in encouraging volunteering among young people. However the respondents felt that the role should stop at encouraging people - volunteering should not become a compulsory part of school life'¹⁰⁹.

A report by Clubs for Young People tells us that 96% of all young people would like to get involved in some of the following activities; receiving career development advice, learning new things, playing sports, and getting involved in the arts and volunteering. However, of these respondents, 43% would prefer to do these activities in the community rather than at school. Indeed, using school facilities and spaces for positive activities out of school hours

¹⁰² Worpole, K. (2003) No particular place to go? Children, young people and public space UK: Groundwork part iv, 1

¹⁰³ COI and Opinion Leader (2007) *Report on findings from the DCSF 'Time to Talk' Consultation Activities* page 136

¹⁰⁴ National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 4

¹⁰⁵ Brunton, G. et al (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) page 7

¹⁰⁶ Wikeley, F. et al (2007) *Educational relationships outside school: why access is important* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation page 23

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Yeowart, C. and McKenzie, D. (2007) *After the bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people* London: New Philanthropy Capital Page 98

¹⁰⁹ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 21

can have the effect of excluding those who have developed an aversion towards school and anything with which it is associated¹¹⁰.

Work from Yeowart and McKenzie found that, regardless on the nature of the activity on offer, locating it in school can exclude those young people who need positive activities more than others. Those not currently engaged in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS), those hostile to school and those excluded for truancy (calculated to be around 10,000 in the UK) are hard to reach with activities in schools¹¹¹. The Welsh Assembly confirms these findings by stating that 'disengaged young people often regard bodies such as schools or youth councils as pointless'¹¹².

Despite this, the Charity 4Children's Make Space Youth Review showed that 68% of young people consulted by them would welcome out-of-school-hours provision on the school site, as long as activities were not just 'an extension of the school day'¹¹³.

6.2.6 Image

Another external attitudinal barrier that affects young people's participation is the image associated with positive activities and with volunteering in particular. A lot of effort has been expended by the Government and third sector organisations on changing the image of volunteering among young people in recent years, with much success.

Research from 1999 concludes that 'volunteering may have an image problem', as one of the main obstacles to young people's participation encountered is that volunteering is perceived as 'boring, badly organised and the preserve of white middle-aged, middle-class females'¹¹⁴. As one respondent put it 'volunteering involves boring jobs in charity shops and smelly clothes'¹¹⁵. A 1998 report by the Institute of Volunteering Research suggests that 'volunteering needs a make-over. It needs to improve its image, broaden its access points and provide what today's and tomorrow's young people need.'¹¹⁶

By 2004, this image appears to have changed somewhat. Further research from Ellis records an improvement in the perceived image of volunteering, but confirms persistent problems. When asked 'when you think of volunteering, what comes to mind?', 'helping people out', being 'good citizens' and having 'a new experiences' were the most popular answers. However, negative perceptions were evident, although less common. Thirty-two per cent of the respondents to a Dubit survey and 18% of respondents to a YouthNet UK survey perceived volunteering as 'boring'. Twenty-three per cent and 11% of the respondents of the two surveys respectively also perceived volunteering as 'not cool'¹¹⁷. These negative perceptions were particularly true for disaffected young people who had a very narrow idea of what volunteering encompasses¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁰ Clubs for Young People (2007) *Young People Drawn Towards the Community After School Hours* page 1

¹¹¹ Yeowart, C. and McKenzie, D. (2007) *After the bell: Out of school hours activities for children and young people* London: New Philanthropy Capital Page 9

¹¹² Welsh Assembly (2000) *Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales* page 29

¹¹³ 4Children (2007) *Make Space Youth Review. Transforming the offer for young people in the UK* UK: Captive8

¹¹⁴ Smith, D. (1999) 'Poor marketing or the decline of altruism? Young people and volunteering in the UK' in *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 4 (4): 373

¹¹⁵ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 9

¹¹⁶ Gaskin, K. (1998) quoted in 'Poor marketing or the decline of altruism? Young people and volunteering in the UK' in *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 4 (4): 373

¹¹⁷ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 8

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, page 9

A separate piece of research by the COI and the Russell Commission called 'Branding Youth Volunteering' supports the idea that negative perceptions are still prevalent among young people. Volunteering is often rejected on the assumption that it is associated with 'Christian', 'geeky' or 'goody-goody' types. Many fear being singled out, laughed at and ridiculed for taking part¹¹⁹.

Despite these attitudes, the extensive efforts of the Government and third sector organisations are reaping rewards. Recent research from Holroyd gives positive insights. She suggested that 'to change these perceptions, involving young people in the key decisions relating to the programme is key'¹²⁰. The Envision project, tries to persuade young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to become involved by making them act on a local issue they feel concerned about and 'shaping' a volunteer project on their own, feeling empowered. The result is that 100% of the participant of these projects, most belonging to the 'disaffected' group mentioned by Ellis above, said afterwards that Envision had inspired them to make a difference in the future. Ninety-seven per cent felt more empowered¹²¹.

It is not just volunteering that suffers from image problems. Youth Music, for example, when trying to involve more young people from ethnic minorities in group music activities, found that 'low participation in classical music activities [...] was due to the fact that it was perceived to be 'uncool''¹²².

Gender stereotypes also appear to contribute to creating negative images among young people. The same report by Youth Music highlights that both girls and boys thought they would be bullied if they played an instrument that was viewed as gender inappropriate¹²³.

The same issue can also be seen in sports. A study by Brunton et al highlighted that, while young men saw physical activity as part of their identity, sports clashed with some women's perception of their femininity¹²⁴. For this reason, young people suggested emphasising the fun and social aspects of physical activities rather than the physical benefits and the competitiveness¹²⁵.

This evidence does not show that there is an image problem with all positive activities. There is no evidence that structured group activities per se have negative associations. Rather, certain types of positive activities are perceived as being owned by certain groups and hence inappropriate for those from others. The perception that certain sports, volunteering activity, music instrument or other activity are more fitted for somebody from a specific socio-economic group, gender, race or age constitute a barrier to participation.

¹¹⁹ COI and Russell Commission (2006) *Branding Youth Volunteering* slide 27

¹²⁰ Holroyd, R. et al (2003) *Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programs* Leeds: Leeds University Press page 9

¹²¹ Envision and Russell Commission (2008) *Making youth action work: the envision programme as a case study of youth volunteering* page 5

¹²² Youth Music (2005) *Participation is ensemble music making by young people of minority ethnic origins* presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, 15-17 September 2005 page 72

¹²³ *Ibid*, page 70

¹²⁴ Brunton, G. et al (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) page 4

¹²⁵ *Ibid* page 4

6.2.7 Peer pressure

Negative peer pressure has been mentioned in relation to many other types of barriers, including the perceived image problems described in the previous section. The negative or 'not for me' images are often shaped by external factors and reinforced by peer relations. One of Ellis's main findings is that 'negative peer pressure can be a considerable barrier to volunteering'¹²⁶. Particularly among teenagers, there is widespread fear of being mocked. A young person says that 'in a materialistic society it is not cool to volunteer. Friendship, ideals and altruism are hard to truly be celebrated'¹²⁷.

Respondents suggest that the way to tackle this is peer advocacy, meaning encouraging young people to involve their peers by communicating their experiences. Peer support is also identified as a way to influence young people in sport activities. Brunton et al report that 'peer support was described by young people as a positive influence in choosing to take part in a physical activity'¹²⁸. Peer advocacy is generally welcomed by current participants of positive activities. Indeed, 84% of volunteers say they are happy to tell their friends about volunteering¹²⁹.

Indeed, work from 2005 showed that 77% of young people felt that their peers' experiences would have the most influence over their volunteering choice. Seventy per cent would be convinced by their friends that volunteering was a positive choice¹³⁰. Bullying is connected to this issue. Some young people suffered from severe bullying at school and hence find it difficult to be in group settings with other young people¹³¹.

6.2.8 Conclusions

The attitudes held by parents, friends, youth workers, role models, teachers and schools can be barriers or enablers to the participation of young people in certain positive activities. Family support, in particular, is an essential enabler, while its absence is an important barrier. This also relates to socio-economic issues, as those with poorer backgrounds tend to be less supported and encouraged by parents to take part in positive activities.

To counterbalance the lack of support by parent in some young people's lives, adult role models are important in helping young people to choose how to get involved and to support them through enduring activities. Some evidence suggests that role models with similar socio-economic, ethnic or cultural backgrounds can increase the influence of those young people sharing that type of background. Others disagree, highlighting that strong and effective support from adults is valuable, regardless of their backgrounds. Despite this, the importance of role models is a persistent trend.

Access through school can engage economic disadvantaged students in positive activities. It can also improve the image of school as a 'cool' or 'fun' place. Those excluded from schools or hostile to them, however, might refuse to participate in anything relating to an institution they do not trust. It follows that there is no golden rule. The role of school in advancing positive activities is delicate and nuanced.

