



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Transitions

Young Adults with Complex Needs

A Social Exclusion Unit Final Report



Social
Exclusion
Unit



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Prime Minister's Foreword



When we came to power in 1997, I made tackling social exclusion one of this Government's priorities. We recognised that too many people were suffering from the combined effect of problems such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing, ill health and discrimination – a vicious cycle that was cutting them off from the things that most people take for granted. We also recognised that this waste of human potential was bad for society as a whole.

Since then, we have made real progress. Our strategy to reform welfare and make work pay has delivered the lowest unemployment for a generation. There are now 700,000 fewer children living in poverty. And through focused action, we have taken on some of the most acute issues – for example, reducing the number of people sleeping rough by three quarters. But we know that there is still much to do.

Public services – and dedicated public servants – are in the front line of our efforts to reduce social exclusion. At the same time, we are implementing a major programme of reform – delivering services that are increasingly personalised to the needs of the individual, offering more choices, driving up standards, encouraging people to take more responsibility.

Our reforms of the public services go hand-in-hand with our continued commitment to social justice. For too long, public services have worked less well for disadvantaged people, who in turn have had few means of challenging the quality of the services they have been offered.

This is why I particularly welcome the Social Exclusion Unit's report *Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs*, part of the *Improving Services, Improving Lives* series. As we give citizens more direct influence over their public services, this process must include the most disadvantaged people in our society, so that we can offer them support that is more effective and relevant to their needs than ever before.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Blair". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that starts under the first letter and extends to the right, ending under the last letter.

Phil Woolas

Foreword



This Government is committed to tackling social exclusion.

The test of our success is how we support the most disadvantaged people in our society. That means helping people at key stages of their life when they are most at risk and most vulnerable. The transition to adulthood is one of these key stages.

Real progress has been made as a result of our actions: the New Deal for Young People has helped to virtually eradicate long-term claimant unemployment amongst young people; between 1998 and 2003 there was a reduction of 9.8 per cent in the under-18 conception rate; and the Youth Green Paper proposes a major boost to all teenagers with more say over what they can do in their spare time and the places they can go. In addition the focus on children and young people in recent years will, in later years, help to reduce the need for later interventions by preventing problems from occurring in the first place.

The transition to adulthood is becoming more complex, longer and more risky. It is a time when young people enter a new and exciting world with new rights – and responsibilities. It is also the time when they take decisions that will affect the rest of their lives.

This report looks at the lives of 16- to 25-year-olds with complex needs. That is, young people who suffer disproportionately from a number of different types of disadvantage: worklessness, lack of training or education, poor health (in particular, mental and sexual health) or substance misuse.

Our actions, focused around the three key themes of age boundaries, holistic services and the thinking and behaviour of young adults, aim to give vulnerable young people the best possible start in adult life.

The report makes clear that help and support for young adults needs to be balanced with young people accepting responsibility for their actions and that respect for both people and places will improve an individual's life chances.

Transitions is the third in the Social Exclusion Unit's *Improving Services, Improving Lives* series. Forthcoming reports in the series will address in more detail particular issues, such as the needs of particular groups, including older people and people who move frequently. Taken together, they will set out a wide-ranging programme of action to make sure that our reformed public services work better for the people who need them most.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Phil Woolas', written in a cursive style.

Phil Woolas

Minister of State for Social Exclusion

Executive Summary

“Listen to what young people are saying, take their views into consideration, treat young people as equals, let them be involved in the discussion about them, explain things clearly”.

SEU Focus Group

Background

Public services are for everyone. But not all sections of society have benefited to the same extent from the major programme of investment in our services. This report looks at one such group: **young adults with complex needs**.

The period of transition from childhood to adulthood is becoming increasingly **complex, difficult and risky**. Most young people, supported by parents, friends and school, manage the transition successfully. But for some young people the process is fraught with difficulties. Without effective intervention, social exclusion in youth can continue long into adulthood and be passed down to the next generation.

The transition to adulthood is more difficult if you also have to deal with one or more of the following issues: **poor housing; homelessness; substance misuse; mental health issues; poor health; poor education or long-term unemployment**.

This report therefore aims to identify **how services can best fit the needs of 16- to 25-year-olds with complex needs** as they make the transition to adulthood. It examines the problems faced by young people as they move from adolescence to adulthood; it explores the areas of **thinking and behaviour, age boundaries and holistic services and the trusted adult** and sets out the principles of effective service delivery for young adults. The report ends by outlining the actions the Government will take to address the problems of service delivery to young adults with complex needs.

The report makes clear that help and support for young adults needs to be balanced with young people accepting responsibility for their actions and that respect for both people and places will improve an individual's life chances. Better services, support and advice for young people will help to **promote self-respect** and therefore **responsible behaviour**.

The problem

Some young people **suffer disproportionately from different types of disadvantage**. These include homelessness, worklessness, lack of training or education and poor health (in particular, mental and sexual health). Young people are also at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, drug use and crime.

- Over 1 million people in Great Britain aged between 16 and 24 are not in education, employment or training.
- Young men are the most likely victims of violent crime. They are also the most likely perpetrators of crime.
- It is estimated that nearly half of all 16- to 24-year-olds in England and Wales have used illicit drugs. Reported Class A drug use amongst 20- to 24-year-olds is three times higher than that in the general population.
- Suicide is the cause of a quarter of the deaths amongst 16- to 24-year-old men.

Some disadvantaged young people also have **'complex needs'**; interlocking problems where the total represents more than the sum of the parts:

- Over 90 per cent of imprisoned young offenders have at least one, or combination of, the following: personality disorder, psychosis, neurotic disorder, or substance misuse.
- Substance misuse affects around a third to a half of people with severe mental health problems.
- Homelessness is frequently associated with substance misuse problems; and being homeless almost trebles a young person's chance of developing a mental health problem.

What is already being done?

There has been an important and welcome focus on children and young people in recent years. Policies targeted at children under the age of 16 – for example, Sure Start, Youth Inclusion and Support Panels, extended schools and the Child Trust Fund – will, in later years, help to reduce the need for later interventions by preventing problems from occurring in the first place. Similarly, the development of Children's Trusts and the *Every Child Matters* agenda have the potential to transform outcomes for young people.

There are many excellent examples of both statutory and voluntary initiatives and programmes designed to support young people. These include, for example, the Connexions Service, Youth Offending Teams and The Prince's Trust 'Team' programme.

But policies and programmes are often targeted at a specific age group or specific problem: **there are relatively few examples of public services that address the needs of 16- to 25-year-olds in the round or ensure an effective transition from youth services to adult services.**

Many policies assume that youth ends at 18 or 19 but the reality is that for some disadvantaged young people – teenage parents for example – this may be when support is most needed. Many of the issues that are thought of as the problems of teenagers are in fact as bad (or worse) for those in their early twenties, on whom much less policy has been focused – the phenomenon of **'the invisible early twenties'**.

The findings

The most **significant findings** from the evidence-gathering phase of the project can be divided into **three key themes**:

- the thinking and behaviour of young adults;
- the age boundaries of policy provision; and
- the benefits of holistic services and the role of the trusted adult.

Thinking and behaviour

“Make them feel like they are achieving something, tell them why they are doing the training and where it’s leading them.”

SEU Focus Group

The way in which young people think and behave is highly relevant to shaping their life-chances. Their **attitudes and assumptions** can either compound their disadvantages or can help to overcome them.

But young people’s attitudes and assumptions are not formed in isolation. **Parents and peers** have a crucial role to play – and parents remain influential well into adulthood. Parents, peers and the community can reinforce positive or negative patterns of thinking and behaviour.

Decisions made during the transition – in areas like education and employment – are critical. They are some of the most important and far-reaching decisions taken at any time of life. But disadvantaged young adults can often be least equipped with the skills they need to make the choices that influence their futures. This is when the role of the trusted adult, which we refer to in detail in chapter 5, becomes crucial.

For some disengaged young adults, the support needed to help them get a job, or to consider re-engaging with education, may take substantial time and effort. In these cases it will be essential to measure the progress, or **‘distance travelled’**, on the road to employment or education.

Our **action points** in this area include:

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will explore the potential for measuring the ‘distance travelled’ by young adults on the road to work and learning.
- The Home Office will work to promote the use of strategies designed to address the underlying causes of a young person's anti-social behaviour.
- DfES will undertake a review of learning to help disadvantaged young adults compete in the labour market.
- DfES and the Department of Health will explore the need and role of low-level counselling for vulnerable young people.

Age boundaries

“When I was 16 I was classed as a priority, but now I am only just 19 they don’t really give a toss.”

SEU Focus Group

Modern transitions to adulthood can be described as either ‘**slow track**’ or ‘**fast track**’. Those on the slow track stay longer in education and remain financially dependent on their parents for longer and experience a slower – but usually more successful – transition. However, young people on the fast-track to adulthood, such as young parents or early school-leavers, can face a more uncertain future.

Policy structures have tended to lag behind the reality of people’s lives: the ways in which young people become adults has become more complicated and diverse but policies have generally failed to keep up with such changes. The age structuring on which many policies are based is often **complex, inconsistent**, and **working against the principle of resources following need**.

Good examples of effective arrangements for the transition from child to adult services already exist, as do initiatives where age boundaries are effectively ‘**blurred**’ to allow for continuity of support for a young person.

We want to build on such developments. Our **action points** in this area include:

- DfES and other government departments will ensure more effective transitions out of Children’s Trusts and between youth and adult services in areas including mental health and criminal justice.
- The National Treatment Agency’s essential guidance will ensure that treatment for drug misuse is dependant on need, not age.
- DWP will review the shared accommodation rules to ensure that they allow vulnerable young adults access to appropriate accommodation.
- The National Offender Management Service will review the provision of services for young adult offenders.

Holistic services and the trusted adult

“There should be counselling, advice about sex, advice for families... because young people go through a lot.”

SEU Focus Group

Many young adults with multiple needs are not supported by current provisions. Some may experience **duplication and overlap** in (single issue-based) services provided, while others may **fall through the gap**.

However, **holistic services** – that is, services that look at the individual and the range of problems that they face – can manage complex problems and encourage engagement with service providers.

Young adults may find it difficult to approach services – either because they don't know that they exist or they may mistrust them because of previous bad experiences – of their own or of friends and family.

Support, advice and guidance are vital to an effective transition. Most young people will receive this from parents and peers, but some – those most disadvantaged – will not be able to access such support. For such people, the trusted adult – be it a mentor, personal adviser or lead professional – will be crucial.

There are plenty of good examples and positive proposals planned in these areas, such as the targeted youth support teams proposed in Youth Matters, the Youth Green Paper.

Our action points in this area include:

- ODPM will support Homeless Link to develop and evaluate 'Move On Plans' to facilitate better movement through hostels and into more suitable accommodation.
- DfES will consider the role of the trusted adult in supporting vulnerable young adults, taking account of the views of young adults themselves.
- DfES and Home Office will explore what constitutes an effective mentoring relationship.
- SEU will work with DfES on the proposed targeted youth support teams.

The **full range of action points** in the areas of **thinking and behaviour, age boundaries** and **holistic services and the trusted adult** can be found in **Chapters 3, 4 and 5** respectively and the **action plan in Chapter 7** which sets out who in Government is responsible for implementing the agreed actions and by when.

Principles of service delivery for young adults

We believe that the evidence gathered during the course of the project points to five key principles of service delivery for young adults. These are:

- actively managing the transition from youth to adult services;
- taking thinking and behaviour into account, and building on it;
- involving young adults (and their families and carers) in designing and delivering services;
- giving effective information about services, and sharing information between services; and
- offering young people a trusted adult who can both challenge and support them.

These principles are not intended to be prescriptive but we think they could be used and adapted by local authorities and other service providers working with young adults. Chapter 6 explores these issues in more detail.

Conclusion

This report aims to improve the delivery of services to young people with complex needs by both **introducing policy changes to existing services and raising the issue for other service providers to consider how best they are meeting the needs of this age range at such a critical stage of their life.**

The gap between the experiences of disadvantaged groups, such as young adults with complex needs, and the general population, is not a new challenge. But narrowing it is central to the Government's strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion and at the heart of Government reforms to **make public services more responsive to the needs of the individual.**

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Summary

This report **examines the effectiveness of services for young adults with complex needs** as they make the **transition to adulthood**. It focuses on 16- to 25-year-olds, analyses the issues they face, and sets out actions agreed across government to improve things.

This project is part of the Social Exclusion Unit's wider work programme – *Improving Services, Improving Lives* – which aims to make public services more effective for disadvantaged people, in order to improve their life chances.

The projects have been identified using evidence from *Breaking the Cycle*, the Government's review of how successful policies had been in tackling social exclusion since 1997. *Breaking the Cycle* identified disadvantaged young adults as a group who had not benefited enough from reforms to date.

This report is divided into sections as follows:

- Chapter 2 sets out the evidence about the problems that young people face as they make the transition to adulthood
- Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore our three key themes of:
 - Thinking and Behaviour;
 - Age Boundaries; and
 - Holistic services and the trusted adult.

The three chapters look at the issues, existing policy, good practice, and changes for the future

- Chapter 6 draws together our conclusions, setting out principles of service delivery for young adults
- Chapter 7 is our action plan. It sets out the actions agreed across government in response to the issues raised in this report and who is responsible for implementing these actions, and by when.

Alongside the report, we are making available annexes on our website **www.socialexclusion.gov.uk**. These include the detailed research we commissioned on thinking and behaviour, and findings from our consultation and focus groups.

Breaking the Cycle

- 1.1 In September 2004 the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) published *Breaking the Cycle* – a stocktake of the Government’s progress in tackling the causes and consequences of social exclusion since 1997.¹ *Breaking the Cycle* concluded that significant progress had been made in a number of areas, including reduced child poverty and pensioner poverty, lower unemployment, expanded nursery education and childcare provision, improved educational attainment, and a sharp drop in the number of rough sleepers.
- 1.2 However, a key finding of *Breaking the Cycle* was that people facing severe or multiple disadvantages are less likely to benefit from policies. In some cases they tend not to use services as much as others do, and sometimes when they do they are less likely to gain from them. *Breaking the Cycle* identified this as a crucial challenge for public service delivery – “we need to improve service design and delivery to extend the reach of what works to those who need it most”.
- 1.3 As a result, better service delivery for disadvantaged groups is the overarching theme of the Social Exclusion Unit’s current work programme.

Improving Services, Improving Lives

- 1.4 *Breaking the Cycle* found that there are some groups within the population who are less likely to benefit from key public services than the population as a whole. These include:
 - people with low literacy, language and numeracy skills;
 - disabled people and people with long term health conditions;
 - some ethnic minority groups;
 - young adults with complex needs;
 - excluded older people; and
 - some groups that move frequently.
- 1.5 It is no coincidence that the life chances of these groups – measured by socio-economic indicators such as income, employment rates, housing quality and qualifications achieved – are on average relatively poor.² Put simply, this means that public services are often least successful for those who need them most.
- 1.6 Through the *Improving Services, Improving Lives* work programme, the Social Exclusion Unit is working with government departments and other stakeholders to deepen our understanding of why some groups benefit less from services than the general population, and to identify approaches to delivery that will narrow that gap. The overall objective of the programme is to make public services more effective for disadvantaged people, in order to improve their life chances.

1.7 That programme consists of an integrated set of projects, of which this report is one:

Disadvantaged adults. A project to make mainstream public services more effective for three broad disadvantaged groups within the adult population: people with literacy, language and numeracy needs; disabled people and people with long-term health conditions; and people from certain ethnic minority groups. An interim report on this project was published in October 2005.

Inclusion through innovation. A project to explore how information and communication technologies (ICT) can help to address the needs of disadvantaged groups. It aims to maximise the use of ICT in support of those who face multiple or entrenched problems, and to address inequalities arising between people who are able to make use of ICT and those who are not. A report on this project was published in November 2005.

Excluded older people. A project putting renewed focus on tackling isolation and social exclusion among older people. Key issues for the project are: early support and preventative services, rather than crisis interventions when action could be too late; greater control and choice for older people to avoid untimely dependency; and joining up services, from benefits to housing to health. A report on this project will be published early in 2006.

Disadvantaged people who move frequently. A project to improve service delivery for people who experience a high degree of instability in their housing circumstances. It aims to promote: tailored services which meet individual needs in different locations; support for people who want to settle and avoid a cycle of homelessness; and the creation of sustainable communities in which both those who move frequently and those who are settled respect each other. A report on this project will be published early in 2006.

An overarching report drawing together the lessons from the whole work programme about how services can be improved for the most disadvantaged will be published in summer 2006.

1.8 An important early finding from *Improving Services, Improving Lives* is that there are also some broad principles that, if implemented more widely, could improve delivery not only for disadvantaged people but for everyone using public services. Our recent report, *Improving Services, Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes*, published in October 2005, began to set out some of these common principles, looking in particular at:

- Information and Communication
- Interactions with frontline staff
- Building personal capacity in those who use services
- Joining-up services
- The role of the voluntary and community sector
- Levers and incentives – including target and funding regimes

- 1.9 The report considers these areas as part of the wider context of public service reform, thinking about how the Government's agenda to develop customer-focus, choice, contestability and user involvement can help the most disadvantaged.

Young Adults with Complex Needs

- 1.10 This report contains the findings from the Young Adults with Complex Needs project, which has also informed the common findings of *Improving Services, Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes*. Our aim has been to focus specifically on those issues and actions which are relevant for young adults as they make the transition to adulthood.
- 1.11 We use the term 'complex needs' in this report as shorthand to describe those who face particularly severe disadvantage. In many cases, this will mean that they have interlocking problems where the total represents more than the sum of the parts. It can also be used to describe the *depth* of particular problems, as well as the *breadth* of problems people may face. This can make people particularly vulnerable and present a challenge to effective service delivery.