¹²⁶ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 17

¹²⁷ *Ibid* page 17

¹²⁸ Brunton, G. et al (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) page 5

¹²⁹ British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* slide 17

¹³⁰ Russell, I. (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* London: Russell Commission page 29

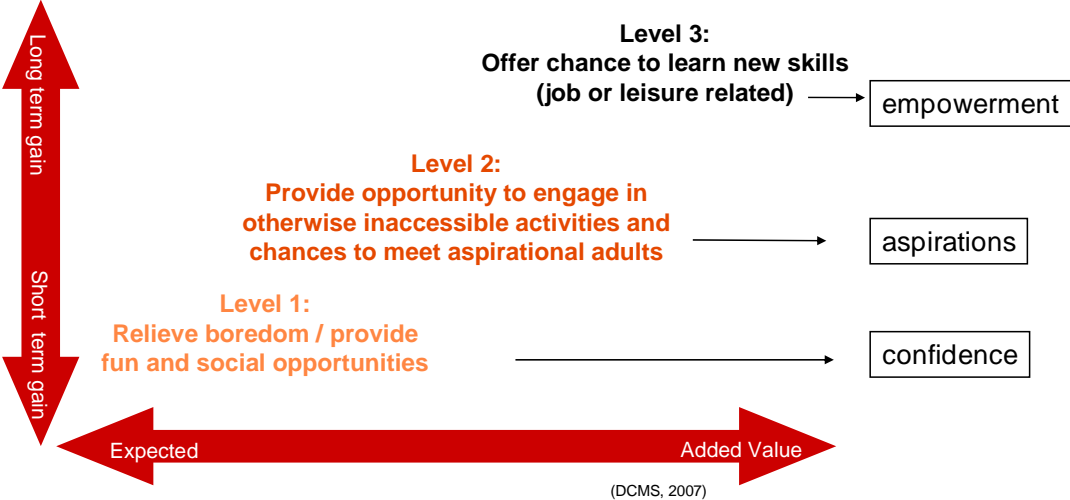
¹³¹ Crabbe, T. (2007) 'Reaching the 'hard to reach: engagement, relationship building and social control in sport based social inclusion work' in *International Journal of Sport, Management and Marketing* 2(1) page 32

Positive activities, especially volunteering, have experienced an improvement in their image among young people in recent years. However, negative perceptions still exist. Volunteering is sometimes perceived as the realm of white, middle class, middle aged women. Engaging young people in decision-making, planning and peer advocacy can be effective in changing images.

There is no evidence that structured group activities are disliked per se. Rather, certain activities are perceived as the realm of those from certain groups. Friends and their opinions are important to young people. Negative peer pressure therefore influences young people's perceptions of an activity which can act as a stumbling block.

6.3 Motivators and barriers: levels of engagement

It is important at this point to try to collect what the evidence has told us so far. Many of the barriers and motivators that we have discussed are interlinked, and internal and external barriers sometimes mutually enforce each other, making participation less likely. We have adapted the below graph from a DCMS's report *Active Generation*¹³².



What this shows is that different motivators and enablers can work at different levels of engagement. It is important (and the communication chapters will address this issue) to develop a succession of messages that can contribute to make young people's involvement meaningful and enduring.

The first stage of engagement can attract young people who have a sedentary life and are not involved in any activity. Positive activities could initially be made attractive by highlighting short term and somehow expected benefits. Positive activities should market themselves as something fun to do, a place different from schools where to meet your friends and make new ones, a relief from boredom. Luring young people through the possibility of having fun is a good way to get them involved initially.

¹³² COI for DCMS (2007) *Active Generation*, slide 46

Once young people have tried an activity, a second set of motivators can help them to prolong their involvement in it. This second group of motivators also work for those who have been involved in an activity for a while but are slowly losing interest. Further motivation can be found by providing opportunities to engage in otherwise inaccessible activities: travelling and meeting people from other regions or countries; taking part in an important competition; try an expensive or locally unavailable leisure activity, learn something new.

The presence of role models and the progressive creation of a positive rapport between them and the young person can be a source of further motivation in participation. In this second level, participation is made more robust and enduring by regular opportunities to do something new and by the development of a positive relationship with role models.

The third level of engagement acts as a longer term motivator by providing high levels of added value to their participation in an activity. These stimuli can include the perspective of learning new skills that can be good for job or leisure related issues. Training courses, UCAS points, leadership and management experiences are all examples of practices that can be put in place in different positive activities and can provide further motivation. Sometimes this can actually give way to relevant career perspectives.

As we can see from the graph, by moving up on the different levels of engagement, the young person can overcome some of the main attitudinal and behavioural barriers identified earlier. Having fun and extending social opportunities can reduce lack of confidence; new activities and new positive figures a young person can identify with can raise aspirations; and chances to learn new recognisable skills can reduce the feeling of disempowerment.

6.4 Minority groups

The previous two sections looked at the effects that both internal and external attitudinal barriers can have on the levels of participation among young people in general. There are, however, other attitudinal barriers that influence engagement with positive activities that do not necessarily apply to all young people, but only to specific groups. Disability, religion, ethnic background and sexual orientation, for example, are traits that correlate with specific barriers common across people from those groups. This chapter describes the evidence on these barriers and on what enablers and facilitator might work particularly well in reducing the effects of these stumbling blocks.

6.4.1 Evidence base

This chapter is based on evidence coming from a variety of sources relating to different types of positive activities, with sport being dominant (Crabbe, 2007; Holroyd, 2003 and Brunton et al, 2001). Evidence about leisure activities and 'things to do' in general also constitutes a substantial portion of the research (Contact a Family, 2002; Centre for Health Service Research, 2004 and National Youth Agency, 2007). There is further evidence from volunteering (Children's Society, 2006 and British Youth Council, 2007) and from arts and culture (Scottish Executive, 2004 and Youth Music, 2005).

This section therefore draws on a wide range of robust evidence gathered from 11 separate reports. However, unlike the previous sections, evidence from sports is dominant, although not the sole contributor. As with others, this section relies on a diverse collection of evidence.

6.4.2 Young disabled people

There are different types of disabilities that allow for different levels of enjoyment of positive activities, but generally young disabled people would like to participate in as many activities as possible and have fun with their peers¹³³. Unfortunately, there are some further practical and attitudinal barriers to add to those mentioned in previous chapters. Research from the Centre for Health Service Research found that bullying by peers, both with and without disabilities, and attitudinal segregation in schools, were leading to socially isolated disabled young people being unable to participate in positive activities¹³⁴. There is evidence of widespread stigmatisation among school-aged children of their peers with disabilities¹³⁵.

Another fundamental barrier was the need for adult assistance, at times perceived to be unnecessary. As with most adolescents, disabled teenagers would like to enjoy more freedom from their parents and other adults. However, independence from adults is not always possible. For Morrison and Ursprung, reliance on adult help or overprotection by adults resulted in fewer opportunities to establish and explore peer relations¹³⁶.

Sixty-eight per cent of parents of young people with disabilities say that they did not use leisure facilities because their families or child was made to feel uncomfortable¹³⁷. This feeling comes from both the institutions and from parents of other children, who often do not accept the 'unusual' behaviour of some disabled children. For example, 73% of parents, especially those with sons and daughters suffering from autism or Asperger syndromes, are daunted by long queues. Their children find it difficult to cope with long queues and complain that only some leisure facilities give them priority. Even when they are given priority, parents can be made to feel uncomfortable by hurtful comments from the parents of able-bodied children¹³⁸.

The absence of specialist provision was also found to be an important barrier, mentioned by 66% of parents. This was a much higher proportion of those who mentioned cost (10%), transport (15%) or distance from home (9%)¹³⁹.

Disabled teenagers would also like to enjoy activities with their peers, but often their special needs are not catered for. This is both in terms of practical issues, such as larger changing rooms, accessible buildings, and in terms of support from the providers of leisure activities. Indeed when parents were asked to choose from issues that would enable their child to enjoy leisure activities with their peers, 64% choose 'staff trained to help my child'¹⁴⁰. Staff attitudes are shown to be important and linked to other issues such as help for young people who find large groups difficult, clear information on availability and more variety and flexibility to suit different interests.

¹³³ Shelley, P. (2002) *Everybody here? Play and leisure for disabled children and young people* London: Contact a Family page 29

¹³⁴ Centre for Health Service Research (2004) 'Identification and description of environmental factors that influence participation of children with cerebral palsy' in *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology* vol. 46: 299

¹³⁵ Morrison and Ursprung 1987 and Pirfski, 2002 mentioned by Centre for Health Service Research (2004) *ibid* page 301

¹³⁶ *Ibid* page 299

¹³⁷ Shelley, P. (2002) *Everybody here? Play and leisure for disabled children and young people* London: Contact a Family page 5

¹³⁸ *ibid* page 5

¹³⁹ *Ibid* page 13

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid* page 25

Research from Contact a Family suggests making Disability Awareness Training compulsory for all staff. It also recommends establishing volunteer buddy schemes which assist disabled young people to attend clubs and activities¹⁴¹. Work from the British Youth Council supports this point, highlighting that peer marketing and peer mentoring should be encouraged, especially for disabled young people¹⁴².

6.4.3 Ethnic and religious minorities

Some young people belonging to Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) groups experience different barriers to participation in positive activities, especially in the arts and in formal volunteering.

The Scottish Executive (now Government) has identified that, aside from the barriers to participation in sports and the arts affecting all young people, ethnic minorities are affected by a lack of diversity in the representation of the arts and in sport, lack of their own culture portrayed, language barriers, fear of racism and social constraints¹⁴³. Most of these barriers often have to do with culture more than ethnicity and are probably less strong in England than in Scotland, where BMEs can be recent immigrants, still strongly connected to a foreign culture and language.

Some minority groups might be inclined to practice unstructured forms of positive activities within the family or community and participate less in formal activities. The high level of participation in music activities by African and Caribbean young people is an example. Evidence shows that many young people from this group do not participate in out-of-school music classes because they are involved in music-making activities at home or take part in gospel and church choirs¹⁴⁴.

For others, religion, rather than ethnicity, has an effect on participation. Muslim parents, particularly South Asians, may find artistic and music activities frivolous and prefer that their children focus on academic work. On a more practical level, after school activities could clash with attendance at mosques. Also, the parents of Muslim girls in particular are often unwilling for their daughters to travel home late from after-school activities¹⁴⁵.

The evidence offers us some solutions to these challenges. Organising events with a focus on non-western genres could be powerful, while providing subsidies for activities would guarantee access to for all. Also, working with parents to educate them on the value of participation could be effective¹⁴⁶. Also, advertising through faith groups, specialist media and in different languages could be helpful in raising levels of participation among young people from BME communities¹⁴⁷.

6.4.4 Gender

Gender issues are important when discussing the barriers and motivators to positive activities. Especially during adolescence, gender plays an important part in the development of perceptions, which in turn can have a powerful impact on a young person's propensity to participate in positive activities.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid* page 30-31

¹⁴² British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* slide 27

¹⁴³ Scottish Executive (2004) *A literature review of the evidence base for culture, the arts and sport policy* page 149

¹⁴⁴ Youth Music (2005) *Participation is ensemble music making by young people of minority ethnic origins* presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, 15-17 September 2005 page 72

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid* page 73-74

¹⁴⁷ British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* slide 26

This is particularly true for sports. As Holroyd writes 'there is a paradox inherent within the nature of sport itself: sport as a positive resource in the lives of disadvantaged youth versus sport as an institution characterised by unequal access, competitiveness and commercialisation'¹⁴⁸. It is this kind of competitiveness that can dissuade young women from participating. While research from Brunton revealed that young men found that sports fit with their male identities, young women did not feel the same. Sport was in conflict with young women's perceptions of their femininity¹⁴⁹. Further, feelings of incompetence, fear of looking stupid in front of others and excessive self-consciousness contributed to these feeling of distance from sports.

Sports can also be perceived to be violent in nature. Crabbe describes sports as 'providing environments in which acts of violence, confrontation and drugs are licensed in ritualised fashion and given meaning through their association with the hegemonic masculine ideals of toughness, heroism and sacrifice'¹⁵⁰. Although this does not, of course, apply to all sport activities, sport can be perceived this way at times.

The same can apply to the arts and music. Playing an instrument or joining an activity that is perceived as inappropriate to their gender is something that young people avoid. Both girls and boys would refrain from joining certain activities for fear of being bullied because considered gender inappropriate¹⁵¹.

Strikingly, research from the Prince's Trust and Envision showed that both boys and girls perceived the other sex as having more choice in positive activities that they had themselves. Girls interviewed by the Prince's Trust complained of a lack of things to do, stressing that 'boys have got snooker clubs or youth clubs, but we have nothing'¹⁵². A piece of research by Envision and the Russell Commission, conversely, reports that young boys would like to see 'more boy oriented stuff' in volunteering and that it would act as an incentive to their participation¹⁵³.

6.4.5 Sexuality

There is some evidence that lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) young people are affected by further barriers to participation. The National Youth Agency claims that both relevant targeted and mainstream activities should offer support to sexual minorities in adolescence¹⁵⁴. Particularly, these young people may suffer from being bullied and could feel particularly uncomfortable for the lack of privacy in changing facilities in leisure centres and sport facilities¹⁵⁵. For the Scottish LGBT groups interviewed, another barrier was the lack of books, films, art and stories with gay or lesbian characters despite the fact that a considerable number of people in the art world belong to these communities¹⁵⁶.

¹⁴⁸ Holroyd, R. et al (2003) Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programs Leeds: Leeds University Press page 7

¹⁴⁹ Brunton, G. et al, (2006) 'Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators' in *Health Education Research* vol. 21 (6) 4

¹⁵⁰ Crabbe, T. (2007) 'Reaching the 'hard to reach: engagement, relationship building and social control in sport based social inclusion work' in *International Journal of Sport, Management and Marketing* 2(1) page 28

¹⁵¹ Youth Music (2005) *Participation is ensemble music making by young people of minority ethnic origins* presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, 15-17 September 2005 page 72

¹⁵² The Prince's Trust (2004) *Reaching the Hardest to Reach* page 45

¹⁵³ Envision and Russell Commission (2008) *Making youth action work: the envision programme as a case study of youth volunteering* page 9

¹⁵⁴ National Youth Agency (2006) *Cutting the Cake: things to do, places to go and someone to talk to* page 5

¹⁵⁵ Scottish Executive (2004) *A literature review of the evidence base for culture, the arts and sport policy* page

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¹⁵⁶ *ibid*

6.4.6 Conclusions

Although young people belonging to minority groups are affected by the same barriers as their peers, they can be faced with other issues that further limit their chances to participate in group activities. Disabled teenagers suffer from bullying and often feel unwelcome at leisure facilities. Special provision and more competent staff are desired for them to be able to enjoy activities with other young people.

Ethnic minorities can face further barriers relating to language, lack of cultural representation and perception that certain activities are 'not for them'. Parental views and religion objections can be a problem too, especially for Muslims. Gender also plays a big role as certain activities are perceived as more or less 'boyish' or 'girly'. Sports, for example, often better fit with ideas of masculinity rather than femininity. The competitiveness and violence are perceived as male rather than female traits. Both boys and girls think that the opposite sex gets more opportunities for positive activities.

LGBT teenagers are put off by scarcity of art, books, and plays with sexual minorities as characters. Participation in sports and outdoor activities can be shunned for the embarrassment due to the lack of privacy in changing rooms.

7. Communication

The second major objective of the research was to collect and analyse evidence on successful and effective communications to young people aged 13 to 19 designed to promote positive activities. The evidence presented and analysed in this section is in two groups. The first is work that makes reference to specific communications campaigns designed to promote positive activities. The second is evidence from broader examples of communication techniques designed for young people.

It should be noted that the number of evaluations conducted specifically on national campaigns designed to encourage young people to engage in positive activities is limited. These kinds of evaluations are not widely available in the public domain and have not been volunteered by the wide range of people from the public and third sectors contacted as part of this research.

This chapter is structured in such a way as to be familiar to communication experts. Firstly, it looks at the development of the audience strand of a strategy. The second examines approach to developing appropriate key messages. The third looks at appropriate media. The chapter then goes on to look at the practical elements of marketing and promotion and involving young people.

7.1 Strategy - Audience

The first step when developing a communication strategy is to clearly identify the audience. DCSF's aim is clearly to communicate to young people aged 13 to 19, but what is not entirely clear is how to do this. As chapter six showed, the questions of attitudinal barriers among different groups is complex. This raises the question of whether to design communications for one audience or to consider how to develop a strategy to address numerous different audiences. This section considers this question.

7.1.1 Young people as an audience

The section on disadvantaged groups of young people described specific barriers than can affect certain minorities groups. Ethnic minorities, LGTB groups and disabled young people shared the wish that mainstream provisions could be more representative of their subgroups and that facilities, staff and fellow peers would respect their differences. This suggests that the task of communicating with different groups of young people is delicate. With so many people belonging to minorities and, at the same time, gender and age differences playing a large role, a myriad of different audiences could be identified.

However, despite these complexities, the evidence reviewed as part of this report suggests that young people from minority groups are largely similar to their peers. For example, a research by Sport England concludes that 'the picture is more complex than many might imagine, with considerable variation in the levels of participation between different ethnic groups, between men and women, and between different sports. The results [of Sport England's research] also challenge stereotypical views that low levels of participation in sport by certain groups are a reflection of culture and choice rather than other constraints such as provision, affordability and access'¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵⁷ Rowe, N. and Champion, R. (2000) *Sport Participation and Ethnicity in England* London: Sport England page 37

Similarly, the then Scottish Executive's research into the lack of participation of young people from BME groups in art and cultural event found that a lack of time, money, availability, inconvenient location, lack of or inaccessible public transport and lack of information are bigger barriers than fear of racism or lack of diversity¹⁵⁸. This is particularly significant as this list of barriers was identified in earlier chapters as barriers common across different groups of young people.

Shelley, writing for Contact a Family, says 'Most disabled young people are just like everyone else. They want to have friends and enjoy their favourite activities. Their interests range from swimming and sport, to drama, arts and crafts, going to parks and playgrounds...and just hanging out with friends or going to a local club'¹⁵⁹.