Working across Government

- 1.12 Developing joined-up solutions to complex problems has always been a key part of the Social Exclusion Unit's remit, and close partnerships with other government departments are a central feature of the way we work.
- 1.13 The findings of our report are relevant to a large number of the government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) Targets, including:

PSA targets

Department for Education and Skills – *Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training.*

Department for Education and Skills – *Tackle the adult skills gap.*

Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills – *Reduce the under-18 conception rate by 50 per cent by 2010 as part of a broader strategy to improve sexual health.*

Department of Health - *Improve life outcomes of adults and children with mental health problems through year on year improvements in access to crisis and CAMHS services and reduce mortality rates by 2010: Including from suicide and undetermined injury by at least 20 per cent.*

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – *Improve the accessibility of services for people in rural areas.*

Department for Work and Pensions – *Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting the position of those in greatest need.*

Home Office – *Reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and building confidence in the criminal justice system without compromising fairness.*

Home Office – *Reduce crime, and further in high crime areas.*

Home Office and Department for Education and Skills – *Reduce the harm caused by drugs by reducing the use of Class A drugs and the frequent use of any illicit drug among all young people under the age of 25, especially by the most vulnerable young people.*

Home Office – *Citizens, communities and the voluntary sector are more fully engaged in tackling social problems and there is more equality of opportunity and respect for people of all races and religions.*

Department for Culture Media and Sport – *By 2008, increase the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by people aged 16 and above by priority groups.*

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – *Tackling disadvantage by reviving the most deprived neighbourhoods, reducing social exclusion and supporting society's most vulnerable groups.*

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – *Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in leading and delivering services to all communities.*

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – *Achieve a better balance between housing availability and the demand for housing.*

1.14 We have liaised closely with relevant strands of work elsewhere within government, to ensure that the project complements them and adds value. Those strands include:

- work on *Youth Matters*, the Youth Green Paper published in July 2005;
- the development of the Activity Agreement and Learning Agreement pilots announced in 2005 and scheduled to start in April 2006;
- work on service delivery in *Independence, Well-being and Choice*, the Green Paper on social care; and
- work with the Foresight Programme on Brain Science, Addiction and Drugs.

We have also kept in close touch with and contributed to cross-government work on anti-social behaviour and respect.

Methodology and sources of evidence

As well as reviewing the available research and evaluation evidence in preparing this report on Young Adults with Complex Needs, the Social Exclusion Unit has gathered **new evidence** from:

- A series of visits to projects throughout the UK - gathering evidence, visiting examples of good practice and discussing the barriers to the effective delivery of services;
- An on-line questionnaire aimed at practitioners working with young adults, which ran between 21 October and 15 December 2004. We targeted the consultation at over 200 organisations and received 129 responses;
- Nearly 100 responses to our interim report *Transitions*, published in March 2005;
- 16 focus groups across England with over 150 young adults;
- Commissioned research on the ways young adults think and behave; and
- Regional road shows with a wide range of stakeholders held throughout England in autumn 2004.

In addition the project has been overseen by three separate steering groups:

- Practitioners working with young adults;
- Officials from across government with an interest in the issues;
- Ministers from other government departments as part of the wider Social Exclusion Unit Work Programme Steering Group.

Overview of this report

1.15 This report is divided into sections as follows:

- this Chapter (Chapter 1) locates the report in the context of the Social Exclusion Unit's wider work programme, and of wider government policy;
- Chapter 2 sets out the evidence about the problems that young people face as they make the transition to adulthood;
- Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore our three key themes of Thinking and Behaviour; Age Boundaries; and Holistic Services and the Trusted Adult, looking at the issues, existing policy, good practice, and propositions for the future;
- Chapter 6 draws together our conclusions, setting out principles of service delivery for young adults; and

- Chapter 7 is our action plan, setting out the actions agreed across government in response to the issues raised in this report and the timescales for achieving them.

1.16 Alongside the report, we are making available annexes on our website **www.socialexclusion.gov.uk**. These include the detailed research we commissioned on thinking and behaviour, and findings from our consultation and focus groups.

CHAPTER 2

The problem

Summary

Breaking the Cycle identified disadvantaged young adults as a group who often have complex needs, compounded by or associated with the transition to adulthood, and for whom existing services are not delivering well enough.

Young people aged between 16 and 25 suffer disproportionately from many different types of disadvantage, including homelessness, worklessness, lack of training or education, poor health (in particular, mental and sexual health), and are at high risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, drug use, and crime.

Many of these issues are thought of as the problems of teenagers – but in fact many are as bad (or worse) for those in their early twenties, on whom much less policy has been focused – the phenomenon of **‘the invisible early twenties’**.

Young adults report a wide range of barriers that get in the way of them seeking or getting help with their problems. Barriers exist in particular for young people with a range of problems that need a range of interventions from services that may not work well together. Age restrictions on services (or abrupt transition between youth and adult services) can also act as barriers.

Background

- 2.1 *Breaking the Cycle* recognised that young people’s lives change rapidly and dramatically in a number of areas between the ages of 16 and 25 and that this was why young people faced particular risks. It also highlighted how the transition to adulthood was changing:

*‘There has been significant change over time in the form and length of these transitions and therefore in the ways in which young people achieve adult identity. A generation ago, young people were far more likely to enter employment on leaving school, and to leave home in order to marry and have children. In recent decades, the linkage between these elements of the transition to adulthood has become looser. Patterns now suggest ‘disordered transitions’, which are less age-related and more complex’.*¹

- 2.2 The report showed the extent to which different experiences of transition have increased polarisation among young people – with some staying longer in education and experiencing a slower but more successful transition. Young people who maintain a ‘fast-track’ to adulthood, with fewer qualifications, are increasingly disadvantaged.

- 2.3 The report looked at policies and services designed to support young adults, and concluded that many of the most disadvantaged are still missing out on the support they need. Among other things, the report suggested that the Government had neglected the needs of disadvantaged young adults. The assumption of many policies was that youth ended abruptly at 18 or 19, whereas many people are still in transition until much later; and for the most disadvantaged, many may have a transition to adulthood that is complex, disordered, and involves several repeated cycles of progress and backtracking.
- 2.4 As a result of these findings, the Social Exclusion Unit set up this project, looking at young adults with complex needs, and deliberately chose an age range of 16-25, in order to include 'older young people', and to look in particular at the issues faced during the transition to adulthood, and at how well services provide for young people during this time.

Young adults and disadvantage

- 2.5 Young people are the subject of great public interest and debate, often framed relatively negatively in terms of the effect on society of a minority of young people. In this section, we aim to set out some facts about young adults, and in particular about the types of disadvantage that some young adults face.
- 2.6 In autumn 2004, there were around 5.5 million people aged between 16 and 24 in England.² Young people are as varied in their characteristics as the rest of the population. Most will not suffer from any major disadvantage, and will make a successful transition to adulthood. But there are some types of disadvantage that are disproportionately likely to affect young people.
- 2.7 There is evidence that a disproportionate number of young people live in deprived areas. Between 11 and 42 per cent of respondents to surveys in some of the most deprived areas of England said they were aged between 16 and 24. This compares to 11 per cent for the whole of England.³
- 2.8 The following section gives a brief background to some of the disadvantages young adults can face and then looks at the extent to which young adults face severe or multiple problems.

Education

- 2.9 Although great improvements have been made in educational attainment with both A-Level and GCSE results rising each year, the improvements in average performance mask the UK's long tale of academic underachievement.
- Turkey and Mexico are the only OECD countries with fewer 18-year-olds enrolled in education than the UK.⁴
 - Forty-one percent of people aged between 20 and 29 only have relatively low-level qualifications (below Level 3, the equivalent of A-level). A quarter (24 per cent) have either a Level 1 qualification or none at all.⁵

- 2.10 Having no or low-level qualifications is detrimental to your employment chances later in life. For example, only half of adults with no qualifications are employed compared to about 80 per cent of those with a Level 2 qualification (equivalent to five A*-C GCSEs) and nearer 90 per cent for those with a university level qualification.⁶

Employment

- 2.11 These statistics emphasise the fact that encouraging young people to continue in learning – including work-based learning and training – until at least the age of 18 will help to ensure the well-being and fulfilment of each individual young person and build a more prosperous society.
- 2.12 However, some young people do move into work straight from school and their labour market position is poor. Around 200,000 16- to 17-year-olds and 900,000 18- to 24-year-olds are not in work or full-time education. This represents about 1 in 8 of all 16- to 17-year-olds and just under 1 in 5 of all 18- to 24-year-olds.⁷

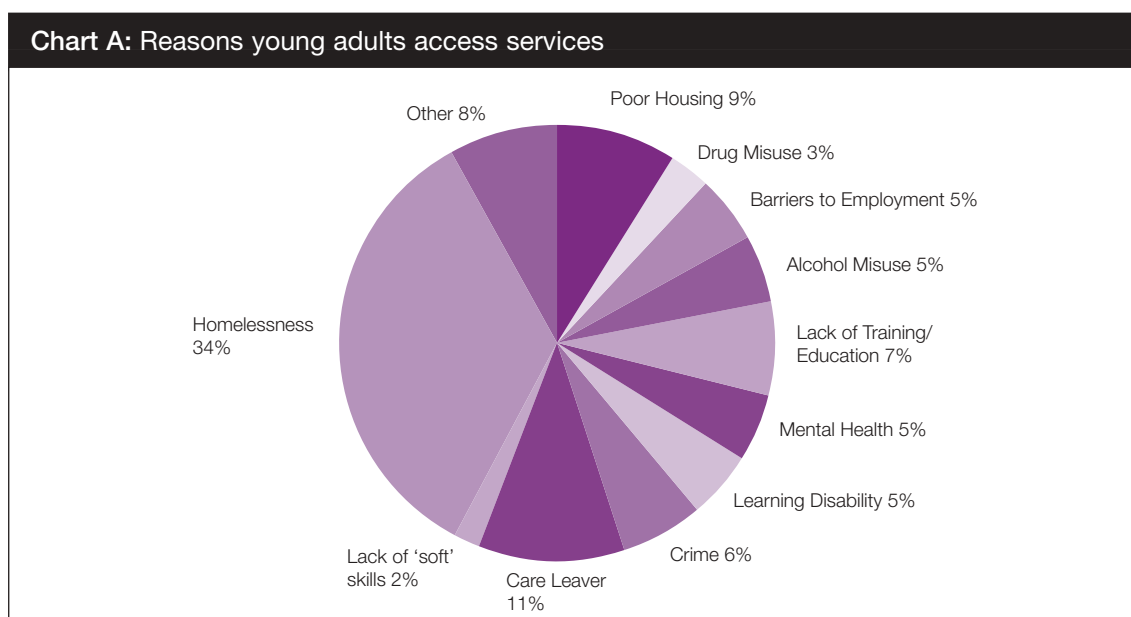
Housing and homelessness

- 2.13 Housing and homelessness problems affect a relatively small proportion of young people, but for those who experience them they are acute and all-consuming.

“Housing is a key issue in overcoming social exclusion. Good quality housing is often a positive step for those with problems.”

Practitioners’ Consultation Response

- 2.14 Young people accounted for nearly one in 10 of all those accepted as homeless in 2004-05,⁸ and there is a rising trend in the number of young people being accepted as homeless: the proportion has risen from 3 per cent in 1997 to 9 per cent in 2005. This is partly due to widening the definition of those in priority need in 2002.⁹
- 2.15 Of those people who contacted the SEU in response to its questionnaire in autumn 2004, 43 per cent stated that the reason young people had first got in touch with services was due to a housing need or to homelessness:¹⁰



Source: Social Exclusion Unit. Young Adults Questionnaire, analysis, 2005.

Health and disability

- 2.16 Young adults often overlook their own health – it's something they think they can take for granted. However, around a quarter of all young people aged between 16 and 24 report a long-standing illness¹¹ and young people who have disabilities can face particular problems.
- 2.17 Low self-esteem and a lack of concern about the consequences of actions can result in young people neglecting their health and taking part in risky behaviour, such as drug and alcohol misuse and unsafe sex. Young people have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections than the general population¹² and a large number of young adults face mental health problems: up to 20 per cent of all 16- to 24-year-olds have a mental health issue and suicide is the cause of a quarter of all deaths amongst 16- to 24-year-old men.¹³

Crime

- 2.18 Young men are the most likely victims of violent crime¹⁴ and the most likely perpetrators of crime. Eighteen to 20-year-olds constitute 42 per cent of all first time offenders¹⁵ and three-quarters of male offenders aged between 18 and 21 re-offend within two years.¹⁶
- 2.19 The young adult prison population is growing. Between 1994 and 2004 the number of young adult men in prison rose by over 20 per cent and the numbers of women in custody aged between 18 and 20 almost doubled.¹⁷
- 2.20 Compared to juvenile prisoners (those aged between 15 and 17), young adult prisoners (aged between 18 and 20) suffer from a lack of focus and resources:

'It is disappointing to report that there continues to be no coherent national strategy, standards or new funding for this important group of young prisoners. All the Young Offender Institutions that we inspected suffered from a lack of resources for crucial work and education.'

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004. Re-printed in *A Lost Generation: the experiences of young people in prison*, Prison Reform Trust, 2004.

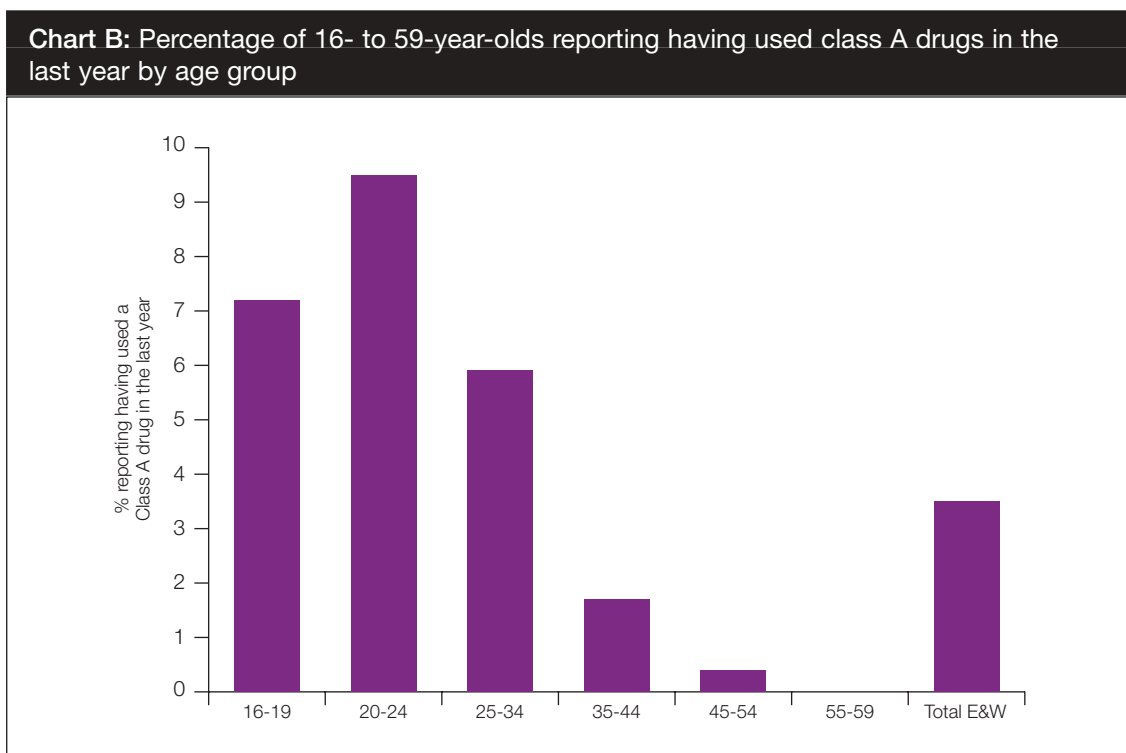
Anti-social behaviour

- 2.21 Anti-social behaviour is often associated with young people: youth anti-social behaviour tends to be frequently reported in the media and therefore highly visible – research shows that 17 per cent of respondents said that rowdy teenagers and young people 'hanging around' was the biggest anti-social behaviour problem where they lived.¹⁸ Between 1 June 2000 and 31 December 2004, 1,496 ASBOs were issued to 15- to 17-year-olds compared with 2,405 issued to people aged over 18.¹⁹

Substance misuse

- 2.22 Young people are the main users of drugs. It is estimated that just under 3 million 16- to 24-year-olds in England and Wales have tried illicit drugs and just under 1 million have tried Class A drugs.²⁰

- 2.23 The 2003 Crime and Justice survey identifies five vulnerable groups of young people: young people who have been in care; who have been homeless; truants; excluded from school; and serious or frequent offenders. While those in vulnerable groups represented 28 per cent of young people in the sample, they accounted for 61 per cent of Class A drug users in the last year.²¹
- 2.24 The 16-19 and 20-24 age groups show levels of any illicit drug use that are more than double the average figure for England and Wales and reported Class A drug use amongst 20- to 24-year-olds (at 9.5 per cent) is nearly three times higher than that in the general population:



Source: Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the 2003/4 British Crime Survey, Home Office, May 2005.

- 2.25 Alcohol is widely used amongst 16- to 25-year-olds. By the age of 16 nearly all young people (94 per cent) have tried alcohol²² and men aged between 16 and 24 are the heaviest drinking section of the population.²³ A study of dependency amongst young adults found that nearly 15 per cent of 16-25 year olds are dependant on alcohol²⁴ and people aged 16-24 are more likely than all other age groups to ‘binge drink’.²⁵ Binge drinkers are more likely to be men, although women’s drinking has been rising fast over the last ten years. In 1998 38 per cent of young females were estimated to consume 6 or more units on their heaviest drinking day. In 2002 the corresponding proportion had risen to 52 per cent.

Social care

- 2.26 Young people who have experienced institutional care are significantly more at risk of social exclusion than other young people; they are much more likely to leave school without qualifications, end up in prison and to become homeless.²⁶ These costs also impact on society: if young people leaving care had the same patterns of activity as their peers in relation to education, employment and training, the savings over three years would be £300 million.²⁷

- 2.27 Those young people aged 16 and over who do not meet the threshold for being ‘in care’ but are in need of support can be helped by their local authority. They may be in need of support for a range of reasons, including: disability; parental illness or disability; or socially unacceptable behaviour. A survey of all local authorities found that in one week in February 2003 there were 27,000 young people in need of support.²⁸

Factors that can compound disadvantage

- 2.28 The disadvantages above can be compounded by additional factors which result in young people being more vulnerable, more at risk of social exclusion and more likely to require intensive and accessible support.

Rural disadvantage

- 2.29 For example, 30 per cent of the rural population are under 25²⁹ and young people living in these areas can struggle to access the services they need, such as college, healthcare and work. They have to travel more than 40 per cent further than their urban counterparts each week because services and facilities are likely to be further away.³⁰
- 2.30 Young people without access to a car face even more problems. The affordability and availability of public transport limits young people’s ability to get to where they need to go.
- 2.31 The relative lack of anonymity in rural areas can also mean that young adults are more likely to hide their problems or less likely to access services which address their disadvantage. It may also be harder to access information about services.
- 2.32 Funding for agencies, linked to deprivation factors, can also be hard to access, especially where significant pockets of deprivation are masked by affluence in the surrounding area.

“Many agencies work on minimum numbers and economies of scale and therefore do not justify supplying services to sparsely populated areas – whatever the level of disadvantage.”

Project Worker, Northumberland

Sexuality

- 2.33 Adolescence is a time when ‘fitting in’ is important and when peer pressure is at its greatest. This makes young people particularly vulnerable to the negative messages about their sexuality.
- 2.34 During adolescence, young lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual people have additional pressures to overcome. Coming to terms with sexuality often takes longer and can result in significant stress if parents and support services are unsympathetic or insensitive. The ‘invisibility’ of homosexuality and the isolation felt by some young people can be contributing factors in depression, alcohol and drug misuse and mental health problems.³¹

“I think it is more difficult being young and lesbian because you are so insecure when you are young. Where to go? Who to see? You think you are the only one at the time; it did for me. It made me so sad and unhappy at the time. It seemed that there was no-one there, no-one to talk to.”

Young Adult, GALYIC (Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale)

Ethnic minority groups

- 2.35 *Preventing Social Exclusion*³² shows how some ethnic minority communities are disproportionately exposed to the risk of social exclusion. For example:
- they are more likely than others to live in deprived areas and in unpopular and overcrowded housing;
 - they are more likely to be poor and to be unemployed, regardless of age, sex, qualifications and place of residence;
 - Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean people are more likely to report suffering ill-health than white people; and
 - as a group, people from ethnic minorities are as well qualified as white people, but some black and Asian groups do not do as well at school as others.
- 2.36 In the area of education, marked differences can be identified between some ethnic groups. For example, in spite of recent improvements in school exclusion statistics for African-Caribbean children, they are still around three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than white pupils.³³
- 2.37 The Social Exclusion Unit’s interim report on disadvantaged adults, *Improving Services, Improving Lives*, published in October 2005, explores ways to improve service delivery to ethnic minority groups.

Physical and learning disability

- 2.38 Both physical and learning disabilities can compound the social exclusion faced by a young adult and can make the transition to adulthood stressful and difficult. Support organisations may not communicate effectively or provide a holistic approach, and they may not involve the young person, their family or carers enough in planning for the future. As with other services, services for young people with disabilities may be provided on the basis of age rather than need.

The Strategy Unit report *‘Improving the life chances of disabled people’* found that:

‘Young people with the most significant impairments tend to experience a delayed transition at 19, on leaving special school. They and their families can experience difficulty co-ordinating the numerous services with which they come into contact. This process becomes more intrusive and complex as the young person approaches adulthood, when changes in entitlement result from change in age and not need, and there are multiple, separate, but overlapping assessment pathways.

‘There are often delays in getting adult services set-up and provision is likely to be age-inappropriate. They may end up in segregated, sometimes costly residential provision, due to the lack of alternative opportunities.’

***Improving the life chances of disabled people,
Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2005***

- 2.39 The Social Exclusion Unit’s interim report on disadvantaged adults, *Improving Services, Improving Lives*, published in October 2005 explores ways to improve service delivery for those with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

Complex needs

- 2.40 The sections above have used a range of different policy areas and circumstances to set out what we know about young adults and disadvantage. But one of the most important features of the disadvantage faced by young adults is that it often does not confine itself to a single domain – many young people who face serious problems in their education, for example, will also face difficulties in the labour market, and are more likely to become involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, to take drugs, and to have problems at home.
- 2.41 Analysis of British Household Panel Survey data showed a decrease between 1997 and 2003 in the proportion of adults aged 16 and over who experienced 5 or more of a basket of disadvantages.³⁴ The analysis also shows a change over time in the profile of people experiencing 5 or more disadvantages. In 1997, 16.6 per cent of all adults experiencing five or more disadvantages were aged between 16 and 24. In 2003, 16- to 24-year-olds accounted for only 13.4 per cent of all adults experiencing 5 or more disadvantages.
- 2.42 There is a great deal of evidence that disadvantages for young adults (as well as for many other disadvantaged groups) tend to ‘cluster’ and that one disadvantage makes people more likely to suffer from others. The Prince’s Trust report *‘Reaching the Hardest to Reach’*,³⁵ published in March 2004, asked young people about disadvantages in four areas: educational underachievement; unemployment; criminal convictions; and time spent in care. They found that 62 per cent of disadvantaged young people they surveyed had more than one disadvantage, and five per cent had all four.
- 2.43 As part of this project, the Social Exclusion Unit asked service providers about the reasons why young adults used their services. Ninety-eight per cent of responses said that young people presented to a particular service with multiple problems.

Multiple needs of disadvantaged young adults: key statistics

- Young people who have been in care are two and a half times more likely to be teenage parents.³⁶
- In 2004, 30 per cent of care leavers at age 19 were not in education, employment or training.³⁷
- The majority of young offenders are out of work. Nearly two-thirds were unemployed at the time of arrest compared to 46 per cent of those aged over 25.³⁸
- Over 90 per cent of imprisoned young offenders have at least one, or a combination of, the following: personality disorder, psychosis, neurotic disorder, or substance misuse.³⁹
- Substance misuse affects around a third to a half of people with severe mental health problems.⁴⁰
- Homelessness is frequently associated with substance misuse problems; and being homeless almost trebles a young person's chance of developing a mental health problem.⁴¹
- Young people leaving care and those looked after by the local authority represent 30 per cent of those in housing need.⁴²
- Between 40 and 49 per cent of young people in custody have had some experience of the care system, and can experience particular difficulties in accessing suitable accommodation on their release from custody.⁴³
- Many young drug users have mental health problems and over half of newly committed prisoners are classified as problem drug users. One in three problem drug users is homeless or in need of housing support.⁴⁴

2.44 However, despite this evidence about the interrelationships of disadvantage, there is no standard template for identifying someone with complex needs or a chaotic lifestyle, and it is difficult to track young people's use of different services. There are no authoritative recording or monitoring systems in place, and no organisation has responsibility for keeping this information.

How many young people have complex needs?

2.45 This report does not attempt to fix a precise figure on the number of young people who are troubled or who have complex needs, because of the difficulty of getting accurate data. But we have established a broad ball-park figure based on information that is available. Of the 5.5 million young adults in England, approximately 750,000 were not in employment, education or training in 2004.⁴⁵ We consider this a very rough proxy for the largest possible estimate of the number of young adults facing disadvantage. We consider that a smaller number – perhaps 200,000, or between 5 and 10 per cent – face very severe disadvantage or have complex needs.

Costs

- 2.46 Just as it is problematic to assess how many young adults have complex needs because of the difficulty in getting accurate data, it is similarly problematic to estimate accurately what the costs of such problems are to either the individual, the community or society as a whole.
- 2.47 Data is rarely available for the whole of this age range. For example, homelessness statistics only provide us with the numbers of applications in priority need, which include 16- and 17-year-olds and 18- and 19-year-old care leavers but not the complete 16-25 cohort.⁴⁶ However, ODPM is currently collecting information on the numbers of 16- to 24-year-olds accepted as homeless.
- 2.48 We know that the costs of drug use and crime are high. Young people are the main users of drugs and the Home Office suggests that each problem drug user costs society £35,000 each year.⁴⁷ In relation to crime, in 2003/04 it cost the state £50,800 to keep a young person in a Young Offenders Institution and £164,750 to keep a young person in a Secure Training Centre.⁴⁸
- 2.49 The costs of not being in employment, training or education is not only the potential earnings that the individual is missing out on (and the tax and national insurance receipts that the state is missing out on) but also the opportunity lost in terms of further education, training or employment skills gained which would improve earning potential. It has been estimated that the financial costs to society of young people currently not in education, training or employment is in the region of £16 billion.⁴⁹

Risk factors

- 2.50 A great deal of research has focused on the types of risk factors that make young people more likely to experience negative outcomes (and particularly on factors that make them likely to commit crime or engage in anti-social behaviour).
- 2.51 There is evidence that many different kinds of poor outcomes share the same ‘risk factors’ – in other words, one disadvantage may cause or exacerbate another. Risk factors such as poor parental supervision and discipline, truancy, living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood or exclusion from school are all known to increase the risk of poor outcomes such as unemployment, criminal and anti-social activity and poor health later in life.
- 2.52 Linked to risk factors is the concept of resilience – a set of personal qualities that makes people more able to withstand the negative effects of particular events or circumstances. The key concepts of resilience include: strong social support networks; positive school experiences; and not being excessively sheltered from challenging situations, which provide opportunities to develop coping skills.⁵⁰
- 2.53 The transition to adulthood for some young people can be a culmination of everything that has come before – whether positive or negative. For this reason, we welcome the important focus on children and young people in recent years. Policies targeted at children under the age of 16 – for example, Sure Start,⁵¹ Sure Start Plus, Youth Inclusion and Support Panels and the Child Trust Fund – will, in later years, help reduce the need for interventions by preventing problems from occurring in the first place. Similarly, the development of Children’s Trusts and the *Every Child Matters* agenda have the potential to transform outcomes for young people in later years.

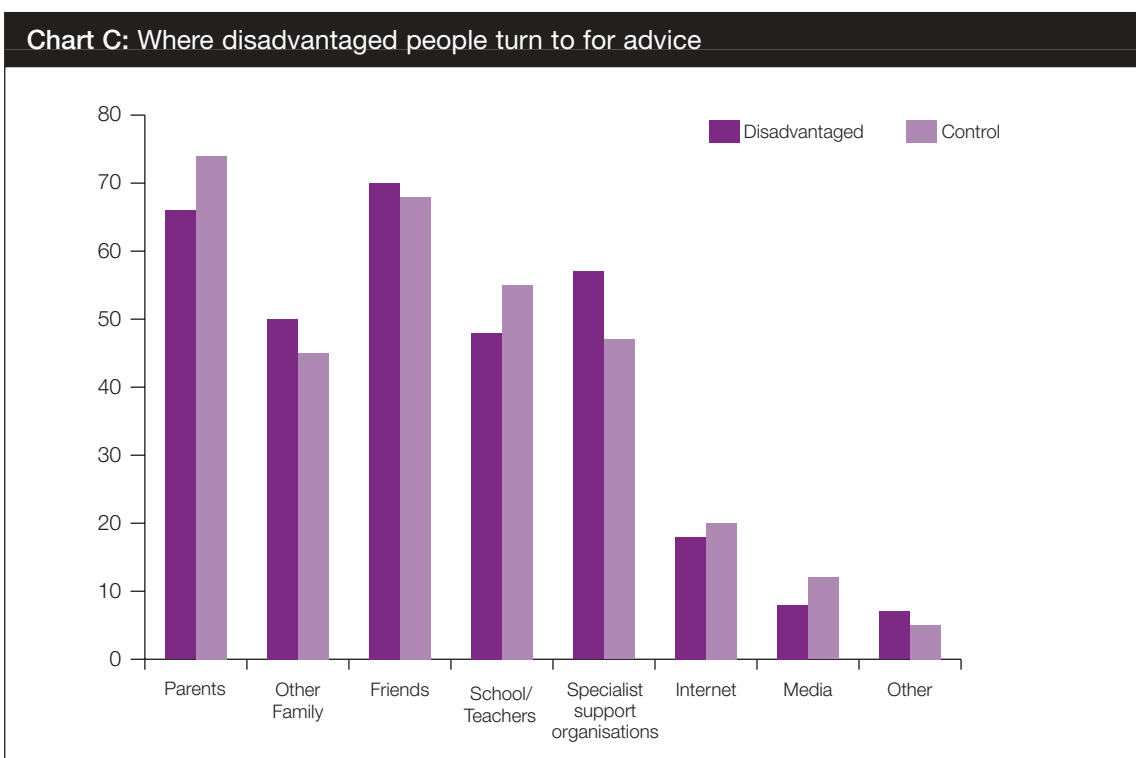
Barriers to getting help

“You can’t work without a flat and you can’t get a flat without work. It’s catch 22.”

SEU Focus Group

2.54 There are a wide range of services that are designed to help disadvantaged young people with the issues they face. Some are focused on particular policy areas (education, or employment); others try to join services together to look at complex needs (like Connexions). Some focus on particular risk or protective factors; a few aim to build resilience. Some are universal, and others are targeted. In this section, we look at the barriers which can get in the way of young people successfully getting the help they need from the range of services which are on offer to them. Many of the issues we raise in this section echo the more general findings of the SEU’s evidence report *Improving Services, Improving Lives*,⁵² which looked at how successfully services work for the most disadvantaged groups.

2.55 It is clear that disadvantaged young people do want to be able to access support services. The table below shows that all young people turn first to family or friends for advice; but also shows that disadvantaged young people are less likely to turn to their parents, and more likely to turn to specialist support services, than other young people.



Source: *Reaching the Hardest to Reach*, The Prince’s Trust, March 2004.

2.56 In addition, *Reaching the Hardest to Reach* found that ninety-two per cent of all 14- to 25-year-olds surveyed thought that there were gaps in the provision of services.

- 2.57 Young adults in SEU's focus groups set out a range of reasons why services were not meeting their needs:

Focus group comments

Participants raised some issues around the **age cut-offs** of services: *"I think some of the stuff that is promoted is age biased, if you are over a certain age you can't use their services... like Connexions."* And they wanted **services which took their thinking into account**, and which **involved them more in how they worked**: *"Listen to what young people are saying, take their views into consideration, treat young people as equals, let them be involved in the discussion about them, explain things clearly."*

Young people also wanted **services that were fair**. They often perceived others as getting special treatment, and resented this especially if they thought it was undeserved: *"If that person [on drugs] at any time, at any moment goes up they can get a crisis loan, but if I need a genuine loan they say sorry you can't have that, find another alternative – where should I go?"*

Young people also generally supported the idea of **incentives** and even **sanctions** in service provision, but only if they were fair too. The young adults in the focus groups tended to support the 'rights and responsibilities' agenda: *"I think it's good [the idea of an agreement with sanctions], but if they can't keep to their appointments we shouldn't have to keep to ours."* The young people thought that at present, the incentives and sanctions didn't always work as they were meant to. For example, some felt there was an incentive to claim incapacity benefit because this meant more money.

Young people in the focus groups – and local practitioners – raised a wide range of issues about the **attitudes of service providers**, and the **importance of having someone to trust and rely on**, and someone who would make an effort to stay in touch: *"They'll come to you, you don't have to go to them, they're excellent, they just seem to know you."* Another said; *"You do find that sometimes you will find someone who is welcoming, they talk to you nicely, the way you deserve to be talked to as a human being, it's not all of them but you do find them."*

Young people valued the support and advice of **'near peers'** – service providers able to identify with disadvantaged young adults because they have experienced a particular disadvantage themselves: *"People say stop using, get clean when they don't know nowt about it". "I think staff should be sent on some kind of training course to see what folks lives are like.....what they are really like so they understand a bit better."*

Young people in the focus groups thought it was important that services were able to recognise that they might have **a range of needs**: *"I had a key worker who I would see on a one to one basis so I could tell him anything about all the stuff in my life.....so he could get a broader picture of what was going on".* They also recognised that these needs might have a particular priority: *"You can't get a job without an address, you can't get anything without an address."*

Many of the young people raised issues about how well **services communicated with each other**: *“When you need to go to one of these places I find that they pass you from post to post.”* They also raised issues about **communication within services** when staff left: *“You might only have a few sessions with them then they are gone and a new one starts.” “And the handover never happens... then you have to tell them everything again.”*

In general, they were happy for services to **share information** about them, as long as their permission had been asked, because they thought it would probably help: *“They [Youth Offending Team] got in touch with my doctor for me to try and get me off the gear and that. It helped.” “That’s good isn’t it ‘cos if probation spoke to housing they might be able to get you a place to live.”* And many of them described their ideal service for young people as being much **more joined-up**: *“Why don’t you have one big building that has everything in one place?”*

The three themes of this report

2.58 Bringing together these views from young people themselves with the evidence above about young people’s outcomes, and with our own research, we have structured the rest of our report around three key themes which capture the most significant findings from our work:

- problems associated with age boundaries;
- the benefits of holistic services and the trusted adult; and
- the thinking and behaviour of young people.

Age boundaries

2.59 Problems associated with age boundaries of policies were identified as a key issue for young people in *Breaking the Cycle*, which, as the previous chapter shows, paved the way for this series of SEU reports. The importance of the issue of age boundaries was reinforced during this project by practitioners and young people alike. Two issues dominated the discussion of this area: the often abrupt ending of services once a young person reaches a certain age, and the sometimes poor transition between youth and adult services.

Holistic services and the trusted adult

2.60 The second key theme revolves around holistic services and the trusted adult. This is not a new issue and the benefits of such approaches are well documented. But it was probably the most frequently mentioned issue in the consultation, regional road-shows and focus groups held to inform this project, and we have therefore explored this area again and tried to develop some fresh thinking.