This is in-line with 'Aiming High: a ten year strategy for positive activities'. The report outlines that 'young people from all backgrounds can experience difficulties... This means a universal approach to ensure accessibility for all young people is needed, with more support for those who have greater difficulties¹⁶⁰'. Further, the benefits of positive activities are universal and it is important to target all young people and not only the disengaged ones, as the PAYP (positive activities for young people) programme did in 2003-2006¹⁶¹.

Together, this all suggests that treating young people as a single audience rather than as a number of separate audiences would be the most appropriate way of developing a communications strategy. However, it does not follow that diversity should be obscured. The Media Trust suggests that 'the most effective approach, which helps avoid stigmatisation, involves targeting [specific groups] within the context of mainstream provision¹⁶²'. Marketing positive activities all together to one large audience of young people can also help downplaying the stereotypes relating to certain types of activities and the 'types' of people they help.

7.1.2 Key findings and recommendations

Positive activities should be seen as mainstream provision for all young people, irrespectively of their demographics. Evidence shows that, despite clear differences in attitudes between groups and demographics, there are strong commonalities in barriers. Treating positive activities as one programme for one audience has also the potential of downplaying the stereotypes related to certain types of activities

However, a plurality of communication techniques will be suggested to address those with particular barriers. The combination of different message and different media to reach all types of young people collectively is recommended.

¹⁵⁸ Scottish Executive (2004) *A literature review of the evidence base for culture, the arts and sport policy* page 149

¹⁵⁹ Shelley, P. (2002) *Everybody here? Play and leisure for disabled children and young people* London: Contact a Family page 3

¹⁶⁰ DCSF and TM Treasury (2007) *Aiming High: a ten year strategy for positive activities* page 54

¹⁶¹ For more information visit www.youthinformation.com/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=92160

¹⁶² Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the Next Generation*

7.2 Strategy - Messages

As will be familiar to communications experts, once an audience has been framed, the next step is to develop key messages relevant to the sub-groups within the audience.

7.2.1 Developing messages

Work from Fairbridge, an organisation supporting inner-city NEETS, recommends that message designed to attract young people to a certain activity aims at their core interests. This understanding of core interests should be informed by developing background research into the interests and aims of the group targeted. Once the main interests that can constitute a 'hook' are identified, an intriguing message can be developed around them¹⁶³.

The Media Trust, a charity aiming to provide communication advice to small third sector organisations, also suggest that it is more effective to focus your message on the experience on offer to the young person, rather than highlighting the charity's core message¹⁶⁴.

Ellis, from the Institute of Volunteering Research, also suggests a variety of messages according to the target age groups. A campaign, she claims, should combine all the different attractions for young people; have fun, make friends, give help, get experience and skills, be rewarded, do something interesting, excited and funky¹⁶⁵.

Different sources confirm that a series of messages containing one individual issue can be less overwhelming than huge issues, which could make young people feel powerless¹⁶⁶. Rather, a large campaign stressing the general benefits of positive activities alongside a series of smaller messages each on a single issue ('meet new friends' or 'learn new things') could be more effective.

The Russell Commission confirms that this is a valid point for engaging young people in volunteering. 'Campaigns to recruit volunteers for a specific purpose are far more effective than generic messages that promote volunteering as simply a 'good thing'. The latter runs the risk of being perceived as a youth intervention programme¹⁶⁷, which would be counter productive as they could automatically make certain groups of young people cynical.

7.2.3 Slogan

A slogan can be a powerful encompassing message that is easily remembered and has the advantage of helping the creation of a recognisable brand. Alongside detailed communication to different subgroups of our young audience, using a slogan has been proved successful. Involving young people in the creation of the slogan is an effective way of creating a message perceived by young people as authentic and powerful.

In the Australian National Youth Week, widely cited in this report as an example of a communication campaign aimed at young people, Young Members (elected youth, representing all areas of Australia) were tasked with choosing a slogan. The result, 'Launch Yourself', was later incorporated in the official logo of the Week¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶³ Fairbridge (2007) *Engaging Young People in Positive Activities*

¹⁶⁴ Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the Next Generation*

¹⁶⁵ Dubit survey quoted in Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: young people speak out on volunteering* page v

¹⁶⁶ Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the Next Generation*

¹⁶⁷ Russell Commission (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* UK: Stationary Offices Limited page 21

¹⁶⁸ Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2007) *National Youth Week 2007 National Report* page 32

There are also interesting examples from the UK. Wirral's Council created a Youth Parliament representing young people living in the borough. One of the first initiatives was a conference involving adult and young members of the community. The slogan 'Young people making a difference' was developed and used for all local publicity¹⁶⁹.

7.2.4 Language and tone

A review by the COI on communicating with young people recommends keeping the message simple. The more information an advertisement tries to communicate, the less it is likely to succeed, particularly among young people that are noted for their short attention spans. Sometimes a motivating message can be buried under other information that could be communicated at a later stage¹⁷⁰.

The Russell Commission, among others, warns us to be careful not to appear condescending in the use of language styles. Attempts to make a message seem 'cool' can be counter productive, so it is suggested to refrain from campaigns that appear to patronise or talk down to young people¹⁷¹. The COI backs this argument by discouraging the mimicry of youth language and advertising, which could backfire if the 'youthspeak' is not up to the minute. The youth language in a proposed Think Link leaflet showed in a focus group was 'derided for being outmoded, patronising and too American'¹⁷².

The COI review goes on advocating for the use of words that entail young people's empowerment and respect for their views. Phrases like 'it's your decision', 'it's up to you', 'you decide' or 'your choice' can have positive effects¹⁷³.

Other words that have been suggested directly by young people as words that would make volunteering more attractive to them are: fun, make friends, meet people, help, challenging, competitions, cool, enjoy, exciting, experience, free, funky, interesting, reward and skills¹⁷⁴.

7.2.5 Specific messages about positive activities

From the evidence found on what enablers and motivators can eradicate the barriers to participation, we can advise on core messages that could be developed in a communication campaign. The messages, as explained in section 6.3, should try to motivate people at different levels.

7.2.5.1 First stage: messages as short term motivators

- Good fun / relieve boredom
- Good places to make friends
- It's different from school
- Everyone's got something to give, everyone's got something to learn
- You decide what to do
- You decide how much time to spend on them

¹⁶⁹ I&Dea Knowledge (2007) *Case study: Young people shaping policy* page 3

¹⁷⁰ Wheeler, M. for COI (2001) *Communicating with Young People: a review of research* page 9

¹⁷¹ Russell Commission (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* UK: Stationary Offices Limited page 21

¹⁷² Wheeler, M. for COI (2001) *ibid*, page 10

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, page 9

¹⁷⁴ Dubit survey quoted in Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: young people speak out on volunteering* page 20

7.2.5.2 Second stage: messages as medium term motivator

- Try something new
- Exciting challenges
- Learn something different
- Who do you want to be?

7.2.5.3 Third stage: messages as long term motivators

- Positive activities for positive futures
- Good for you, good for others
- Learn useful skills
- Good for your CV

7.2.6 Conclusions

Evidence shows the importance of developing background research to understand what the core interests are and what young people are attracted by. It is suggested that a series of individual issues are better than one generic message that could be overwhelming.

The evidence also shows that it is important to consider creating a slogan, which would have the advantage of helping the creation of a recognisable brand. The language used should be simple and not condescending. To avoid condescension, it is better not to attempt to sound cool or to talk 'youthspeak'. Messages that have worked in the past have tried to convey a sense of control and empowerment by using phrases such as 'it's your choice' or 'it's up to you'.

7.3 Strategy - Media

Once a message or a series of messages have been developed, it is important to choose which medium or combination of media to use to communicate them to the target audience. There are a variety of media available, each with some advantages over the others, but with some limitations. As young people's interests change frequently, it is important to regularly update the message and the medium chosen¹⁷⁵.

7.3.1 Magazines

Magazines offer a variety of opportunities to reach the notoriously hard-to-engage audience. Magazines for teenagers, girls especially, have the experience and credibility to handle topics sensitively and inspire their readers to actively make a difference¹⁷⁶. Communicating the benefits of positive activities in general or of a project in particular by looking for coverage in a youth magazine can be effective. Magazines are popular among teenagers as they provide access to real life stories that they can identify with. It is a good method to talk about intimate issues that would make the young person feel embarrassed if addressed face-to-face. Magazines also create a sense of community and connection with peers, with lots of articles with advice on 'teenager' and 'mature subjects by aspirational adults or fellow young people.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the next generation* part 1

¹⁷⁶ *ibid* part 3

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid* part 3

The COI, however, warns to be careful when using magazines. If an advertisement is placed in the wrong environment it can adversely affect the reception of the communication. Placing an ad in a magazine may catch the reader in the wrong mindset, when they are focused on clothes or celebrities, for instance¹⁷⁸.

It is therefore important, if choosing to communicate through magazines, to carefully choose the right section and, rather than just placing an ad for positive activities, be creative and embed the message in an interview, a multiple-choice personality test, or an award, for example.

7.3.2 Social Networking websites

There has been increased emphasis on the importance of social networking websites like Facebook, Bebo or MySpace in the discourse of a global shift towards a more interactive and user-generated use of the Internet, known as Web 2.0.