Thinking and behaviour

- 2.61 For young adults, issues around thinking and behaviour are particularly critical because decisions made during this time – in areas like education and employment – are some of the most important and far-reaching decisions taken at any time of life. In addition, and possibly partly because of this, young adulthood is a stage of life when many people are prepared (to some extent) to reassess their thinking and try to change their lives.
- 2.62 During the evidence gathering phase of the project we heard from lots of young people who regretted earlier behaviour – especially in relation to work while at school. Some older younger people – those aged in their twenties – commented on the need to adopt a more long-term perspective and recognised that they would have sooner or later come unstuck by sticking to short-term strategies and seeking instant reward.
- 2.63 The next chapter looks at the issue of young people’s thinking and behaviour in more detail.

CHAPTER 3

The thinking and behaviour of young adults

Summary

The way young adults think and behave can compound their disadvantages, or can help them overcome them. Some young adults behave in ways that are anti-social or worse; helping to change this kind of behaviour is a central priority for Government's work on **respect**.

Parents, peers and the community are critical shapers of the way young adults think and behave – and parents remain influential well into adulthood. Parents, peers and the community may in some cases reinforce negative and unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour.

Policy makers may use **sanctions or incentives** to try to change young adults' behaviour. But they may not do enough to understand the thinking of young adults (particularly those from disadvantaged groups); and this may make some sanctions or incentives less effective than they would otherwise be. Our evidence suggests that most young people believe strongly in systems of **rights and responsibilities** – but they think that some of the current systems aren't operated fairly, or don't provide the most effective kinds of incentives or sanctions.

With some notable exceptions, **policy makers rarely focus on interventions that directly address thinking or attitudes**. But there is evidence that for the most disadvantaged and chaotic young adults, **work to address thinking and behaviour directly may be a necessary first step on the road to education or sustained employment**.

There are a number of policy areas in which these difficulties are particularly apparent: education, employment and training; criminal justice; substance misuse; and health; but there are also examples of good practice and helpful pointers for the future, particularly in the voluntary sector, where specific support for thinking and behaviour is more common and measurements of 'soft skills' are better developed.

Our action points in this area include promoting re-engagement with the most disadvantaged young adults by measuring their progress on the road to work and learning, and action to ensure efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour are focused on prevention as well as punishment.

The impact of thinking and behaviour on life chances

- 3.1 In *Improving Services, Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes*, we set out the importance of the user's own capacity in making sure that they get access to the services they need. This is not a way of evading service providers' responsibility for offering a good service; but it recognises that there are shared responsibilities, and that the way a user approaches a service can help or hinder them.
- 3.2 It is clear that the way people think and behave – their attitudes, assumptions, and habitual responses to situations – are very powerful in shaping their life-chances. Some attitudes, habits and behaviours may work to protect people from disadvantages and crises. Other ways of thinking about the world may not only be very damaging to a person's own chances, but may also impact on others around them. The Government's 'Respect' agenda, which aims to address disrespectful and anti-social behaviour, directly addresses this issue.
- 3.3 For young adults, these issues around thinking and behaviour are particularly critical for two main reasons:
- first, decisions made during the transition to adulthood often have powerful and long-lasting effects; and
 - second, and possibly partly because of this, young adults may become prepared (to some extent) to reassess their thinking and try to change their lives.
- 3.4 But it is not clear that we currently have good enough information about how young people think and behave; or that we use it well enough in designing policy.
- 3.5 Recent research in the field of cognitive behaviour and adolescent brain development reinforces the importance of considering young adults' thinking and behaviour as distinct. A study of brain development¹ indicates that the brain's centre of reasoning and problem solving is among the last to mature, meaning that even into the twenties young people may think and react very differently from older adults.

What we know about patterns of thinking and behaviour among disadvantaged young people

- 3.6 As part of this project, we have commissioned a literature review which looks at the academic research on disadvantaged young adults' thinking and behaviour, and in particular at the ways in which they take decisions. This research – *The thinking and behaviour of young adults (aged 16-25)* – should be read in conjunction with this report and is available on the internet at www.socialexclusion.gov.uk
- 3.7 This section uses that research and other evidence to summarise some of the key things we know about the way disadvantaged young adults think and make decisions.

What young adults want

- 3.8 The Prince's Trust research, *Reaching the Hardest to Reach*, found that at the broadest level, disadvantaged young people want the same things as most young people: a family, an interesting job, and sufficient money to support their lifestyle.
- 3.9 However, young people were not always clear or consistent about what was standing in their way. Forty-one per cent of the sample identified that a lack of qualifications was a barrier to getting what they wanted, but of those who were themselves educational underachievers, only 33 per cent recognised that a lack of qualifications was a barrier.²
- 3.10 There was also a gender split in the barriers identified by disadvantaged people in this particular study, and the focus shifted with age. Disadvantaged females were more likely to mention a lack of confidence, not having enough experience and being a parent (despite enjoying the time spent with their children). Disadvantaged males were more likely to mention (their own) bad behaviour. Other recent studies support the suggestion that young people often feel responsible for their own situation (even where they may not be).³

Looking to the future

- 3.11 Young people employ different strategies for managing their lives. These are often characterised as:
- short-term: associated with coping and survival;
 - medium-term: an intermediary phase with time to reflect, and possibly involving some tentative risks and changes – this could be the first step towards a long-term strategy; and
 - long-term: usually an approach taken by those with a high level of competence, involving mobilising resources and support to underpin a plan.
- 3.12 Those most likely to take a short-term view have been found to have experienced family crisis, be in insecure circumstances and have experienced failure. Some are seeking immediate and urgent escape from untenable current circumstances, such as unhappy family lives. They therefore lack the economic, family and individual resources which would help them to be strategic and forward-thinking. The result can be frequent changes of accommodation or drifting between jobs, and further experience of failure and rejection – which in turn feeds into future thinking and behaviour. Young adults in this position may need help to settle down and plan for the future.⁴
- 3.13 Some young people say that at the age when they were required to make important decisions – for example, about staying in education – they were not sufficiently mature to think ahead and had no clear idea of what they wanted to do, or why higher education would help them. Over time, in the light of experience, more young people begin to take longer-term and more strategic perspectives. But planning is most likely to occur on a foundation of some success – so it can be important for troubled young people to be able to take small and reasonably risk-free early steps.⁵ There is evidence that poor motivation is as much a consequence of negative experience as a cause of it.⁶

Fateful moments and risk

- 3.14 The literature also highlights the importance of ‘fateful moments’ in catalysing changed thinking or behaviour – moments can come when people are exposed to new experiences and new social contacts, and begin to compare their own situation with others, or are shocked into deciding that they need to change their lives.⁷ Imprisonment can sometimes act in this way; and parenthood is well-known as a trigger for desisting from various kinds of negative behaviour (from smoking to drug use to criminal activity).⁸
- 3.15 Another important factor in young people’s decision-making is calculation of risk. Some activities (for example, going to university) may be much riskier for a young person from a deprived background than for others – not only involving greater cost, but possibly not bringing as much ‘soft’ parental support and encouragement, and meaning more severing of ties with friends.⁹
- 3.16 Some risk is both inevitable and necessary as part of growing up; but young people need to be helped to manage risk, and offered opportunities in a form that helps them take sensible decisions – for example, using summer schools to give young people a ‘taster’ of higher education before expecting them to commit to it.¹⁰

Who shapes thinking and behaviour? Parents, peers and the community

- 3.17 Young people’s views are very varied, but they are strongly influenced by their parents, peers and local community – more so than by objective evidence or careful planning.
- 3.18 Research suggests that young people’s decisions about education and training had little to do with formal information available, and more to do with the opinions of family and friends given by chance.¹¹ Family and friends may be well-equipped to give this advice; but they also may not, and for many of the most disadvantaged young people, this can result in existing disadvantage being passed on through the generations, or around a deprived community.

Parents

- 3.19 A parent’s own experience of their transition to adulthood can influence how they view their child’s transition. Those who had a fast track transition to adulthood may think that their child should also move into work and home life, unsupported, rather than delaying this through education and training. Their experience may lead them to doubt the intrinsic value of education, or its instrumental value in leading to better jobs.
- 3.20 *Breaking the Cycle* found that children living in households where nobody works are more likely to be unemployed themselves in adulthood. Men whose fathers were unemployed are twice as likely to experience unemployment themselves between 23- and 33-years of age.¹² And study of drug use among young people in care found that parental drug use had normalised drug use for them.¹³
- 3.21 Some of those who work with disadvantaged people express these issues bluntly: “Parents pass on a fear of doing well. Lack of drive and ambition is inbred. They’ll all end up on the dole trap.”¹⁴

- 3.22 However, parents' own material resources and experiences are less important in determining their child's life chances than factors like their interest in their child's education.¹⁵ Supportive families can help cushion disadvantaged young people against risk. It is therefore particularly problematic that those young people who are most disadvantaged are also more likely to have poor parental relationships, which can mean that they lack this support. Family breakdown is a major cause of homelessness among young adults;¹⁶ and children who have suffered from some form of family conflict are also at greater risk of running away, offending and drug use.¹⁷

Peers

- 3.23 Peers and wider social networks also exercise a strong influence on young people's thinking and behaviour. Recent research shows that disadvantaged young adults often considered informal contacts to be more effective in the search for jobs than training or education.¹⁸ The same research argues that for many young adults, social networks have become smaller and more embedded in the immediate neighbourhood. The researchers concluded that young adults were right to the extent that social networks often got them into a job – but that the jobs in question were usually low-skilled and low-paid, with limited prospects.
- 3.24 Peers may also form or reinforce their own ideas about what constitutes 'success' and 'failure', and what behaviour is positive or acceptable. Several studies have explored working class subcultures which glorify manual work, and are 'anti-school'. Young people in poor communities may not see the relevance of education to their lives, and if they resist peer pressure and work hard at school, they risk being bullied, which can lead to some withdrawing from school altogether.¹⁹ There is also evidence of pressure in some working class communities not to 'stand out from the crowd'.²⁰
- 3.25 Peer behaviour, like parental behaviour, also impacts strongly on young people. *Breaking the Cycle* indicated that men with friends or relatives who had been in trouble with the police are more than three times as likely to be offenders themselves.²¹ Young people who are part of a group where offending is common are likely to be able to extend their 'social circle' into prison:

'As individuals...got older and custodial sentences more frequent, these neighbourhood networks extended into local prison populations. As individuals entered and were released from prison they could rely on a continuum of support through an exchange of similar populations between the two sites of neighbourhood and prison.'

**Poor Transitions, Social exclusion and young adults.
Webster et al, December 2004.**

- 3.26 Changing social relationships are also relevant both to involvement in drug use and desistance from it. Young people wanting to get off drugs had to form different social networks in which drug use was discouraged. Some young people stopped offending when they 'settled down' with a partner, or became engaged in training or college courses or in formal or informal work.

- 3.27 However, local communities, however disadvantaged, provide friendships, support and contacts (sometimes referred to in academic literature as ‘bonding social capital’). There has been lengthy academic discussion about whether the tightness of this ‘bonding social capital’ can inhibit the formation of ‘bridging social capital’ that would help people make wider links and expand their horizons.

‘There are young people on the estate that live in a very small world, the boundaries of which go little further than the edge of the estate.’

Barriers to Employment for 16- to 25-year-olds, Preston Road New Deal for Communities, June 2004.

- 3.28 What is clear is that the support, friendship and sense of belonging that most people derive from their local communities is important to them, and is not something that they will readily surrender or question. It is usually only in fairly extreme circumstances that young people will consider pulling away from their peer networks and trying to start again. This gives policy makers the challenge of understanding and trying to work through, rather than around, the existing strong influences on young adults’ thinking and behaviour.

Thinking and behaviour in policy making

- 3.29 At the very least, it is important that those who make policies and run services aimed at disadvantaged young adults are able to take their thinking and behaviour into account. This is not for ‘soft’ reasons of accommodation or political correctness – it is because policies that take the starting point of these young people into account are much more likely to be successful than those that do not.²²
- 3.30 Policies and services may also aim to influence young people’s thinking and behaviour – from work that develops ‘soft skills’ and aims to change young people’s views about how they communicate and interact with others, to work that aims to change aspirations and help young people raise their sights, through to policies and programmes at the ‘hard’ end that aim to reverse negative and anti-social ways of thinking and behaving.
- 3.31 At present, work that explicitly focuses on thinking and attitude is much more common in the voluntary and community sector than as part of statutory provision (with the exception of some work on cognitive behavioural therapy in the criminal justice system). Statutory organisations tend to rely on relatively mechanistic sanctions and incentives regimes to try to influence behaviour, more or less by-passing the thinking and influences that may act on young people.

Sanctions and incentives

Young people in our focus groups raised a range of issues around sanctions and incentives. They were, in general, quite supportive of the notion of sanctions and incentives, recognising that they might help them to behave well or to stick at something. They had strong notions of fairness, and were keen on instruments that rewarded effort. Education Maintenance Allowances were cited as an example of a mechanism that helped ensure that they attended college regularly and worked hard. However, they felt that some existing regimes weren't fair, or weren't operating as they were meant to:

"I found that the people that are on cider or drugged up, they seem to get more money than I get." (Male, SEU focus group)

They were also clear that if they were going to enter into such agreements, service providers would also have to meet certain standards:

"I think it's good [the idea of an agreement with sanctions], but if they can't keep to their appointments we shouldn't have to keep to ours." (Male, SEU focus group)

Specific policy areas of concern

3.32 As we have looked at these issues around young adults' thinking and behaviour, we have identified a set of particular areas where there is cause for concern, or scope to do more. These are set out below.

Education and lifeskills

3.33 Many service providers raised concerns with us during the project about funding and support for work with the most disadvantaged young people that aims to improve their lifeskills and make them ready for training, education or employment. Many projects of this kind address fundamental issues around thinking and behaviour – for example, covering anger management as part of their work on communication skills.

The Prince's Trust 'Team' Programme - Jarrow

The Team programme is a 12-week programme for 16- to 25-year-olds (the majority unemployed) of personal development training achieved through teamwork in the community. Throughout the 12 weeks the young people undertake teambuilding, a community project, a work placement and a final presentation. They learn teamwork, leadership, communication skills and motivation.

One Jarrow Team programme had 17 participants, all of whom had been recruited by the Team Leader on outreach (on the street, or by contacting drug rehab centres, doctors, solicitors and magistrates' courts). Many faced barriers and came from difficult backgrounds, for example with low basic skills, a history of truancy, being brought up in care, offending and participating in drug rehabilitation programmes. This particular group decided to renovate a retirement home nearby and negotiated with local companies to gain the necessary materials – such as overalls, paint and equipment.

Since the launch of 'Team' in 1990, more than 80,000 young people have joined the personal development programme and 79 per cent of the young people moved into employment, education or training.

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- 3.34 Providers said that it was very hard to get any employment-related funding for this kind of lifeskills work (even when they were getting many referrals from jobcentres). Some had been able to get Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding for this type of work in the past (sometimes through pilots), but for some this was now becoming more difficult. European Social Fund was also used as a source of funding for this work (although this is largely coming to an end in 2007); and those working with young people in housing need also used Supporting People funding, which they praised for being available to support this kind of wider work. However, all were concerned that there was no clear policy on where this kind of lifeskills provision fitted (should it be seen as education, training, preparation for employment, or an aspect of housing support?) or on how it should be funded.
- 3.35 Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes are designed to give some of this kind of support to young people who are not ready to go straight into employment, further education, an apprenticeship or other work-based programmes. E2E aims to meet the needs of a wide range of young people, some of whom will take longer than others to complete the course, and some of whom will benefit from additional support.
- 3.36 Funding for places on E2E programmes is based on an average time of 22 weeks to complete the programme. Although the intention was that some young people would still need longer to complete the course, and providers would support this because others would take less time, this could act as a funding incentive for providers to take people who can complete the course quickly.
- 3.37 Many people have told us that this has made service providers less inclined to take those young people who might take longer; and has meant that E2E now serves a slightly different (and more able) cohort than those it was originally intended for. There is also an overall shortage of E2E places and certain areas have waiting lists, which makes it easier for providers to be selective about who they accept onto their courses.

- 3.38 E2E is, of course, not the only provision at this level – there are a range of ‘foundation’ level courses run by colleges and other providers, as well as the voluntary and community sector provision discussed above – but E2E is seen as having a privileged funding position compared to previous programmes. This is because E2E offers a broader range of advice, guidance, training and support than those that went before, and so attracts a higher rate of funding. E2E also tends to be the first port of call for some advisers of young people, who may know less about the other alternatives.
- 3.39 A linked issue is the difficulty of fitting some of this work into the National Qualifications Framework. The importance of the qualifications framework is that it is increasingly difficult to get funding for provision that does not attract a qualification of some kind. Several providers have told us that the lowest rung of the qualifications ladder is too high for some of their most disadvantaged and troubled young people. Others, though, are in the process of developing modular qualifications which do fit into the framework.
- 3.40 We believe there is a case for a more coherent government position on lifeskills, and reviewing whether the current ‘foundation’ level provision (including E2E) is working well to support the most disadvantaged young people in taking their first steps into work and training. A review of this might also consider whether the first rung of the qualifications framework is low enough; or whether more support needs to be given to voluntary and community sector organisations and others in developing lifeskills programmes which do attract suitable qualifications and provide progression for young people.

Action Point 1: The Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council will review the impact of funding and accreditation for learning (below level 2) aimed at those who are taking their first steps towards training or employment. The aim is to make sure that there are a wide variety of high-quality courses and programmes available which meet the different needs of a wide range of young people, including the most disengaged and disadvantaged.

Work and training

- 3.41 Young people in our focus groups raised a range of issues around work incentives – it didn’t always seem to them that the benefit system was working very well to make work pay. In particular, there were issues around the housing benefit system for those living in hostels – where the income from work was almost always seen as being outweighed by the loss of housing benefit, and the expense of hostel accommodation without it. Some young people also raised the issue of incapacity benefit, where they endorsed the Government’s view that changes were needed to make sure that incapacity benefit was supporting those who were genuinely sick, and also that it could put people in a benefit trap:

“What if you are on the sick? You go out training and then you will lose your benefits. People go on the sick because it’s more money.”