YouthNet mentions a survey that concludes that 'social networking has taken off, with 42% of internet users regularly visiting sites such as Bebo and Facebook compared to 23% last year. Two years ago the number was so small it did not register as a separate category in the European Interactive Advertising Association¹⁷⁹.

These online communities encompass a series of other media as they often integrate web profiles with blogs, instant messaging, email, music streaming, photo sharing, videos, event organisation, groups and members forums. They create connected communities giving their users a tool to put their lives online and express themselves¹⁸⁰.

Again, organisations like V or YouthNet have been pioneers in using social networking website to market their messages about volunteering among young people.

7.3.3 Blogs

Another key element of the Web 2.0 is the use of blogs; online interactive diaries that stimulate conversations on a web page. They are a source of access to young people's thoughts and mindsets and they provide an 'authentic' voice. Young people tend to like their simple, non-condescending language and style and often participate in lively discussions on issues they are passionate about¹⁸¹.

An impressive 33% of all 14 to 21 year olds online have launched their own blog or website¹⁸². On average, this audience spends eight hours a week online and half of that time is spent in online communities and blogging¹⁸³. This demonstrates the importance of interactive online content when communicating to young people.

Oxfam is a particularly good example in this respect. Their online programme called 'Generation Why' has used blogs as a means of sending live updates from particular events of interest to young people, like the G8 demonstrations, Glastonbury festival and the Coldplay tour. This way, young people are encouraged to share their thoughts about these events. After only six months of blogging, 20% of Generation Why users described blogs as their favourite part of the site¹⁸⁴.

¹⁷⁸ Wheeler, M. (2001) *Communicating with Young People: a review of research* page 11

¹⁷⁹ Youth Net (2007) *Digital Natives: Communicating with Youth in the age of Web 2.0* slide 26

¹⁸⁰ Media Trust (2008) *Communication fore the next generation* part 5

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

¹⁸² Gibson (2005) 'Young blog their way to a publishing revolution' in *The Guardian* 07 October 2005

¹⁸³ Media Trust (2008) *Communication fore the next generation* part 5

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*

7.3.4 Radio

Radio is one of the oldest media but its importance persists. Radio communication is characterised by being intrusive, high frequency and time specific. Young people spend most of their daytime in school or outside of their houses which limits the time they can be accessed through the radio. However, increasing numbers of electronic gadgets and music players include radio access among their many functions. During the homework period (where many of them keep their radios switched on), the morning before or while going to school, the weekends¹⁸⁵ and the winter and summer holidays are the most appropriate times to target young people. Many radio stations target young people in some of their programmes. Identifying these programmes can be a good starting point when deciding to communicate a message through the radio.

The Media Trust provides some tips for getting a message heard through the radio:

- Be creative in the first line of your story
- Allow enough time for the radio station to schedule your story in
- Radio offer many formats and styles, not just ads, so consider them when you deliver a message
- Give any project a name that creates an interest
- Most importantly, make it relevant to the youth market¹⁸⁶

7.3.5 Text Messages

Text messaging can be very cost effective, as sending a SMS is much cheaper than sending a letter or a flier. However, the space is limited to 160 characters in most cases, so this medium only becomes useful when the message chosen can be communicated effectively in a concise style. Most of the time, this limited space can be used as a route towards another medium, which allows for more extensive information. For example, a text message can be sent saying 'win a trip to Florida if you take part in half-a-marathon. Visit www.halfamarathon.com)'.

This message is obviously not exhaustive, but it provides a link to another medium (most of the times a website). Communication can therefore be through two or more routes.

There are, however, many regulations that govern the use of text messages. ASA and ICSTIS regulations should be read before embarking in a text message campaign¹⁸⁷. There are companies that provide cheap mobile marketing services and they can be consulted if a text message campaign is chosen.¹⁸⁸

The City of Wakefield has implemented a system of consultation of young people called 'Youth Voice' that involves text messaging. Youth Voice was set-up to take advantage of the high media use among young people to use text messaging as an important channel to engage with them. It consists of a mechanism for quickly and effectively consulting young people on a variety of different issues. Questions with multiple choices or open answers are periodically sent out via bulk text messages, with panel members able to respond with their

¹⁸⁵ *ibid* part 4

¹⁸⁶ *ibid* part 4

¹⁸⁷ *ibid* part 5

¹⁸⁸ *ibid* part 5

views. To become part of this panel, young people simply have to fill in a form, leaving their phone number and giving their permission to be contacted. Forms are available in schools and in youth centres where NEETs and others not accessible through schools can be contacted¹⁸⁹.

Fairbridge also recommends using text messages to remind young people that they are due to attend a session. With a series of conflicting commitment and the poor use of organisers, agendas and planners, this can effectively increase regular attendance to positive activities¹⁹⁰.

7.3.6 Viral Marketing

The term viral marketing refers to any activity that encourages people to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the opportunity for vast exposure and awareness. If the strategy turns out to be successful, it is possible to communicate to a huge number of young people with a limited initial set-up cost¹⁹¹. Viral marketing is good to make a petition go around quickly, or to launch a new project or programme or to communicate a last-minute information or event to as many young people as possible starting from a list of available contacts (a mailing list or a series of mobile phone numbers).

Again, the Media Trust gives some valuable advice on what elements a successful viral campaign should contain (although it specifies that not all elements are necessary, but the more it features the more a campaign is likely to be successful):

- Give something away in exchange for passing the message on (a small gadget or present, a free entry to some event etc)
- Make it easy for people to send on
- Make sure the message will work on a small and large scale.
- Have a topical message
- Make it fun and provocative while making sure it is on brand
- Find ways to track or sample the outreach of your message to measure the success of your campaign¹⁹²

Once the viral communication starts, there is little control over who it will reach.

7.3.7 Websites

Websites are often the primary communication tool and the main source of detailed information for young people. If previous sections emphasised the need to keep a message short and concise, young people usually require an extensive breadth of information in websites. As the Australian Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (DFCSIA) specifies 'all the components of a certain campaign, activity or event should be found in the website'¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁹ I&DeA (2007) *Case study: use of ICT to enable positive youth engagement* page 1

¹⁹⁰ Fairbridge (2008) *Engaging Young People in Positive Activities* page 3

¹⁹¹ Media Trust (2008) *Communication fore the next generation* part 5

¹⁹² *ibid*

¹⁹³ DFCSIA (2007) *National Youth Week 2007 National Report* page 34

Young people are media savvy and were born when the Internet was already a reality. They can spot immediately whether a website is worth lingering on or whether the content, layout and design are too boring or not user-friendly. For this reason it is important to always use the latest website development software and to rely on good web designers who can create intriguing layouts in which 'the image must break the stereotypical government look and engage the audience in relevant and interesting ways'¹⁹⁴.

A good example of engagement in positive activities through a creative and interactive website is BBC Blast¹⁹⁵. BBC Blast is a creative forum that inspires and motivates young people to develop their creative talents and showcase their work on a digital platform. Blast members can upload their art, dance moves, fashion designs, films and music. They can rate or comment on creative work made by other young people. Experts and famous people occasionally comment on some of the creative work done by young people and offer valuable advice. BBC Blast began in 2002 and has inspired over 250,000 young people in the UK¹⁹⁶.

Ernestina Hall, responsible for CSR at the BBC, explains the communication strategy that she thinks have made BBC Blast so popular among young people: 'It grabs young people's attention through youth focus branding and association with relevant projects, which this year includes a presence at the Reading Festival. The website is designed with accessibility in mind and information is available for free. Not only online, but also by telephone and at events'¹⁹⁷. In other words, online presence is essential, but it cannot stop there. Young people need to be able to access a service through other channels like phone or face-to-face contact.

Another characteristic of BBC Blast is its interactivity. Not only pictures, videos, stories and art pieces can be uploaded, rated and discussed, but the interaction is made real by adult workers providing tips, guidance, possibility of training and industry contacts.

There are lots of other examples of websites aimed at young people, which have attracted large audiences because of their ability to be interactive and creative. We will provide two more examples that, although not about promotion of positive activities, can still provide a prototype for successful communication to teenagers.

For example, creating quizzes around issues can be a successful way to hold young people's interest. Friends of the Earth has created a website for teenagers¹⁹⁸. A multiple-choice quiz on green habits, written with a witty and funny language, tells young people how environmentally friendly their lifestyles are. Signing a petition and becoming a supporter of Friends of the Earth at the Earth Summit is a follow-up from the quiz and many people go on participating as a consequence.

YouthNet developed a similar idea relying on the use of online quizzes. TheSite.org found a creative way to communicate to young people what practices were legal. The language used and the design made the website and the programme successful.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid* page 32

¹⁹⁵ www.bbc.co.uk/blast/

¹⁹⁶ Media Trust (2008) *Communication fore the next generation* part 5

¹⁹⁷ *ibid* part 5

¹⁹⁸ www.meanorgreen.co.uk

7.3.8 Face-to-face

If an organisation is managing young volunteers appropriately, it is argued, they can be effective peer recruiters¹⁹⁹. Indeed, word of mouth was the primary route into volunteering for most young people²⁰⁰. The Media Trust confirms that ‘nothing beats face-to-face contact with your audience’²⁰¹. The British Youth Council backs this argument by advising that whilst the Internet and new media are important for everyone to gather information, research shows that young people are still more likely to act on something they are told face-to-face²⁰².

Envision, for example, used technology without losing human contact. They developed introductory videos, but young volunteers went around schools and youth centres presenting these videos to their peers²⁰³. Fairbridge also uses face-to-face meetings to introduce new young people currently not in any form of education, employment or training. They consider useful to arrange the initial meeting in a setting that the young person feel comfortable with. Better to use a ‘neutral’ place, for example a café, than the association headquarters or offices²⁰⁴.

The Children’s Society stresses a similar point. Networking in the local community and building-up contacts is a good way to recruit young people. Especially for reaching hard-to-reach groups, contacts with local communities, social services, faith groups and other organisation become fundamental. Face-to-face communication with parents is also suggested as an indirect access to young people²⁰⁵.

Community Matters joins in the face-to-face choir by recommending to ‘use a range of formats for publicity and promotional material including the spoken word- direct personal contact from youth workers or other young people can be very powerful’²⁰⁶.

7.3.9 Conclusions

There are a variety of media that can be used to convey messages. Young people are media savvy and they consume a wide range of media. Working with a combination of them can address young people from different angles and maximise the impact of the messages.

Magazines, blogs, text messaging and viral marketing should be taken in consideration when communicating to teenagers. Websites are the main locus of information, but need to be interactive, creative and their design modern and constantly updated. There is widespread agreement that word of mouth and local face-to-face communication to young people and their parents remain pivotal.

¹⁹⁹ Institute of Volunteering Research (2007) *Young People help out: volunteering and giving among young people* page 3

²⁰⁰ *Ibid* page 3

²⁰¹ Media Trust (2008) *Communication fore the next generation* part 2

²⁰² British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming barriers to youth volunteering* slide 27

²⁰³ Russell Commission and Envision (2008) *Making Youth Action Work*

²⁰⁴ Fairbridge (2008) *Engaging Young People in Positive Activities* page 2

²⁰⁵ Children’s Society (2008a) *Young Volunteering on the margin* page 20

²⁰⁶ Community Matters (2007) *Engaging young people in your community organisation* page 12

7.4 Practice - Marketing and promotion

The previous chapters provided evidence on the theory of communication to young people. Identifying an audience, developing a message and choosing the appropriate medium to convey it are concepts familiar to communications professionals. In our literature and communication review, however, we came across a lot of other practical tips and advices on how to market and promote a service to young people. These can be useful considerations to keep in mind when promoting positive activities to young people.

7.4.1 Celebrities

Several pieces of research touched upon the issue of celebrity endorsement. Research has shown that young people value and are inspired by local role models, but there is less consensus over what impact celebrities can have in encouraging young people to participate in positive activities.

Seventy-five per cent of young respondents to an Oxfam survey on Make Poverty History said that 'celebrity endorsements get the message to people who might not otherwise care'²⁰⁷. Young volunteers also confirm that celebrities could be a good route into volunteering, but warn that these celebrities should not just be seen on national campaigns but also seen acting in local settings²⁰⁸. The majority of students react positively to celebrity involvement when they show integrity: 'I like it because they [McFly] go to Uganda and do a different version'²⁰⁹. Seeing the celebrities genuinely interested by going on follow-up visits illustrates their integrity. Students are intrigued by the celebrity's experience and the celebrity is a conduit for their emotional response²¹⁰.

This point is reiterated by the Media Trust. 'The public is sceptical of celebrities 'working' for a cause unless they are seen to be working their socks off to achieve results. In depth research before choosing a celebrity becomes vital'²¹¹. The COI advises to make sure there is identification between the young people targeted and the celebrity chosen. A TV advertisement using a well-known DJ was very successful in making science appear more modern and relevant to young people 10 to 19 years old. This figure was respected for becoming successful against the odds as he was from a disadvantaged background²¹².

Conversely, a research commissioned by the Scout Association warns not to overestimate the role of celebrities and only use them if thought to be essential to a marketing campaign. Only 15% of respondents feel that celebrities have a positive influence on their lives. In fact, parents, family and friends are more influential than celebrities as role models²¹³.

7.4.2 Celebrities - good practice

The Australian Youth Week can give an example of good practice in using celebrity and public figures in marketing and promotion. Youth Week organised the selection of NYW Supporters to generate media coverage of the events. The Young Members (the representatives of young people chosen from around Australia) provided a list of preferences of Australian celebrities and community leaders that they admired and whose presence they

²⁰⁷ Oxfam survey quoted in Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the next generation* part 3

²⁰⁸ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 20

²⁰⁹ Market Link Research, *Red Nose Day 2005: Quantitative and Qualitative Research - Children*, slide 15.

²¹⁰ TW Research, June 2007, *What Makes a Good Story about Poverty? The Public, Artists and Media Perspective - Qualitative Research Findings*, slide 20.

²¹¹ Media Trust (2008) *Communication for the next generation* part 3

²¹² Wheeler, M. for COI (2001) *Communicating with Young People: a review of research* page 9

²¹³ Nfp Synergy (2007) *Typical Young People: a study of what young people are really like today* London: Nfp page 10

would have liked to see. The celebrities are more likely to agree to participate if their presence is the result of young people's 'vox populi'. The selected supporters, chosen from different areas of the country to maximise coverage, come from a variety of backgrounds including aboriginal, music, television, sport, disability and environment²¹⁴. The supporters provided media 'hooks' and actively helped to provide media coverage for the Youth Week.

This example is paradigmatic, as it involves young people to select role models who are important to them and relevant to their cause.

7.4.3 Creativity

Aside from the 'classic' communication methods and tools described in previous chapters, it is important to be creative and to try to come up with new ideas to promote a message or a project. The Russell Commission, for example, has spent time with TV programme makers to suggest a collaboration to encourage a more creative and open approach to promote volunteering. For example, programmes that are popular among young people could embed volunteering messages in their plot. Soap operas' characters can be seen promoting volunteering and reality shows can be developed around this concept, too²¹⁵.

Being creative often means 'thinking outside the box'. Although fliers and posters are important to promote an event or a campaign, sometimes original gadgets can have a much bigger effect. The Australian Youth Week organisers, for example, sent huge quantities of fliers to every corner of the country, together with a few gadgets, including sweat wristbands for teenagers and temporary tattoos for children. They realised that the fliers were not popular as the information they contained was easily accessible through the website. The wristbands however, were extremely popular and young people were still wearing them months after the Youth Week²¹⁶.

In the UK, the Borough of Telford and Wrekin was selected as an example of good practice for inclusion and access. They decided to embark in a project of wider advertisement for positive activities and came up with the successful Flexi Card scheme which proved successful. By creating a partnership with sport clubs, theatres, bowling alleys, swimming pools, leisure facilities and many others they developed a Flexi card system, in which young people could get cheaper access to a series of positive activities. The system was promoted through an initial free 'open day' in which young people could experience different activities²¹⁷.

UK Youth has been creative in setting up Youth Achievement Awards that work as an incentive for young people to volunteer. UK Youth developed a framework for accreditation by setting up bronze, silver and gold targets for young people's participation. This form of accreditation was welcomed by young people, whose participation increased as a consequence of these new targets²¹⁸.

²¹⁴ Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2007) *National Youth Week 2007 National Report* page 28

²¹⁵ Russell Commission (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* UK: Stationary Offices Limited page 21

²¹⁶ Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2007) *National Youth Week 2007 National Report* page 33

²¹⁷ I&DeA (2003) *Borough of Telford and Wrekin: review of leisure, sports and arts facilities- inclusion and access*

²¹⁸ UK Youth (2007) *More Ways to Use UK Youth's Youth Achievement Awards with Young Volunteers* Bransgore: UK Youth

Another marketing idea that was both innovative and creative came from the organisers of the Australian Youth Week. The programme with the attractive name 'Win Free Stuff', accessible through the NYW's website, requires young people to answer a simple question (posed by the competition sponsor) for the chance to win a minor prize. This way, private companies are incentivised to participate not only for good corporate social responsibility, but in exchange for the possibility of knowing their audience better by asking a question to a large sample. Entrants can also opt-in to receive email promotions and updates by the companies²¹⁹. Young people were attracted by the chance of winning prizes and, for many, this section of the website was a route into participation in the Youth Week.

7.4.4 Branding

Promoting and marketing can benefit from a product or a service having a defined and recognisable brand. Mark Blundell, director of the Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey, London, gives an example on branding of positive activities from his research experience in the United States. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) organisation develop a recognisable logo that is found on all buildings used for positive activities (including when held in schools, community centres, churches and recreational centres). The logo is nationally recognised and found on more than 4,000 buildings across the country.

Blundell says that 'it signifies a symbol of trust and commitment that people are pleased to associate with, not least the children and young people attending the centres. T-shirts with the BGCA are very common and create a sense of belonging and identity²²⁰'. Blundell goes on to recommend that 'here in the UK it would be good to have a similar, identifiable logo for youth centre'. Positive activities in general could benefit from a logo, common not only to youth clubs but to all other activities for young people.