SEU focus group

- 3.42 This issue was raised, among others, by methadone-dependent heroin users, who are often on incapacity benefit, and who find it very hard to find work that will match the rates of benefit they receive.
- 3.43 The Green Paper on Welfare Reform should help to address these issues by recognising the importance of incentivising work, easing transitions into and out of work and making benefit rules easier to understand.
- 3.44 In addition to perceptions of the financial benefit – or otherwise – of getting a job, a number of young adults were pessimistic about getting the type of job they wanted. In general, their expectations were achievable – they wanted a reasonably paid job with the potential for advancement. Many said that they wanted apprenticeships in skilled trades but many felt such positions were either non-existent in the local area or that they would be unsuccessful if they applied. Young people who had recently left care reported that prospective employers pitied them or considered them ‘bad’ and most had limited travel horizons in the search for work – very few had considered moving out of the region to look for work.
- 3.45 It was suggested that the ‘work-first’ approach of Jobcentre Plus means that young people can often feel pressurised into taking the first job available. This can result in the job being short-lived and a sense of mistrust developing between the individual and official organisations like Jobcentre Plus.

“Jobcentres need to be more helpful in finding the jobs that we want.”

SEU focus group

- 3.46 The Learning Agreement pilots scheduled to start in April 2006 recognise the importance of a job with training. For young people in work but with no training, the pilots will offer financial support on the condition that they fulfil the conditions of an agreement designed to increase their skills and vocational training.
- 3.47 This is a welcome development and one that can be supported in the future by Jobcentre Plus, for example, by exploring the potential for amending the points system²³ to allocate extra points for clients who move into jobs with accredited training.

Action Point 2: Jobcentre Plus will consider the evaluation of the Learning Agreement pilots and any wider implications.

Drugs and alcohol

- 3.48 The Government’s updated drugs strategy²⁴ has resulted in an increase in treatment for problem drug users, and the benefits of the policy are beginning to be seen in relation to drugs and crime.²⁵ A range of interventions is needed to address problematic drug use, and the Government is investing in all types of treatment, tailored to individual needs.

- 3.49 During the evidence-gathering phase of this project, a number of issues relating to treatment were raised which point to the possibility of further improvement. Two of these relate specifically to how far drug interventions respond to young adults' thinking and behaviour.
- 3.50 First, although waiting times for drug treatment have dropped (from an average of 9.1 weeks in December 2001 to 2.5 weeks in March 2005)²⁶ there was a perception that priority for urgent treatment is still given to those who are identified through the criminal justice system. In fact, in 2004/05 only 11 per cent of people entering treatment did directly via the criminal justice system.²⁷ Sixteen and 17-year-olds can be sentenced to a Drug Treatment and Testing Order, and older offenders to a Community Order. In such cases, treatment should start within two days of the order being made.
- 3.51 The research conducted to support this project on thinking and behaviour²⁸ has emphasised both the importance of 'fateful moments' which may trigger young people to try to change their lifestyle, and the short time horizons of many young people. There may be a place for more recognition of these in drugs policy – first by continuing the effort to make sure that waiting times are reduced, particularly for young people who self-refer; and second, perhaps, by being more proactive about seeking out 'fateful moments' and offering drug treatment. Some of the best-known triggers for desistance from drug use are getting a good job; settling down with a partner; having a child; or the death of a close friend or relative (especially if the death is drug-related). Statutory agencies have good routes for knowing both about births and deaths; and work should be done to investigate whether, in certain circumstances, these could be used as triggers for an offer of help with problematic drug use, perhaps through social services.
- 3.52 Second, and also related to timing, it is important that in working with problematic drug users, services are joined-up but are also sensitive to the young person's own sense of priorities. The National Treatment Agency has recognised that drug users have complex problems and that effective partnership working between service providers will be necessary to address social and health problems. It is important to make a rounded offer of help; but the ordering and timing of what is offered will also be significant:

'Commonly the young people experiencing more severe circumstances such as drug addiction and homelessness found it difficult to think beyond their immediate circumstances. For example, young people experiencing drug addiction could not consider finding housing until they had overcome their addiction.'

'However, young people that were in more optimistic situations often wanted the agencies approach to be more long term and forward thinking suggesting that they would like the jobcentre to consider their training options before they went into employment. Similarly one participant discussed feeling it was important that they built up confidence through volunteering opportunities before they started in paid employment, thus offering them the best possible opportunities.'

QA Research Report for SEU, March 2005

- 3.53 This intersects with the issue raised above about methadone-dependent heroin users and incapacity benefit – work also needs to be done to make sure that addressing drug use first and employment issues later does not land those who are trying to escape their drug use in a benefit trap.

- 3.54 Chapter 2 shows the scale of alcohol misuse amongst 16- to 25-year-olds – especially in relation to binge drinking. However, evidence suggests that binge drinking is largely a transitory phenomenon. As people get older, the frequency of drinking increases but the volume decreases – ‘most people leave binge drinking behind as they approach their mid-twenties’.²⁹ Binge drinkers are at increased risk of accidents and alcohol poisoning and there can also be a greater risk of sexual assault. Men in particular are more likely both to be a victim of violence and to commit violent offences. The impacts on society are visible in, for example, high levels of attendance at A&E related to alcohol.
- 3.55 Alcohol misuse is particularly associated with mental health problems in vulnerable groups such as offenders, young people and homeless people.³⁰
- 3.56 The Government is implementing an Alcohol Harm Reduction Programme which is primarily based on the recommendations in the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, published in March 2004.
- 3.57 Work is currently underway to develop improved treatment services for alcohol misusers in the form of Screenings and Brief Interventions. A national alcohol research project (ANARP) has been completed and published, which for the first time provides a national map of alcohol treatment services across England. Based on this research, better services in the form of local toolkits are being developed. Also, the Department of Health is developing Models of Care which provide a framework for the commissioning and provision for alcohol treatment.
- 3.58 In addition, the Licensing Act 2003 provides for the ability to have flexible opening hours. This will help police tackle flashpoints of violence at closing time and evidence shows that flexible hours do not mean more drinking – ‘all day’ opening in England in 1988 was followed by five years of decline in the consumption of alcohol.
- 3.59 The Act also gives local authorities and residents more power to tackle local problems and gives the police more powers to close down ‘problem’ bars as well as increased penalties for premises that sell to underage drinkers.

Anti-social behaviour

- 3.60 Anti-social behaviour strategies are a relatively new area of government policy. They advocate a twin-track approach of enforcement and support providing help for individuals and communities and using the powers available to ensure acceptable standards of behaviour are upheld. There is a clear need for policies and programmes that address anti-social behaviour and support respect and responsibility, and some of the young adults who participated in the focus groups held to inform this report agreed that it was right to require people to take responsibility for their own actions.
- 3.61 However, many respondents to our consultation were concerned that some interventions to address anti-social behaviour appeared to be purely punitive; they suggested that, alongside punishment, more attention needed to be given to strategies to prevent anti-social behaviour. This echoes the recent findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation,³¹ which claims that two-thirds of the general population favour preventative action over punitive action against anti-social behaviour. The Government has introduced a range of preventative anti-social behaviour measures intended to address this issue, but they are not widely publicised or known about.

- 3.62 One of these measures is the Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC). These are voluntary written agreements between an individual and one or more local agencies, often the local housing authority and the police. The Contract specifies a range of anti-social activities which the individual must not engage in, but it also recognises the importance of the young person helping to write the Contract, and the benefits of diversionary activities. They make the young person aware of the impact of their behaviour on the wider community and place an element of restriction on a young person with some preventative measures to help move them away from anti-social behaviour. An evaluation of ABCs in Islington suggests that they have helped to significantly reduce anti-social behaviour.³²

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Individual Support Orders

- 3.63 During our consultation and focus groups, few people knew about Individual Support Orders (ISOs), which were introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2003, and became available from 1 May 2004. These are civil orders that can be attached to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) for a 10- to 17-year-old. ISOs are designed to compel young people to get the support they need to address the underlying causes of their anti-social behaviour. They provide a helpful mechanism which could be used to make sure that an ASBO is a trigger for offering help and support to make sure that any anti-social acts are not repeated.
- 3.64 Courts are obliged to make an ISO if they take the view that it would help prevent further anti-social behaviour. But the use of ISOs has been severely limited – just seven have been applied to ASBOs since May 2004.³³
- 3.65 The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) in the Home Office has recognised this issue, and sees the primary reason for low take-up of ISOs as their cost (estimated at £1,500). To address this, the Home Office has allocated a further £500,000 to be used specifically for the provision of ISOs. The cost of obtaining an ASBO is approximately £2,500,³⁴ which, as practitioners have become more familiar with the processes required in obtaining an Order, is less than half it was in 2002.³⁵
- 3.66 More needs to be done to publicise and use ISOs as a means of addressing the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour, and consideration needs to be given to making the attachment of ISOs to ASBOs more automatic for young people. They are not a ‘soft option’ – they sit alongside an ASBO and help to make sure that it works. Compelling the individual who is subject to an ASBO to attend services that can address the underlying causes of their anti-social behaviour will give the ASBO more of a chance of succeeding and provide a more sustainable solution to the anti-social behaviour.
- 3.67 An additional benefit of making sure that ASBOs are more often associated with preventative work would be to engage more local voluntary and community sector bodies in helping to support the drive against anti-social behaviour. At present, the Home Affairs Select Committee³⁶ found that some key players were often not fully committed to local anti-social behaviour strategies because they were perceived as excessively punitive. Consequently, those local bodies were foregoing the chance to influence the anti-social behaviour strategies at a local level.

Action Point 3: The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office will work with the Youth Justice Board and other relevant agencies to increase further take-up of Individual Support Orders for young people with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders as part of the wider Respect campaign.

More flexibility in the length of ASBOs

- 3.68 All ASBOs last a minimum of two years, irrespective of whether they are applied to a 16-year-old or a 60-year-old. A number of external stakeholders have suggested that two years is a very long time in the life of a child, and may be an inappropriate length of time for them to be subject to an ASBO.
- 3.69 The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit want to promote the message that ASBOs can be reviewed and discharged. ASBU is encouraging practitioners to set up mechanisms to review ASBOs and to contemplate varying terms or discharging orders if behaviour improves; but the figures show that just 142 out of a total of 4649 ASBOs have been varied in this way.³⁷

Action Point 4: The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office will monitor the duration of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders applied to young adults and promote the ability to review Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and vary or discharge them as appropriate.

Intervention Orders

- 3.70 The Government proposes a new civil order for people aged 18 and over – an Intervention Order – which will be issued alongside an ASBO. The Intervention Order would focus on drugs and would provide a further means of ensuring that people whose anti-social behaviour is rooted in their substance misuse can be effectively dealt with outside the criminal justice system. The Order would require them to engage with drug treatment, or undertake other specific actions.
- 3.71 Intervention Orders are a welcome development which, like ISOs for young adults, recognise that it will be important to address the causes of anti-social behaviour in adults. However, the intention at present is to restrict them only to drug use. For many young adults, there will be other causes underlying anti-social behaviour – and these should also be addressed.

Action Point 5: Dependant on the take up and effectiveness of the Intervention Order, Home Office and other government departments will consider widening their use to non-drug related Anti-Social Behaviour.

Therapy and counselling

- 3.72 One type of intervention aimed directly at how young adults think and behave has been raised with us several times during this project. There is a wide consensus among service providers within the voluntary and community sector that psychological therapy or counselling for young people – on issues like depression, eating disorders, or bereavement – can be beneficial.

- 3.73 There is evidence that young adults benefit from counselling when they receive it – and many young adults are on waiting lists. Furthermore, clinical evidence exists which shows that adults receiving non-directive counselling significantly experienced a reduction in depressive symptoms in the short term compared to general practitioner care.³⁸ The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) have also issued guidance³⁹ on the treatment and management on depression in young people recommending that those with severe or moderate depression be offered, as a first line treatment, a specific psychological therapy.
- 3.74 At present the provision of psychological therapy and counselling services is patchy and is funded through a wide range of ‘stitched-together’ routes – sometimes by local authorities, sometimes using charitable funds, and so on. Consideration will be given as to whether existing services could be helped to offer more comprehensive coverage.

Action Point 6: The Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health to consider whether existing psychological and counselling services could be helped to offer more comprehensive, consistent and reliable coverage, perhaps by including counselling in the offer to be made to young people through targeted youth support teams.

Support for the parents of older young people

- 3.75 The influence of parents on older young people is widely neglected by policy makers – perhaps because it is seen as too difficult to get involved in. Government has, in the past, been afraid of appearing ‘nannying’ when addressing issues around parents and parenting – and this is a particular risk when considering older young adults, who may themselves resent any attempt to involve or recognise the role of their parents. But the evidence is overwhelming that even when they are not keen to acknowledge it, young people are strongly influenced by their parents well into young adulthood.
- 3.76 We strongly welcome the additional resource that Government has made available through the Parenting Fund⁴⁰ to the voluntary and community sector in England to strengthen support services for parents. It will be important that in the future this support is made more widely available for projects with a focus on older young people as well as for children.

Good practice and pointers for the future

- 3.77 As well as identifying these issues, we have also seen a wide range of good practice in recognising young adults’ thinking and behaviour, and some positive pointers for the future in government policy.

Involving young people’s thinking more effectively

- 3.78 One very powerful way of recognising young adults’ thinking and using it to make services more effective is to involve them in service design themselves.

- 3.79 The most interesting examples of young people's involvement go well beyond consultation events or consultative committees, or even the chance for young people to influence appointments. They involve young people running things themselves; making spending decisions; and even designing their own sanctions regimes.

Youth Voice

Youth Voice was set-up in 1998 by a group of young people from the deprived area of Belgrave in Leicester. It is completely youth-led and all the directors are aged between 18 and 25, working with over 500 people aged 8 to 24.

Youth Voice provides:

- recreational activities to promote participation and self-esteem;
- skills development that allow young people to be advocates and represent themselves at decision-making level; and
- transferable skills that are accredited, which lead to further education, getting employment or setting up in enterprise.

The project encourages young people to empower themselves by working with them to establish what they are interested in, what issues they face, and how these might be overcome.

Since 2003, the project has assisted over 100 young people into paid work for at least six months.

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Work that directly aims to develop thinking and behaviour

- 3.80 We have also seen a range of good work that aims to impact directly on thinking and behaviour. Some of these recognise that working on aspects of thinking – like self-esteem and aspirations – may be the best way to achieve other goals:

Bodypower Project

The Bodypower Project recognises that aspiration is the most effective form of contraception.

The project supports Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in schools in Southwark. It aims to help teachers and health workers feel confident about delivering SRE by running mock clinics and by raising both the awareness of the services available and the self-esteem of young people. The project team is multi-agency, made up of several partners including the PCT, Education and Business Alliance, three sexual outreach workers (from the PCT, Brook Advisory Centre and King College Hospital), the Healthy Schools Partnership and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit. Additional resources have been found in the form of third-year medical students.

To support those delivering SRE the project has produced a toolkit that includes activities and an agreed evaluation and planning form between partners. Much emphasis has been placed on building a common language between partners and increasing the self-esteem of the young people participating.

Southwark experienced a 6.1 per cent reduction in teenage conception rates in 2002.

Contact: Chris Ace, chris.ace@southwark.gov.uk, 020 7525 2828

Activity agreements – recognising early steps

- 3.81 A critical and welcome recent step in government has been the announcement of the piloting of Activity Agreements, with associated Activity Allowances. The aim of the agreements is to support and encourage disengaged 16- to 17-year-olds (those Not in Education, Employment or Training – ‘NEET’ – for at least 20 weeks) back into learning; and critically, they recognise that for some people there will have to be some intermediate steps before they can go into full-time training or work.
- 3.82 One of the ways that the success of the pilots will be measured relates to ‘softer’ measures which will try to capture the ‘distance travelled’ towards hard outcomes such as a job or training. It will be important to consider these indicators since the target groups are hard to reach and changes in education, training or labour market status will take substantial effort and time.
- 3.83 The Agreement would be between a young person and their Connexions adviser; and would include activities designed to help the young person towards work or training (perhaps including voluntary work, or work on ‘soft skills’).
- 3.84 In some of the pilots, Activity Agreements will be supported by an Activity Allowance (similar to an Education Maintenance Allowance) which would be paid as long as the young person kept to their agreement. It will also be important that funding is made available to support the kind of provision that might be included in young people’s agreements – which links to the set of issues raised above in the section on education and lifeskills.

- 3.85 Evaluation of the pilots will measure changes in behaviours and attitudes of individuals, their engagement with support services, and their readiness to take up new opportunities to learn or work, as well as changes in their overall status.
- 3.86 Many of the voluntary and community sector service providers already use ‘distance travelled’ measures in support of their work with young adults to develop lifeskills; but few are well-evidenced and this means that they are often not considered a robust enough basis for funding these types of lifeskill programmes.
- 3.87 At present, there are few incentives in the system to work with the most disadvantaged people, because most of the funding and targets are aimed at getting young people over the threshold of work or education. Work done to move them towards that threshold – as opposed to over it – is hard to recognise and reward.
- 3.88 The Activity Agreement pilots can be used as a mechanism to look at distance travelled measures, and perhaps to gather evidence which might help establish their reliability more accurately. A robust and reliable way of measuring the distance travelled of a young person will help make sure that service providers get recognition for the small steps that they help the most disadvantaged people to make in getting closer to employability or to readiness for full-time training.

Action Point 7: The Government (in particular, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions) to take the opportunity of the proposed use of ‘distance travelled’ measurement in the Activity Agreement pilots to assess how useful it is as a measure and whether it has potential for application elsewhere.

CHAPTER 4

Age boundaries

Summary

The shape of transition to adulthood has changed for everybody. But has also diverged. Most young people are now taking **longer** over the transition to adulthood, but for a disadvantaged minority the transition is **accelerated**, often chaotic and disordered.

Age boundaries in policy and service provision don't recognise these changes well. They can seem **arbitrary**, and often **don't give any helpful flexibility** to those whose lives aren't following a conventional pattern – including in particular the most disadvantaged. There is **little consistency or continuity** – some **services end abruptly** for people of a particular age, and in other areas there is **not enough support for the transition between youth and adult services**. And if you have a troubled life, you may well want to start accessing services just at the point where they are no longer available to you – **there is not enough support for 'second chances'**.