7.4.5 Advertising

Outdoor advertisement can also be a good way to promote participation. Whether in the form of posters or even billboards or in the form of fliers distribution, the location of outdoor promotion should also be given consideration. Fairbridge suggests advertising positive activities in the places where young people hang out: outside schools, in bus stops, parks, cafés etc. While the location of a certain activity should avoid 'territorial' locations that can be associated to a certain gang or a certain group of young people, advertisement should try to reach each of these areas²²¹.

The information contained in the posters or fliers should be easily understood, even by young people with disabilities or poor literacy. Using images rather than words for the core message can help convey the messages to a larger audience²²².

Advertise through a variety of media can stretch the outreach. Alternative formats should either be produced or available on request. When appropriate, material should also be translated into the other major languages spoken in the area²²³.

²¹⁹ Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2007) *National Youth Week 2007 National Report* page 31

²²⁰ Blundell, M. (2007) *Programmes in Youth Centres* online only http://www.wcmt.org.uk/public/reports/209_1.pdf page 2

²²¹ Fairbridge (2008) *Engaging young people in positive activities* page 3

²²² MenCap (2007) *Make it clear: a guide to making information easy to read and understand* page 4

²²³ British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming barriers to youth volunteering* slide 26

7.4.6 Conclusions

Celebrity endorsements can be effective, but true passion for the issue and practical involvement in a project are essential. Being creative is important, but that does not only mean creating a great website. Messages can be embedded in TV programs, new gadgets can be created and new flexi card systems can be implemented, to mention a few. An umbrella logo for positive activities could become a symbol of trust, commitment and identity. The location of advertisement should be carefully chosen. Advertisement should contain easily understood information and be available in a variety of formats. While events should be held in neutral places, advertisements should be present in all places where young people hang out.

7.5 Practice - Involving young people

Across different areas of this report, the evidence has shown that a solution to a number of problems could come by greater involvement of young people in the planning, managing and evaluation of positive activities. The Government has pioneered this approach in recent years with participatory budgeting schemes at the local level. This chapter will focus on what has been identified as good practice in this area.

7.5.1 Involving young people

Involvement of young people is often sought at the evaluation stage. A paper questionnaire with a few questions on the perks and shortcomings of an activity is often enough to claim that young people's voices were heard. If views are only sought at the end, there is a risk that young people will see this as an afterthought with little overall importance²²⁴.

The Big Lottery Fund has a fund called Young People's Fund 2 specifically aimed at positive activities that involve young people. Its idea of 'involvement' is much more encompassing than giving young people a questionnaire. They explain that 'by involvement we mean that young people will plan, manage and evaluate projects as well as benefitting from them. Youth-led projects are where young people are able to influence decisions, policies and services'²²⁵.

They continue by advising that an excellent project is one where young people:

- Have the original idea and plan the work that defines the need for the project
- Set-up and manage the project, going to adults for advice and support when needed
- Are involved in developing the organisation's policies and services
- Lead on evaluating the project and publicising lessons learnt²²⁶

Involving young people in key decisions allows them to enjoy some degree of autonomy and ownership, but also helps them to develop more realistic perceptions of their control over external factors and affords them the respect so often seen as lacking in their interactions with adults²²⁷.

²²⁴ Big Lottery Fund (2005) *Engaging young people in evaluation and consultation* London: Burlington Press page 3

²²⁵ Big Lottery Fund (2008) *Involving young people: what do we mean?* Page 1

²²⁶ *ibid* Page 1

²²⁷ Holroyd, R. et al (2003) *Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programs* Leeds: Leeds University Press page 9

7.5.2 Involvement - planning and consulting

It is important to map and research what is currently available in the area and what other youth organisations exist and what they do. Sometimes, projects risk duplicating an existing service. Young people can be involved in mapping what is on offer in the area and whether possible partnerships are desirable²²⁸.

Once there is certainty that a project or an activity is really answering to specific needs, the planning and management of a project can start. Continued communication with young people should be sought through ongoing meetings, emails lists, message boards and web communication. A decision-making body, such as a young people advisory group or forum should be put up. It is important to be responsive to the consultation and to make sure that young people's views are acted upon where possible²²⁹.

Giving young people power to budget and manage a fund is a delicate practice that requires trust. If youth involvement is desired, however, the same trust placed in young people in the planning or evaluating, should be shown in managing money. Some organisations have developed youth-led funding schemes, such as vashpoint²³⁰, which put money directly into the hands of young people so that they can act on their concerns²³¹.

These methods work well with those who are already involved in some sort of activity or who are part of some association or group. It is harder to hear the views of those not involved in any activities, but there are methods that will be described in section 7.5.4.

7.5.3 Involvement - evaluation

The Lottery Fund recommends using a range of different evaluation methods in order to capture the diversity of young people and their views, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. These can include questionnaires, focus groups but also blogs and websites, graffiti walls, suggestion boxes or more creative approaches²³².

Creative methods have the advantage of initiating discussion by 'distancing' an issue so that it becomes more detached from personal experience. Developing an act, going through some photographs or making posters or drawings to express young people's feelings towards a completed activity or project, can be a good way to hear everybody's personal opinion, even from those not too articulated or expressive²³³. These methods can, of course, be implemented at all stages of the involvement, and not necessarily only at the evaluation stage. A project about bullying, for example, can overcome young people's insecurities and difficulties to talk about such a delicate issue, by asking them to act a situation out, or paint it.

Both the documents by Participation Works and Big Lottery Fund quoted in this section include a variety of examples of young people's involvement.

²²⁸ Community Matters (2007) *Engaging young people in your community organisation* London: Community Matters page 4

²²⁹ *Ibid* page 6

²³⁰ www.vinspired.com/vcashpoint/

²³¹ Vinformed (2007) *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns* page 11

²³² Big Lottery Fund (2005) *ibid* page 4,9

²³³ Participation Works (2007) *How to use creative methods for participation* London: National Children Bureau page 2

7.5.4 Involvement - peer advocacy

The involvement of those who are not currently participating in any activity and are not part of any structured group can be obtained through the precious help of those young people who are involved. As a respondent of a qualitative research conducted by Dubit said, 'knowing friends who do an activity is the best way to get involved in it, as you believe what they say'²³⁴. As we have seen in previous sessions, friends are very important to young people and their opinions and advices are taken in consideration.

For these reasons, peer advocacy is suggested by a number of different sources as the best way to get disengaged young people to participate in activities, or at least to voice their discontent towards what's on offer.

Taster days or 'bring a friend' day have been working in the past. The use of other young people, who are already enrolled in a programme, as advocates can be a useful means of making activities appear more accessible while being a mean of development for those already involved²³⁵. The British Youth Council reminds that 'organisations should realise that volunteering for the first time can be daunting if you are on your own and feel out of place, so offering taster days for groups of friends would be effective'²³⁶.

Ellis suggests using schools and other educational establishments for young people to give presentations to others who are not currently involved in volunteering²³⁷. The same applies to sports, where peer supports was identified by young people as a positive influence in choosing to take part in a physical activity²³⁸. The Russell Commission also stresses the importance of peer advocacy as one of the key ingredients for a successful campaign. They say that 'campaigns that combine local peer-to-peer 'guerrilla' type marketing initiatives and local media exposure with national awareness are more likely to succeed'²³⁹.

7.5.5 Involvement - good practice

A number of examples of youth engagement in the UK can be found through the Improvement and Development Agency's website, where case studies of successful local authorities' efforts to involve young people are listed.

In Wirral, the 2006 Youth Voice Conference was organised to bring together young people and representatives of different public bodies (the police, schools, Connexions, Healthlink, Wirral Multicultural Centre etc) to talk about issues affecting youth in the area. A Charter of Participation for youth in Wirral was developed and a Youth Parliament was created. Young people elected to represent their peers met during the summer and planned the outline agenda for the conference, agreed on the format of the day and identified local hot topics to be discussed.

The conference was a great success, attracting a lot of positive media coverage and became a blueprint for future public events in Wirral²⁴⁰. Further details are found in the case study appendix.

²³⁴ Ellis, A. (2004) *Managing Volunteers. Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering* page 19

²³⁵ Fairbridge (2008) *Engaging Young People in Positive Activities* page 3

²³⁶ British Youth Council (2007) *Overcoming Barriers to Youth Volunteering* slide 25

²³⁷ *ibid*

²³⁸ Brunton, G. et al, (2001) *Young People and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators* page 5

²³⁹ Russell, I. (2005) *A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement* London: Russell Commission page 23

²⁴⁰ I&DeA (2007b) *Case study: Young people shaping policy*

Another example of good practice is Blackpool Council, which received 'Council of the Year' award for involving vulnerable young people- both one to one and in groups- in democratic decision-making. One outcome of the consultation with young people has been the creation of the young person website²⁴¹, effectively a directory of positive activities available in the area²⁴².