There are some policy areas where the problem is particularly pronounced: the criminal justice system, mental health services and education, for example.

However, there are also examples of good practice and helpful pointers for the future – both in terms of making age boundaries more 'blurry' in order to make room for services to follow need rather than age; and in supporting a smoother, and therefore better, transition from youth to adult services.

Our action points in this chapter focus on improving the transition from child to adult services in areas such as the criminal justice system and mental health services. The chapter also proposes a more proactive approach to managing the transition out of Children's Trusts; particularly through data sharing and full assessment on the basis of need rather than age.

The changing transition to adulthood

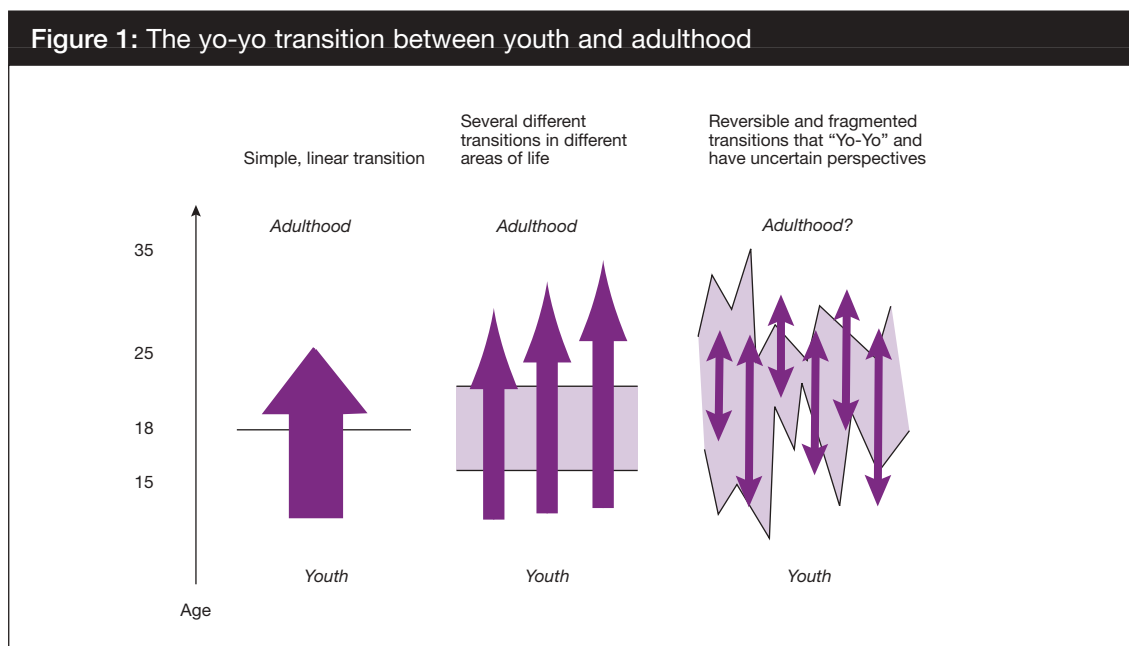
- 4.1 Most young people aged between 16 and 25 are in the process of transition – moving from dependence to independence. Nearly all young people experience some disturbance or uncertainty at some stage during this period – but for most, it is a positive and exciting process, supported by parents, friends, schools, colleges, and, increasingly, universities.
- 4.2 As discussed briefly in chapter 2, the transition to adulthood has changed and is changing. Even definitions of what constitutes adulthood are becoming more fluid, with young adults increasingly seeing perceptions of independence as more significant than age markers or events in defining what it means to be adult.¹

- 4.3 This may be partly because, as university attendance becomes more common, and the average age both for marriage and for having children gets later, most transitions to adulthood extend over a longer period, and are more complex. For example, people may be considered adult in one domain (they have a job) but not in another (they still live at home with parents).² For most young people, the period for which they are in some sense dependent – supported through university by their family, advised by tutors at college, or subsidised by their parents to get their first flat – has been extended.
- 4.4 At the same time, though, a significant minority of young adults still go through ‘accelerated’ transitions – leaving home and school early, becoming young carers, entering (or trying to enter) the labour market early, and perhaps having children early. A pattern of relatively early transition into work that might have seemed normal half a century ago is now severely disadvantaging, as Gill Jones sets out in her literature review for this project:

‘Slow track transitions typically involve staying on in post-compulsory education and delaying entry into full-time employment and family formation (often until 30 or later). Slow track transitions involve many semi-independent statuses, requiring different levels of parental support. Slow track transitions, following longstanding middle class practices, are problematic for those without middle class models of extended economic support from parents. This is reflected in the number of ‘broken’ or ‘fractured’ extended transitions which occur.

‘Fast track transitions may typically involve leaving education at or before the minimum age, and risking unemployment or insecure and badly-paid work. Failed fast track transitions may result in young people ending up not economically active (‘NEET’). They may also involve early family formation – including teenage pregnancy. The risk of involvement in problematic social behaviour – offending, abuse of drugs and alcohol – is also higher among this group. Fast track transitions follow a working class pattern where young people are expected to be self-supporting, and are particularly problematic when they cannot be, because of low wages, unemployment or teenage motherhood. It is from this latter group that most ‘socially excluded’ young people come.’³

- 4.5 Furthermore, very few transitions to adulthood are linear (whether they are ‘fast’ or ‘slow’). Because risk comes alongside independence, many transitions involve an element of ‘backtracking’ where young people revert to some form of dependence (for example, if they lose their job, break-up with a partner, or find they have nowhere to live). This is sometimes referred to as the ‘yo-yo’ transition between youth and adulthood.
- 4.6 In summary, ‘age has become less reliable as a marker of adult independence, though it is still adhered to as a means of targeting delivery of policies’.⁴



Age boundaries in policy and service provision

- 4.7 There is no consistent agreed age at which the Government treats a person as an adult. This might be regarded as a good thing if it meant that the system allowed some leeway for different kinds of transition. But in practice, what it means is that there are a huge range of different age-contingent arrangements for policy provision, many involving sharp cliff-edges, which fall at different points. This can be confusing; but more importantly, it may get in the way of giving young people the support that they need through their transition to adulthood, especially if their transition is non-typical.

The wide range of age boundaries

- 4.8 In *Young people's transitions to adulthood*, Morrow and Richards summarise some of the main age boundaries as follows:

***Legally or politically**, young people acquire a range of rights and duties between the ages of 14 and 21; perhaps the crucial defining age is 18, with the acquisition of the right to vote.*

***Financially and economically**, young people are technically able to leave school at the age of 16 and go into full-time work, where they may receive adult pay levels. [But].. young people are not eligible to claim full social security benefits until they are 25-years-old. These factors mean that young people are frequently economically dependent upon their families until well into their mid-twenties...'⁵*

- 4.9 But even this to some extent simplifies the position. Some legal responsibilities start even earlier (for example, the age of criminal responsibility is 10); and the position on benefits is more complicated, with different rates and entitlements at 16, 18 and 25, differing again according to family status.

- 4.10 There is also no agreed definition of a ‘young person’ or ‘young adult’ in the UK. The European Union definition of ‘youth’ is a young person between the ages of 15 and 25,⁶ but this has not been widely (or consistently) adopted in the UK. For example, the criminal justice system assumes that you are ‘adult’ – albeit a ‘young adult’ – at the age of 18 for the purpose of jurisdiction and sentencing, but at present acknowledges that those under 21 are better accommodated separately from those who are older. Children’s Trusts are designed to support children and young people; but their responsibility extends only to the age of 19. The New Deal for Young People, on the other hand, extends to age 25.

Services designed to support young people end earlier than need

- 4.11 This report is not arguing that Government should identify a single moment at which young people become adults. Indeed, variations in age boundaries may be positive if they reflect differences in need. But it is not clear that current age boundaries are helpful or consistent in responding to the needs of young people, and especially the most disadvantaged.
- 4.12 This project focuses on the 16-25 age range because previous research had identified older young adults as not being adequately catered for by services and often ignored by policy makers. *Breaking the Cycle* concluded that: ‘One of the most significant of these [difficulties] is the problem we have identified concerning the age boundaries of nearly all policy provision, and the paucity of arrangements which can support a young person through into early adulthood.’⁷

“Coming to terms with sexuality often takes longer and involves greater stress – hence support services need to be there for longer – at least to 25”.

Project worker, GALYIC, SEU project visit

- 4.13 Problems relating to age boundaries were an issue widely raised during the evidence-gathering process for this report. Examples given include Connexions, which is available to most people only until they reach the age of 19.⁸ But for many of the most vulnerable young people – especially those whose lives have been interrupted in some way (for example, by a period of chaotic drug use, by imprisonment, or by having a child) – this means that once they are ready to access this kind of help, it is no longer available. Research commissioned by The Prince’s Trust suggests that ‘...by the time that young people are able to form aspirations for themselves, their opportunities to convert them into realistic goals are limited by the pathways that they have already taken.’⁹
- 4.14 Other research emphasises this point. ‘The problems associated with youth transitions do not conclude at neat, age-specific points and therefore age-related policies (such as ... the New Deal for Young People) do not fit harmoniously with the realities of the extended transitions that our sample members have undertaken.’¹⁰

“When I was 16 I was classed as a priority, but now I am only just 19 they don’t really give a toss.”

SEU Focus Group

- 4.15 Many voluntary and community sector providers for this age group respond to the limited amount of statutory support for young adults by trying to fill some of the gaps in provision. It is striking how many voluntary and community sector projects work with young adults up to the age of 25 (or in some cases, even older) and see them as continuing to have issues that are related to their youth and their transition, beyond the point where statutory services see them as ‘adult’.
- Weston Spirit is a national organisation tackling issues of social exclusion in 13- to 25-year-olds through a range of activities and personal development programmes.
 - Similarly, Fairbridge works to improve the confidence, motivation and skills of young people between the ages of 13 and 25.
 - The Prince’s Trust runs personal development programmes, such as ‘Team’, for young people aged between 16 and 25.
 - YMCA (England) is the largest voluntary sector provider of safe, supported accommodation for single men and women between the ages of 16 and 35.
- 4.16 Practitioners on the ground often recognise these issues even when the structures of the service in which they work do not. In preparing this report, we spoke to a number of Connexions advisers who were prepared to work with people over the age of 19, even though they had to do this somewhat covertly, knowing that strictly speaking this work was not funded and did not contribute to their targets.
- 4.17 Funding issues also mean that sometimes, even though stated age limits are generous, in practice provision is limited. For example, in May 2004, apprenticeships were opened up to adults by scrapping the arbitrary age boundary at 24. However, the reality is that those under 19 are still more likely to take up an apprenticeship – only 39 per cent of those starting an apprenticeship were over 19 in 2004.¹¹ Those young adults not yet ready for level 2 training may find it difficult to get onto an apprenticeship.
- 4.18 The Learning and Skills Council directs funding particularly towards those under 19, who are the subject of the main level 2 target. Again, *Breaking the Cycle* identified this problem and recognised the phenomenon of the ‘invisible 20s’: “provision targeted at a particular age group can ignore the pressing needs of those a little older.”¹²
- 4.19 The overall effect of this is that there is relatively little scope for ‘second chances’, especially in getting help and advice for issues that relate specifically to the transition to adulthood. Effective prevention is about intervening early at the onset of problems – at whatever stage in life.

4.20 We have seen above that transition is tending to be more complex and disordered for everybody; and that for the most disadvantaged people, it is particularly likely to follow a non-typical pattern, and involve ‘backtracking’. But services designed to support young adults through their transition to adulthood do not recognise these changes. At a time when very few middle-class parents would dream of withdrawing help, advice and support from their son or daughter at the age of 18, or even 21 or 25, statutory systems of support assume independence and adulthood among the most disadvantaged at a young and unhelpfully uniform age.

“This course is only until you are 25, so this is my last chance to get anywhere in life.”

SEU focus group

Youth and adult services rarely join-up well enough

- 4.21 Even where services do not end completely at a particular age, there is often a transition to be made between youth services and adult services. *Breaking the Cycle* identified that ‘while holistic and joined-up policies represent an important step forward in youth policy approaches, there may be an increasing need for more vertical integration of services’.¹³ And our research and consultation have confirmed that poor integration between youth and adult services can be a problem when helping young people with complex needs to make the transition to adulthood.
- 4.22 The Green Paper on youth, *Youth Matters*, recognises this problem: ‘young people who need continued long-term support can lose continuity in treatment and support when making the transition between adolescent and adult services’. The Green Paper also includes a consultation question which asks what more can be done to help older teenagers make a smooth transition to adult services. The consultation ended on 4 November 2005 and the Government will respond in the following months.

Specific policy areas of concern

- 4.23 During the course of our project, as well as identifying the general issues explored above, we have come across a number of specific areas in which problems linked to age boundaries are particularly acute, or where real improvements could be made:
- the Criminal Justice System;
 - Mental Health Services;
 - education;
 - financial support and the Benefits System;
 - drug treatment; and
 - the Common Assessment Framework.

Links between the youth and adult criminal justice systems

- 4.24 The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) is responsible for preventative measures, commissioning custody and making grants to bodies that work with offenders up to the age of 18. At the front-line, Youth Offending Teams (YOT) are multi-agency teams in every local authority that identify each young offender's needs and circumstances and decide on appropriate programmes.
- 4.25 The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), created in 2004, works with those aged over 18 and is responsible for designing interventions and services to reduce reoffending.
- 4.26 Transition from the youth to the adult system is rough and can bring disruption or cessation of the programmes which give offenders opportunities and diversions. Once an offender reaches the age of 18, they are often transferred to a new prison and subject to a new regime and the effort and high financial cost of early programmes may, in some cases, be wasted if programmes and approaches are not sustained.
- 4.27 This sharp transition is despite the fact that it has been found that 18- to 20-year-olds have many of the same characteristics as 16- to 17-year-old young offenders: immaturity, low educational achievement, poor parenting, behavioural problems, and alcohol or drug misuse.¹⁴
- 4.28 The YOT is a relatively new organisation but evidence suggests that they are making an impact. The Joint Inspection of YOTs, published in 2004, found that only 26 per cent of the cases examined had reoffended during the course of their contact with the YOT and 61 per cent of young people had 'definitely' stopped offending.

Action Point 8: The National Offender Management Service and the Youth Justice Board to promote the benefits of protocols between Youth Offending Teams and local probation services to manage 18-year-old offenders and the arrangements for transfer of responsibility from the YOT effectively.

Assessment tools

- 4.29 A practical example of the poor linkages between the two systems can be found in the assessment tools used by the youth and adult systems. ASSET is a paper-based risk assessment tool used by YOTs. The assessment is holistic and includes a section on education and personal needs. On arriving in custody each young person should come from the court with a completed ASSET form.
- 4.30 All offenders aged 18 and over and sentenced to community or custodial sentences of a year or more will have an OASys (Offender Assessment System) assessment to identify their likelihood of re-offending, their risk of serious harm, the needs related to their offending, and the interventions required to rehabilitate and resettle them.

- 4.31 Although they are only slightly different, there are presently no linkages between ASSET and OASys, although the National Probation Service is working to rectify this.

Action Point 9: The National Offender Management Service will lead on work to link ASSET and OASys to enable two-way sharing of data. This will provide practitioners with valuable information regarding juvenile offenders moving into the adult system.

Young adult offenders

- 4.32 There is only limited flexibility regarding the boundary between youth and adult provision. Sixteen and 17-year-olds can be subject to juvenile sentences such as Supervision Orders or to those available for adults such as a Drug Treatment and Testing Orders. There is no flexibility for an offender aged 18 to be sentenced to juvenile sentences, except in situations when an offender becomes 18 during the course of a trial.
- 4.33 A more flexible approach can be found elsewhere in Europe. Since 1953, all young adult offenders in Germany are transferred to the jurisdiction of juvenile courts. Juvenile law has to be applied if it appears that the motives and the circumstances of the offence are those of a typical juvenile crime. In 1965 only 38 per cent of young adults were sentenced in terms of the Juvenile Justice Act, but by 1990 this proportion had nearly doubled to 64 per cent.¹⁵
- 4.34 Spain in 2000 introduced regulations for young adults that are very similar to those of Germany. In 2001 Austria and Lithuania also introduced a flexible system to deal with young adult offenders, with the option to choose an appropriate sanction from either the juvenile or the adult criminal law, depending on the personality and maturity of the offender.¹⁶
- 4.35 Similarly, in Scotland, pilots are currently exploring whether 16- and 17-year-old offenders could be more effectively dealt with by the Children's Hearing System (which work with people under 16) rather than the courts (which tend to be much more likely to give custodial sentences). This recommendation was based on evidence that persistent young offenders have problems which are in many cases transitional. This is supported by NACRO,¹⁷ who found that 'many people who commit offences in their late teens and early twenties will desist from offending once the transition to adulthood is complete'.¹⁸
- 4.36 The fact that other countries pursue a particular course does not make it right. But we believe it might be helpful to consider what the benefits and drawbacks of this kind of flexibility in the system might be.
- 4.37 Another problem with age boundaries within the Criminal Justice System relates to sentencing 18- to 20-year-olds to detention in a Young Offenders Institution. This treats this age range as a group which is distinct from both adults and juveniles, and requires that they are kept separate from both. Potentially it creates two points of transition between juveniles and full adults.

4.38 NOMS will undertake a project to review the management of young adult offenders in custody and the community in the light of the planned implementation of the new sentence of 'custody plus'.¹⁹ The project will cover, amongst other things:

- housing and emotional support;
- employment, training and education;
- drugs and alcohol; and
- the use of the prison estate for young adult offenders.

4.39 There is clearly potential for this project to help to make sure that the new mechanisms for managing young adult offenders are positive, and they may even offer more helpful flexibility than the old system. But it will be important for the project to be managed carefully to make sure that these benefits outweigh the risks.

Action Point 10: The National Offender Management Service to lead a project on the provision of services required for young adult offenders in custody and the community. The Social Exclusion Unit will be represented on the Reference Group brought together to oversee the work of the project.

Mental health services

4.40 Mental health problems often first surface during the transition to adulthood, due to new pressures and challenges. Up to 20 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds have a mental health issue, mostly anxiety and depression. Suicide is the cause of a quarter of all deaths amongst 16- to 24-year-old men,²⁰ and it has been estimated that suicide attempts by young men have risen by over 170 per cent since 1985.²¹

4.41 Children and young people have access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in their area until the age of 16. Few mental health services deal adequately with the 16 – 21 age group, as treatment often needs to be carried out over a long period past the CAMHS age boundary,²² and some CAMHS may not take on a young person if it is clear that they will need long treatment.²³ However, Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS) may not have the approach needed to assess and treat the young adult adequately.²⁴ The consequence is that some young people find that at 17 they are having difficulty getting any mental health support at all.

"I got to sixteen and then there's nothing you can do for a whole year until you're 18 – so what happens to 17- year- olds?"

SEU focus group

4.42 Arrangements for the purchase of services for 17- and 18-year-olds were found to be inconsistent across England, with 28 per cent of health authorities including this age group in contracts with younger children; 16 per cent in adult contracts, and 15 per cent not clear where to place contracts with older adolescents.²⁵

- 4.43 CAMHS and AMHS also take quite different approaches to mental health issues. The developmental approach, which characterises the specialist CAMHS, involves a much lower threshold of intervention than AMHS. Many adult psychiatrists are not prepared to work on the issues which affect young people – for example, some mental health professionals do not recognise conditions like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- 4.44 This inconsistency in treatment approach is rarely acknowledged, and can be badly handled in transition arrangements. For example, the Mental Health Foundation found that where CAMHS ends at 16 and AMHS begins at 18, young people between these ages, especially those who are no longer in education, may well disappear from statutory services, because of the lack of transition arrangements in place.²⁶ Young people aged between 16 and 18 make up only 11 per cent of the CAMHS client group.²⁷
- 4.45 Even where there is no gap in provision, the move from CAMHS to AMHS can be difficult, and many young people drop-out at the point of transition and consequently have no access to the skilled support they need. In addition, parents often report that they feel left out of important decisions during the transition to AMHS, despite wanting to remain involved with their child's treatment.²⁸
- 4.46 CAMHS services have traditionally been resourced for young people up to their 16th birthday. The Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills both recognise that many young people of 16 and 17 years of age are not receiving the services they require.²⁹ The Adult Mental Health Service Framework³⁰ also highlighted the need to establish local service protocols between CAMHS and AMHS to ensure access to appropriate care for older adolescents over 16. There is some promising work already underway with the development of early intervention in psychosis teams (working with 14- to 35-year-olds) and crisis resolution teams (working with those aged over 17) to provide a more comprehensive service and close the gap between CAMHS and AMHS.
- 4.47 There is currently a great deal of work underway looking at the transition between the CAMHS and AMHS services – in particular the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services which identified the need for development of CAMHS for young adults aged 16 to 17; and the Youth Green Paper, *Youth Matters*, which proposed that the Government explores how best to deliver appropriate services to adolescents who may not identify themselves with younger users of child and adolescent mental health services, nor with many users of adult mental health services.

Action Point 11: The Department of Health will monitor the progress on the development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 16- and 17-year-olds and ensure that progress is being made.

Second chances in education

- 4.48 The third issue that has been raised with us is education. A large number of vulnerable young people truant from school, are excluded, or face other problems in their lives that mean that they do not benefit as much as they should from the years of formal education.

‘Every day over 50,000 pupils miss a day of school without permission and estimated 7.5 million school days are missed each year through truancy. Research shows that these children who are not in school are most vulnerable and are easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour and more likely to be unemployed after leaving school.’

DfES website

- 4.49 In later life, a young person may want a ‘second chance’ to return to education. Although financial support to enable them to return to education after 16 is available,³¹ it is, at present, geared towards those who will finish ‘non-advanced’ education (i.e. anything below higher education) by 19. This does not give much time for second chances for those whose education has been seriously disrupted.
- 4.50 One of the results of the recent *Review of Financial Support*,³² *Supporting Young People to Achieve*, is that, from April 2006, if someone is in non-advanced education when they turn 19 they – and their family – can continue to receive certain benefits: Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Income Support (and therefore Housing Benefit and Education Maintenance Allowance), until they have completed their current study or reach the age of 20 (whichever comes first). This will benefit those young people who have had to take a break from their course – perhaps because of a pregnancy. Similarly, the families of young people in unwaged training – such as Apprenticeships – will continue to receive support.
- 4.51 This is clearly an improvement on the previous situation, but it is likely that there will still be some young people who have to abandon their attempts to catch up on learning because they reach 20 before they have finished their course. Because of this, the Government will keep this new age limit under review.
- 4.52 Young people who are 19 and over and studying full time – that is, more than 16 hours a week – cannot claim housing benefit even if they are not in receipt of any other income. This has meant that someone who is in the middle of their course when they turn 19 could lose their housing benefit and find it extremely difficult to complete their course. It also acts as a deterrent to older young people entering full-time learning (even if they are also working part-time).
- 4.53 DWP is reviewing the rules relating to Further Education and Housing Benefit in line with the Government commitments (expressed in the Department for Education and Skills 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, published in February 2005) to help people get and keep a job. This should be finalised in early 2006.

Action Point 12: The Department for Work and Pensions to take forward the recommendations of the Housing Benefit and Further Education review.

Extended project

- 4.54 Young people whose lives are subject to frequent disruption and setbacks will struggle to perform well in assessment systems based on taking one-off examinations on set days and submitting assignments at fixed times. As a result, they are at risk of becoming de-motivated and drifting away from education.
- 4.55 However, new ways of demonstrating ability that match the rigour and status of conventional methods, but are *not* tied to fixed points in the academic year or to completion by a certain age, could open up new opportunities for young people with troubled lives.
- 4.56 The extended project proposed in the 14-19 White Paper on education and skills has clear potential in this regard. A single piece of work that can be developed over time would allow young people to take time out to cope properly with, for instance, a family crisis, treatment for illness or looking for somewhere to live without feeling they are going to miss the boat completely because of a looming exam date. It would eventually provide them with a high-status accredited piece of work to use in seeking further learning opportunities or looking for work.

Action Point 13: In developing the extended project proposed in the 14-19 White Paper, the Government will ask the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to explore how this project could be designed to meet the needs of young adults with complex needs. This could include:

- **allowing for the project to be taken at non-advanced levels where young people would clearly benefit from flexibility in demonstrating attainment;**
- **allowing for young people with complex needs to complete the project after they have passed 19; and**
- **providing secure online storage facilities for young people to store work.**

Financial support and the benefits system

- 4.57 A fourth area that was raised very frequently during our consultation and focus groups for this project was benefit rates. Young people found the rules extremely complicated and confusing. They did not understand the rationale for the wide range of different benefit rates; and they frequently felt that they were being given a rate that related to their age rather than to their particular circumstances or need for support.

“It’s not fair. Why does it cost more for them to live than me?”

SEU Focus Group

- 4.58 Age-graded benefit rates reflect general assumptions that most young people will continue to live with their parents between the ages of 16 and 25, as well as the fact that young people have lower earnings expectations. At 25, adult levels of welfare support become available. Until then, they are generally expected to be able to receive economic support from their parents or carers – whether or not they do in practice.³³
- 4.59 The current system of gaining access to financial support between 16 and 18 is dependent on a range of factors: whether or not the young person is in learning, what type of learning, the family's economic circumstances and other eligibility criteria.³⁴ Jobcentre Plus has a clearly defined set of 'vulnerable' clients³⁵ who are eligible for higher rates of benefits, but apart from this there is extremely limited discretion for different rates of benefit according to need rather than age.
- 4.60 Young people tend to get their information predominantly by word of mouth from other young people, which often results in them knowing the weekly or fortnightly figures that are available but not being at all clear about what the figures are made up of, or what the rationale is for the wide range of different benefits. If they are to continue to manage their way round a benefits system that is considerably more complex than the one that applies to older adults, young people need much better sources of benefits advice.
- 4.61 Again, the complexity of the benefit system and financial support for young people was recognised in the *Review of Financial Support: Supporting Young People to Achieve*,³⁶ which proposed a single system of financial support for young people. This document promises more coherent support for young people to equip themselves with the necessary skills to compete in the labour market. As we have already seen, the review will widen eligibility for financial support for people in full-time education and unwaged trainees.
- 4.62 The Review, which was produced by the Treasury, DfES and DWP, promises revised guidance for Jobcentre Plus to enable them to issue a quicker and more accessible service to 16- to 17-year-olds. The Review also recognised that there was a need for a more coherent, single point of information about financial support. DfES, LSC, DWP, the Treasury, and Revenue and Customs are working together to produce a booklet and associated website that will give young people (and their parents and advisers) as much information as possible about the financial support available to them.
- 4.63 A specific Benefit that was raised with us by many respondents as a particular issue was the Single Room Rent (SRR). This limits housing benefit for those under the age of 25 to that of the average cost of shared accommodation in the local area. This means exclusive use of a bedroom, but sharing a living room, bathroom and kitchen.
- 4.64 The Housing Benefit system is going through change with the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance. Under this allowance, single claimants under 25 are entitled to a new shared room rate, which is based on a more generous definition than the existing SRR.
- 4.65 Nevertheless, we have heard from many young people that, while they do not necessarily object to living in such accommodation, it can be hard to find appropriate places to live at the current rates, and it will be important that the new rates improve this.

Action Point 14: In developing the new Local Housing Allowance, the Department for Work and Pensions will review the shared accommodation rules to ensure that they allow vulnerable young people under 25 to access appropriate accommodation.

Foster care

- 4.66 Linked to benefit payments is the issue of the status of payments to foster carers once a young person reaches 18.
- 4.67 While the majority of young people are having extended transitions to independence, characterised by staying longer in the parental home, those in foster placements may face uncertainty when they reach 18, and foster families that continue to support young people at this age may lose out financially.
- 4.68 Foster placements last until a young person reaches 18. During this time, the foster carers receive payments from the local authority which are not taken into account for benefit purposes. When the young person reaches 18, the foster placement becomes an adult placement. The Pathway Plan drawn-up by the local authority may suggest that staying with the former foster carers may be in the best interests of the young person. However, any payments received by the foster carer once the young person reaches the age of 18 are now treated as income for benefit purposes. It has been suggested that this can result in financial hardship for the carers, provides a perverse incentive for the carers to accommodate younger foster placements rather than continuing to support older ones, and may result in a young person who has just turned 18 being unable to stay in a suitable placement.

Action Point 15: The Department for Work and Pensions will explore the position with regard to payments to former foster carers who continue to care for a young person after the age of 18 and consider any issues arising.

Substance misuse

- 4.69 Recent welcome developments in this area include the expansion of adult drug treatment and a focus on prevention and early intervention for young people. However, there has been limited help for young people – treatment for this age range has traditionally been ‘under-resourced and marginalised’.³⁷
- 4.70 In June 2005, the National Treatment Agency published ‘Young people’s substance misuse treatment services – essential guidance’. This recognises that ensuring a smooth transition to adult services is a critical success factor for services aiming to help young people with substance misuse problems.

Action Point 16: The National Treatment Agency’s essential guidance for local practitioners will ensure that treatment for drug misuse is dependent on need, not age.

The Common Assessment Framework

- 4.71 A further opportunity to make the transition to adulthood smoother is through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). *Every Child Matters* proposed the introduction of a CAF for children and young people up to the age of 18. The CAF aims to:
- promote more effective and earlier identification of additional needs for children and young people;
 - improve multi-agency working;
 - ensure a holistic assessment of a child's needs, taking account of the individual, family and community and therefore reduce the need for different assessment processes; and
 - enable information to follow the child and promote the appropriate sharing of information.
- 4.72 All local authority areas are expected to implement the framework between April 2006 and the end of 2008.
- 4.73 The Common Assessment Framework provides an ideal opportunity to identify those for whom the transition to adulthood may prove problematic and to address their needs.

Action Point 17: The Department for Education and Skills will review the Common Assessment Framework guidance to be issued in 2006, to ensure that there will be an assessment of older teenagers' readiness to make the transition to adult services, and that plans are made to address any issues identified.

Good practice and pointers for the future

- 4.74 As well as identifying areas of difficulty, and highlighting particular services where change is needed, our project has identified good practice and helpful changes in policy direction.

Blurring age boundaries to follow need

- 4.75 The following example demonstrates how age boundaries can be blurred to ensure that services are delivered according to need rather than restricted by age:

West Euston One-Stop-Shop

This is a one-stop-shop – that is, a number of services located in one place.

People can walk in to gain advice; access services; use the computers, internet and library. In the Partnership, the Connexions service (dealing with 13 to 19 year olds and up to 24 for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities) is located next to Next Steps (the adult information, advice and guidance service).

Staff are prepared to work flexibly across the age boundary, with funding following the client. This means that if a Connexions worker has been helping a young person who turns 19, they can continue to work with them, providing continuity and support, and the help is counted as part of Next Steps figures, with funding allocated accordingly.

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- 4.76 As well as these examples of good practice, there are encouraging signs in national policy-making for young people. The targeted youth support teams, announced in *Youth Matters*,³⁸ and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 will be focused on young people aged up to 19. But *Youth Matters* states that the service should work with young people aged up to 25 where they have a particular need.

Action Point 18: In developing its Youth Strategy, the Department for Education and Skills will consider how the proposed targeted youth support service can respond effectively to the needs of young people, rather than being bound by their age.

Managing the transition to adult services

- 4.77 We are also aware of good practice in managing the transition from youth to adult services. For example, in Swindon a protocol between the YOT and the local probation service is designed to promote the best interests of the young person. In some cases the YOT, which normally works with young people up to the age of 18 only, will make an intervention with a young person over this age limit in order to deliver a continuous service.
- 4.78 The protocol also provides for an effective transition for the young person from the YOT to the Probation Service. For example, both the YOT and probation service will devise a joint plan for the last six months of a YOT's involvement with young offenders on community orders and approaching their 18th birthday. This could include trying to align regimes before and after transfer to the probation service or providing opportunities for the young person to visit the probation office and understand the likely implications of adult probation supervision.

Services for young people with problematic drug misuse

This Guide, published by the Scottish Executive in 2003, says: 'The age group of the target population needs careful consideration. Although young people with drug misuse problems are most likely to come to the attention of services around 15-years-old, by this point problems may be well entrenched. In this Guide, we concentrate on the needs of children and young people up to the age of 16. However, much of the information will also be applicable to services for 16 to 18 year olds because many issues and service pathways are relevant to both age groups. Services will need to be able to offer some flexibility because young people mature at different rates. A carefully managed transition between young people's and adult services can have an influence on treatment outcomes. Legal age cut off may not be the most appropriate time to transfer to adult services. The maturity and needs of the young person and the availability of appropriate services should be taken into account when deciding the timing of this transfer.'

- 4.79 Here again the proposed targeted youth support teams are a promising development. *Youth Matters* proposes that these teams will have responsibility for helping to manage the transition to adulthood (and to adult services) for the most vulnerable young people with whom they work.
- 4.80 Similarly the *Every Child Matters* agenda recognises through the guidance for practitioners that 'knowledge of the transition into adulthood' is a vital element for workers in this area.

Action Point 19: The Department for Education and Skills and the Social Exclusion Unit will work together to help ensure that those working with vulnerable young people are supported and funded to help their clients make a successful transition to adulthood, and in particular, to make sure that the creation of Children's Trusts does not create a new and unhelpful discontinuity in the system between children's and adult services.

CHAPTER 5

Holistic services and the trusted adult

Summary

Young adults often find it **difficult to approach services**. This can be due to previous bad experiences, or simply because **they do not know where to turn for help**.

Holistic services – that is, services that look at the person and the range of problems they face, not just a particular problem or issue in isolation – can manage complex problems. They can also **encourage involvement** as some young adults avoid using services for fear of embarrassment or stigma, especially if their problems are sensitive (for example, sexual health, debt, or drug use).

Troubled young adults often lack the skills and resilience needed to make the transition to adulthood. **Support, advice and guidance are crucial** in order to make a successful transition. For many young adults this will come from their parents, relatives, guardians, or teachers – but not all have these sources of support. For them, this supporting role may be filled by a personal advisor or mentor – or someone else acting in the role of trusted adult.

There has been some impressive progress in promoting joined-up working, and in developing the skills of a range of personal advisers. But there are still a number of areas where more could be done, including strengthening the links between housing and other services; doing more work involving young people themselves in the recruitment and training of those who act as trusted adults, including considering ways to promote the use of peer mentors; gathering better evidence about what makes for effective mentoring; and looking at how far funding and target regimes support joined-up working.

In this area, there are a very large number of examples of good practice and many positive pointers for the future, in particular the proposals in the Youth Green Paper, *Youth Matters*, on targeted youth support teams.

The action points in this chapter focus on integrated and joined-up services for young people. It proposes better alignment of funding and targets, and lists ways in which we can build on the proposals contained in *Youth Matters*; with the acknowledgment that more action needs to be taken to explore mentoring relationships and the role of the trusted adult.

What young adults want from services

- 5.1 As we set out in Chapter 1, this report is part of a series of reports from the Social Exclusion Unit looking at how services might work better for the most disadvantaged people. This Chapter picks up many of the themes of the wider work programme, and in particular those identified in *Improving Services, Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes*,¹ which includes a broader survey of issues around joining-up, and of the skills and attitudes of those who provide services for the most disadvantaged.
- 5.2 *Breaking the Cycle* said that one of the current problems for disadvantaged people is that ‘services may not be accessible, may not be perceived as appropriate or may not meet clients’ complex needs,’² and this is particularly true for young adults making the transition to adulthood.
- 5.3 Many young adults with troubled lives find it difficult to engage with services. Some can feel that a service is not for them, or that the service is targeted at a specific group they do not identify with or want to identify with³. More often young adults may turn away from services due to previous bad experiences at school or with social services, and only make contact with services when they reach crisis point and have no choice. This was supported by our consultation finding that housing issues and homelessness are by far the most common reasons that the most disadvantaged young adults reach out to services.⁴ Young adults may also not know where to go for help, and lack the confidence to ask questions and seek advice and support.
- 5.4 The two most frequent points raised by young people, when asked in our focus groups about what their ideal service would be like, were the importance of a joined-up service; and the need for staff that understood them, respected them, and were prepared to listen.