In Lewisham, the Young Commissioner Group was created in 2006 with 16 young people drawn from diverse backgrounds from across the Borough. They attended an accredited course that provided the background about what youth work should aim at and training in grant-giving. After that they received almost £350,000 designed to improve provisions of 'places to go, things to do, and people to talk to' particularly for those with little or no access to youth provision. The project was extremely successful and it involved the presence and support of elected leaders, including the Mayor of London²⁴³. Details are found in the case study appendix.

7.5.6 Conclusions

Involvement means that young people will plan, manage and evaluate projects as well as benefitting from them. Youth-led projects are where young people are able to influence decisions, policies and services. Involving young people in key decisions allows them to enjoy some degree of autonomy and ownership, but also helps them to develop more realistic perceptions of their control over external factors

Giving young people budget responsibility is a delicate practice involving a lot of trust, but advisable if more engagement and feeling of ownership are desired. When evaluating a project a number of methods can be used. Being creative is important. Peer advocacy is suggested by many sources. There is nothing more efficient than using friendship, one of the most important values for young people, to recruit others into positive activities.

²⁴¹ See www.rubothered.co.uk for further details

²⁴² Taplin, M. (2008) Communication Practice

²⁴³ I&DeA (2007a) *Service delivery case study: positive youth engagement*

8. Research gaps and future development

8.1 Future research needs

The evidence base for this review of attitudinal barriers to young people taking up positive activities is broad and disparate. This is because research reports have often focussed on one particular type of positive activity or a specific demographic profile. Although the evidence has been presented in a thematic way, factors can differ significantly across sporting, cultural, uniformed and cultural activities.

Our thematic analysis, while valuable in providing an overview, can also make it difficult to gauge the relative importance and inter-relationship of the different types of physical, attitudinal and behavioural barriers. This problem is exacerbated by the focus placed by most of the research on assessing the impact of a range of positive activities on young people rather than the barriers. To provide a clearer picture of why young people do not engage with positive activities, further qualitative and quantitative research is needed. This should look at answering the following questions:

- How do the reasons for young people not participating in structured group activities differ according to type of activity, socio-demographic factors and location?
- What is the relative importance of physical, attitudinal and behavioural barriers?
- To what extent do these factors correlate with each other?
- Can young people be segmented according to their reasons for not getting involved in structured group activities? If so, what is the profile and size of these segments?
- What factors do young people feel could be addressed by Government and the voluntary sector?

Although these objectives suggest a quantitative study, the lack of a broad piece of qualitative research that explores reasons for non-participation would necessitate an initial exploratory stage of research.

8.2 Qualitative research

The purpose of qualitative research would be to identify reasons behind non-participation by going beyond common reasons cited, such as a lack of interest in specific activities and time and cost constraints. This would be done by exploring young people's past experiences and pre-perceptions of structured group activities. Projective and enabling techniques should be used, in particular, to uncover internal factors, such as those relating to young people's lack of self-esteem and low identification with groups running activities. While a pre-task, such as a diary or a request for young people to put together a list of activities they could undertake in their community, would be a useful means of identifying more physical and practical barriers. The picture could be completed by carrying out qualitative research with experts and parents. The scoping exercise for the desk research was unable to identify in-depth qualitative studies among parents and experts relevant to this area. Research among these audiences would help to complete the picture by contrasting their experiences and views with those of young people.

We suggest that the young people's groups are split into those that participate in positive activities and those that do not. The groups should be weighted towards those that do not participate to ensure that there is sufficient scope for exploring the barriers. The purpose of including participants would be to provide a point of contrast with non-participants. Their responses to the potential barriers listed in the report and will help provide a context for non-participant responses.

The qualitative research can be used to draw up a tentative segmentation of young non-participants according to the barriers they are most influenced by. Qualitative research can provide an understanding of the inter-relationship of these factors and can begin to suggest how these might be addressed in the future. It will also have value by informing the development of the quantitative questionnaire, since it will help ensure that the pre-coded questions reflect the full range of possible responses and are expressed in a way that young people are likely to understand.

8.3 Quantitative research

Quantitative research can be used to cluster non-participants by undertaking factor analysis on their responses to survey questions relating to their reasons for not getting involved. The size and profile of the clusters will help policy makers design interventions that are likely to be most effective in addressing the underlying causes of non-participation. The survey could also act as a benchmark prior to large scale invention and communication campaigns in this area. Future tracking surveys would be able to identify how the individual clusters responded to the new initiatives, thereby, providing an indication of their success. In addition, quantitative research could be undertaken with representative sample of young people in England to provide a definitive measure of levels of participation across different types of activities.

In summary, future research should look at reasons behind non-participation in organised group activities in general rather than focus on particular types of activity. This means a stronger emphasis on understanding the influence of generic factors, such as levels of access, pre-conceptions of the activities and organisations running them and young people's self-perceptions. A robust quantitative survey that tracks participation and barriers over time would also help to monitor investment in this area.

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10. Appendix: Communication with experts

The report mentions a contact letter and an interview discussion that have served the purpose to communicate and collect evidence from key experts and stakeholders. The full texts are reported in this section.

10.1 Contact letter

9th June 2008

Dear

DCSF's research project: Engaging Young People in Positive Activities

I am writing to ask you to be involved in the formative stages of an important piece of research that will help the Department for Children, Schools and Families promote positive activities among young people. Your knowledge and views will be vital to the process.

DCSF has commissioned EdComs, a leading research consultancy, to carry-out the research on our behalf. The demands on your time would be minimal.

The research is designed to contribute to DCSF's desire to raise the uptake of positive activities among young people. DCSF has previously commissioned work on the physical barriers to accessing positive activities. Rather than repeat this work, EdComs's research will focus on the behavioural and attitudinal barriers to participation in positive activities. The first stage is to conduct an audit of the existing research about these types of motivators and barriers of participation in positive activities. The second stage will uncover evidence on the effectiveness of communication campaigns designed to change the behaviour of young people, both domestically and internationally.

Both stages will be underpinned by a number of short telephone conversations with experts in these areas. The purpose of the interviews will be to help build the evidence base by gathering experts' views on the existing literature, revealing gaps, and uncovering knowledge of behavioural change among young people resulting from communications campaigns. I would be grateful if you would be one of the experts that EdComs contacts. Each telephone conversation will last for a maximum of half an hour and will address one or both of the following areas in varying levels of detail:

Relevant existing research and gaps in the evidence base

Successful public campaigns aimed at young people, domestically and internationally

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. EdComs aims to have conversations with key stakeholders in the week commencing 16th June. Please contact me (020 7925 5064) or James MacGregor at EdComs (020 7401 4014, james.macgregor@edcoms.co.uk) if you would like to discuss this further. I hope that you will be available to make a contribution to this valuable work.

Yours sincerely,

Sara Jones
Communications Strategy & Planning
Department for Children, Schools and Families

10.2 Phone interview Guide

COI / DCSF Young People Involvement in Positive Activities

Telephone Interview Questions

Purpose

The questions in this document are designed to be used for half hour long telephone interviews with key stakeholders identified by the DCSF. The purpose of these interviews is to gain a better understanding from the stakeholders' expertise of the latest and most significant evidence on motivations and barriers to young people engaging in positive activities.

Information from the interviews will also provide insights and supporting evidence to support DCSF's development of a communication plan to engage young people in positive activities.

Considerations

The questions in this document are a guide rather than a rigid structure for a telephone conversation. The researcher might find it necessary to deviate from the wording of the questions in order to uncover the information being sought. Such deviations would be reliant on the researcher's judgement.

Also, timings are approximate and act as a guide. Again, it will be for the researcher to use her/his judgement to assess how much useful information can be gathered in each of the areas of questioning. The discussion on the existing literature and on communication strategies are often interlinked, but some of the experts like you might have more extensive knowledge on one or the other facet of this issue.

Structure

1. *Introduction (5 minutes)*

Each interview will open with a brief explanation of the following:

- Reference to the earlier email letter from DCSF contact (Sara Jones)
- DCSF's intentions in commissioning EdComs to undertake work on their behalf, focusing on DCSF's belief that effective communication will be dependant on understanding what messages will motivate young people to take part in positive activities
- Explanation of research's focus on attitudinal rather than physical barriers.
- A brief summary of the researchers' role at EdComs, their role on the project and the organisation.

The researcher will also offer to answer any factual questions at this point.

2. Research Evidence (10 minutes)

- What are the barriers to participation of young people in positive activities?
- Aside from the practical barriers (cost, accessibility, information...) are there any behavioural or attitudinal barriers?
- Are these barriers affecting some sub-group of young people more than others?
- Which articles/ books/ studies give evidence or analysis on these topics?

3. Communication Approach and Strategy (10 minutes)

- What is the most effective way to communicate to young people the benefits to themselves and their communities from their participation in positive activities?
- What messages could help tackling the barriers?
- And what messages could enhance their motivation to participation?
- Which communication activities have been successful in changing young people's behaviour?
- Which articles/ books/ studies talk about successful communication approaches?

4. Further Sources (5 minutes)

- Who are the key academics / opinion leaders that you consider experts on the subjects we touched upon earlier?
- Which are the leading organisations that have conducted research into barriers / motivators to youth participation and into communication strategies?
- Where are the gaps in research?
 - What questions remain unanswered?
 - What questions have been inadequately answered?

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