Holistic services

“Why don’t you have one big building that has everything in one place?”

SEU focus group

- 5.5 The holistic service approach, sometimes referred to as joined-up or ‘multi-agency working’, is becoming increasingly common. The Office for Government Commerce defines joined-up working as collaborative working across organisational boundaries to tackle shared issues. They identified the main drivers and benefits as:
- the sharing of information and resources;
 - more customer-focused and person centred services;
 - improved co-ordination and integration of service delivery; and
 - the development of new and innovative approaches to service provision.⁵
- 5.6 As Chapter 2 shows, young people want services that communicate effectively – both externally and internally – especially when a member of staff leaves and a new one starts.

- 5.7 Young people were interested in the convenience of joined-up services (or the inconvenience of services that didn't join-up) and they raised a wide range of issues around getting information about services – including issues about how well services signposted to one another.
- 5.8 They were also very keen for services to see them as a person rather than a problem – which is why we have chosen the term 'holistic services' for this section. *Breaking the Cycle* highlighted the importance of a client and person-centred approach for addressing multiple and complex needs effectively,⁶ and it is clear that this fits with young adults' own views about what is most helpful:

“Something that is going to support you in work and housing but also like mentally to counsel you and help you – so it goes through everything.”

SEU focus group

- 5.9 Our consultation also gave us a very clear message that very few disadvantaged young people only have one 'issue' to deal with. One of the starkest findings from the first phase of the project was that 98 per cent of practitioners who responded to our consultation said that their clients had multiple problems.⁷
- 5.10 Holistic and joined-up services can also help to overcome access issues. As well as making information-sharing and onward referral easier, simple mechanisms like co-location can make it easier for young people to know where to go for help; and can also overcome the stigma associated with certain kinds of services. Services need to be accessible at convenient times and locations, as well as being culturally appropriate and free of stigma.⁸

Urban Exchange

Urban Exchange in Preston can offer advice and support – within one building – to 11 – 25-year-olds on a wide range of issues: for example, accommodation and housing, benefits, drugs, education and training, leaving care, sex and health, work and careers.

For example, one young woman came to see an information and advice worker for help around accommodation and feelings of hopelessness. Before she left the building she had been found emergency accommodation for the night and had been referred to the counselling service. The immediacy of the support is something that both young people and staff report finding particularly helpful.

Since the centre opened in April 2004 approximately 5000 young people have used the facility.

“A young person could be here to see their Connexions Advisor, find out about benefits or take a pregnancy test. They could be here for anything” – Staff Member.

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- 5.11 Other research also suggests that ‘services which have an open access policy often work well; and that policy makers should place greater importance on ‘one-stop’ services for young people in their early twenties which can deal with a range of common problems on site, while referring young adults on to more specialist services when required.’⁹
- 5.12 This move towards more client-centred services fits well as part of the Government’s wider drive to modernise public services, and make them more responsive to users. As we set out in chapter 3, involving young people themselves in service design – including taking their desire for more joined-up and holistic services seriously – will be important not only as part of this aspiration, but in order to develop services that are more attractive to young people, and which therefore work better.
- 5.13 *Breaking the Cycle* highlighted the need for increased devolution and delegation allowing service providers the flexibility to design and develop services to make them relevant to the local community.¹⁰ It is not possible to provide an effective service to tackle social exclusion and the complex needs of young adults without understanding both local and individual needs.
- 5.14 Locally designed services can make the best use of the resources and build on strengths in the area – each area will be different. In this, local leadership is key; the role of central government should not be prescriptive about the precise ways in which services should be joined-up, but to establish a framework and some underpinning principles, and to remove barriers that stand in the way of effectively joined-up services.

Trusted adults

“One of the qualities of the trusted adult is flexibility – a willingness to go the extra mile and be prepared to provide support on a very wide range of issues”

Project worker, Hexham

- 5.15 As well as the benefits of holistic services, the need for a trusted adult, mentor or guide was also highlighted during the course of this project. The role of the trusted adult has two principal elements:
- building and maintaining a trusting relationship; and
 - advising and encouraging young adults through small but significant steps towards positive outcomes.
- 5.16 The trusted adult could be a personal adviser, key worker, mentor or an independent visitor. Such individuals can ensure that there is continuity of support and promote trust between the young adult and a particular service. They can also develop relationships with local services to allow them to act as a broker, introducing them to a range of specialist provision relevant to their personal needs.

5.17 Young adults thought it was important that all the service providers they worked with treated them with respect, and listened to their views seriously; but they set particular store by having someone who really cared about them and their difficulties, and who was prepared to work with them consistently to address their needs.

5.18 Young adults in a series of focus groups held across England gave many examples of workers who they felt didn't have their interests at heart, or who weren't really interested:

"They are meant to help with getting back into work but they are not bothered about that."

5.19 They were also clear that a worker who didn't treat young people well probably wouldn't be very effective:

"If they don't listen you feel shit so you leave in a shit mood and you are more likely to go off and do something you shouldn't".

5.20 They were glowing, though, about workers and services who had shown willingness to 'go the extra mile':

"They'll come to you, you don't have to go to them, they're excellent they just seem to know you."

"They get back in contact with you, because each time I've moved they find out where you are even if you haven't told them, they give you a new worker in the same town, they write to you and get back to you and come and see you – I think that's good."

5.21 Consistency was very important for the young people in our focus groups. A particular issue raised in many of the groups was the difficulties that occurred when workers left or changed frequently:

"You might only have a few sessions with them then they are gone and a new one starts."

"And the handover never happens... then you have to tell them everything again."

"I've had seven different drugs workers in the year and you just have to start again at square one and explain everything."

5.22 Some also said that they felt they could not build too strong a relationship with their worker, in case they moved on. It is vital that services develop and use effective protocols for hand-overs when workers change; but also that they do not change workers lightly, and try as far as possible to avoid very rapid staff turnover.

5.23 Many services we spoke to offer young adults a trusted adult figure of some kind – a key-worker, personal adviser or mentor. Most combine a supportive and signposting role with some element of challenge for the young person.

Mancroft Advice Project (MAP)

The Mancroft Advice Project (MAP) in Norwich provides information, advice, counselling and support to young people aged 11- to 25-years-old. The Project is a member of Youth Access, the national membership organisation for young people's information, counselling, support and advice services.

Young people come to use the centre for a variety of reasons, to use the internet facilities, get information on housing or benefits, seek advice on employment or talk to someone about their problems.

Many young people using the project build strong relationships with the staff they trust and turn to. Staff see each person as an individual and provide appropriate support for them. Some young adults will be guided to other services and projects, and in some cases staff going with them for the first time. Some young adults will be encouraged to take new steps and meet new challenges with the support of someone at the centre. For others who are not yet ready to move forward, staff listen and offer support, giving them the opportunity to use the service as they feel comfortable.

“Some young people just need to be listened to and encouraged and for some they will need to be challenged and pushed. But sometimes having a successful project means engaging with people who are not going anywhere at first” – Staff Member.

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- 5.24 It is important that those acting as trusted adults are able to offer some element of challenge to young people, and to help them move on in their thinking. This can make the role of trusted adult very challenging; and it raises particular questions about how far it is important that trusted adults share the thinking and experiences of the young people with whom they work. Young people themselves are very keen for those who work with them to share their world-view to some extent; and particularly to have been through some of the same experiences they have been through:

“Because then they would know what we have been through – at the minute they don't know what we have been through. If they know what taking drugs feels like then they would be better.”

- 5.25 For this reason, many successful services use ex-service users to help others, often to great effect. Peer mentors – ‘near peers’ – are also used with increasing frequency, and can often help engage young people, and capitalise on the value that young people set on the opinions of their peers.
- 5.26 But it is also important that young adults are able to accept advice and support from people with whom they do not identify – otherwise there is a risk that their horizons are limited. There is also a risk that services that make very extensive use of ex-service-users unintentionally give service users a message that their best career option is to become a personal adviser or youth worker themselves – which may be positive, but may sometimes prevent them looking at a wider range of options. It is therefore important to strike a balance between trusted adults who share a young person's world-view, and those who can help them move on.

Neighbourhood Wardens

Neighbourhood Wardens provide a highly visible, uniformed, semi-official presence in residential and public areas, town centres and high-crime areas with the aim of reducing crime and fear of crime; deterring anti-social behaviour; fostering social inclusion; and caring for the environment.

Their overall purpose is to improve quality of life and contribute to the regeneration of an area. The wardens have a number of roles depending on local needs. Wardens often get to know the local young adults in their community and for some young people be seen as a source of support and guidance – acting as a trusted adult.

An evaluation of the Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme¹¹ shows that Wardens can play a pivotal role in young adults' lives and that the best wardens were already doing this. In particular it showed how some Wardens were providing diversionary schemes for young people to reduce anti-social behaviour. In building relationships with young adults in areas of deprivation Wardens are able to gain their trust and talk to them about a range of issues.

'By building relationships of trust with younger people, wardens are acting as positive role models in communities that have been stripped of institutional infrastructure and authority figures.'¹²

- 5.27 Clearly, it is important that trusted adults have a positive attitude and are able to convince young people that they are interested in them; that they are able to challenge effectively as well as to support; and that they can, as far as possible, give sustained support and build relationships with young people that allow them to make suggestions that others can't.

"Getting told by people you know and people you talk to – you are more responsive when it's someone you know."

SEU focus group

- 5.28 Voluntary and Community organisations are particularly effective in providing the environment and skills to engage young adults initially. The trusted adult in this context is in a strong position to broker and host more specialist services. During our consultation (at The Junction in Colchester, and Archway in Leeds, for example) we saw examples of Jobcentre Plus staff, counsellors, mental health workers and nurses using community projects as a place to work effectively with young adults.

“Having a mentor was good for me because he showed me he was actually listening and understanding me as a person, not just any old counsellor who would sit there and say nothing back. He seemed caring and I guess this made me feel comfortable.

“He asked questions and wanted to know what my hobbies were and showed me he had an interest in what I was about. He gave me advice and some guidance to open my mind to see things in different ways and helped me to be more organised with life. It was like having a friend I respected and that’s why I chose to listen and give him my time.

“He always tracked me down to find out if I was doing ok and arranged regular meetings with me twice a week this helped me to be confident.

“Having a one-to-one mentor has definitely helped me.”

Young adult seconded to the Social Exclusion Unit

- 5.29 Finally, some young people raised the issue of the number of different adults who are supporting them – saying that it could become confusing to have too many people trying to play the trusted adult role. Here again, balance is important – it is right that young people should have specialist support as well as signposting; and it helps to build resilience if a young person has more than one person on whom they can rely. But it is generally accepted that it is best if a young person can have a single nominated ‘lead professional’ who is responsible for making sure that things join-up around them, and helping to keep the service ‘landscape’ simple for the young person.

Specific policy areas of concern

- 5.30 The issues of holistic services and the trusted adult have been the focus of policy attention over recent years. The Connexions Service, in particular, was set up as a result of the Social Exclusion Unit’s *Bridging the Gap* report¹³ and aimed both to provide a more holistic, joined-up service and to offer young adults a trusted ‘personal adviser’. Young people, particularly at the Youth Summit organised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in January 2005, emphasised how positively they felt about most aspects of Connexions. The Youth Green Paper has proposed a new targeted Youth Support Service, which will build on the successes of Connexions, and go even further to integrate services for disadvantaged young people (more information is given about this below). Despite these positive developments, though, a number of specific areas of concern remain.

Making stronger links between housing and other services

- 5.31 Our consultation, focus groups, and desk research have all made it very clear that, for the most disadvantaged young people, housing issues are often critical, and are the trigger for young people who are very disengaged from the system to access services. Although the total proportion of young people who are homeless is relatively small, there are many estimates that a significantly larger number face housing issues of some kind – they may be in unstable housing, moving between friends and family, or they may be staying in the family home despite facing difficult issues there, because they feel they have little other choice. Many of the young adults who are most disadvantaged – who have particularly deep, complex needs – also face housing difficulties. And it is often through housing that they come to the attention of service providers.
- 5.32 In 2004-05, 10,560 young people aged 16 and 17 and care-leavers aged 18 to 20 were accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty – i.e. eligible for assistance with accommodation.¹⁴ Of the 10,560 accepted as homeless during 2004/05, 9,480 were 16- and 17-year-olds and 1,080 18- to 20-year-olds leaving care. Nearly one in ten households in 2004-05 were accepted as in priority need for accommodation because a member was a vulnerable young person.¹⁵
- 5.33 However, not all housing service providers are equally good at recognising and supporting multiple needs. Some organisations, like the Foyer Federation, explicitly recognise that most of their clients have many other issues alongside their housing need, and set out to address them – the Federation are proud of providing young people with places to live that are much more than a hostel. Many providers use Supporting People funding in creative ways to address the problems of their clients in a holistic way.
- 5.34 Increasingly, the emphasis on preventing homelessness is also making Local Authority housing departments focus on the issues that have caused a young person to become homeless – and they are offering (for example) more family mediation to try to help young people back into the parental home. Through Local Authority Homelessness Strategies, statutory and voluntary services are joining up to help prevent homelessness. But in many places, this help is limited to the problems that are directly impacting on the young person's housing situation; a young person presenting as homeless is rarely assessed holistically and few housing departments see it as part of their role to signpost young people onto other help they may need that does not seem to relate directly to their housing need.
- 5.35 This is a missed opportunity to help young people – and more holistic help might help to prevent them coming to crisis point in other areas of their life later. Of course, we cannot expect housing departments themselves to be expert at providing every kind of help and support a young person might need; but it should increasingly be seen as good practice for housing departments to have a protocol for referring people on to other types of help and support which they might need: if the support needed is not clear, or may require the involvement of more than one agency, an assessment using the CAF is likely to help.

- 5.36 The Homelessness Code of Guidance provides statutory guidance to local authorities on their duties under the homelessness legislation. The ODPM is revising the current version of the Code, which was published in July 2002, to reflect more recent changes to policy and legislation. The revised Code, which is due to be issued in December 2005 includes new chapters on preventing homelessness, providing support and working with others, all of which promote the role of joint working in providing effective and holistic solutions to addressing housing and other needs.
- 5.37 In particular, the revised Code stresses the importance of ensuring that children and young people are not to be sent to and fro between different authorities or between different departments within authorities. It also highlights the need for clear corporate policies and departmental procedures for collaborative working between housing and social services in order to provide an effective safety net for vulnerable young people who have experienced homelessness.

Action Point 20: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will issue a revised *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* to prevent homelessness amongst young people and highlight the importance of collaborative working between housing and other services.

- 5.38 A linked issue is the shortage of suitable 'move-on' accommodation for homeless young people.

Consultation

Respondents to our consultation said:

"There is a real need for services e.g. 16- to 17-year-olds having difficulty accessing accommodation" was raised by a Local Authority.

And a voluntary sector organisation said that what was needed was: *"More supported accommodation for hard to house young people,"* and again: *"More move-on accommodation,"* was raised as a need by a care charity.

A homelessness charity in their response went further: *"The waiting time for accessing hostel accommodation is increasing because of a lack of move-on accommodation, which is blocking bed spaces. Lack of move-on can cause young people to regress. Once a young person is ready to live independently and unable to do so they can lose those skills they have acquired and this can be very difficult to reverse."*

- 5.39 We have highlighted the issue of the Single Room Rent in Chapter 4 and have also pointed out the particular difficulties faced by young people in hostel accommodation, for whom Housing Benefit can sometimes act as a work disincentive. But there is also a straightforward issue in many parts of the country where there is not enough housing (and particularly cheap social or private rented housing) to go round. Young adults, especially those who are over 18, single and childless can be right at the bottom of priority lists for housing – which reflects sensible recognition of the needs of families and other vulnerable people, but leaves them with very few housing options.

- 5.40 Government is addressing problems of housing supply overall through the programmes for growth areas in the South-East, and as part of that work is committed to ensure that there is sufficient social and other affordable housing (including good value private rented accommodation).
- 5.41 Solving this problem is bound to be a long-term exercise (simply because it takes time to build housing). But there are also a number of issues which can be addressed earlier, including preventing homelessness in the first place and making sure that, where a young person is homeless, they can move quickly into appropriate accommodation and do not stay in hostel accommodation for longer than they need.
- 5.42 Hostels have played an important role in reducing the number of people sleeping rough, but there has been concern about the quality of some first stage hostels and the impact they have in moving single homeless people into independent living. Too many hostel residents have been leaving for negative reasons, such as being evicted or abandoning their places and returning to the streets or other temporary accommodation, while others have been staying in hostels longer than necessary because of the lack of accommodation for them to move on to.
- 5.43 In January 2005, the Deputy Prime Minister announced £90 million to improve the quality of hostels for homeless people in England. The Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) runs until 2007/08 and is funding almost 100 projects in 35 local authorities, many of which will benefit young people.¹⁶
- 5.44 Underlying the programme is the need to change the very nature of services in hostels so that they provide better opportunities for homeless people and prevent them from becoming homeless again. It is also important that there is a planned approach to move-on. The intention is that hostels will cease to be places of last resort, and instead become centres of excellence that positively change the lives of formerly homeless people.
- 5.45 ODPM is also working with the Home Office and the voluntary sector to develop a new approach to capacity building and infrastructure support for the homeless sector – Change Up. The aim is to strengthen the voluntary sector by improving leadership, information exchange and best practice, create regional and sub-regional support arrangements and develop practical support for smaller, harder to reach frontline agencies. As part of Change Up, ODPM has contracted Homeless Link to place a manager in each of the Government Offices to help cement partnership working between local authorities, central government and the voluntary sector. These managers will be specifically engaged with the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme and its aims.

Action Point 21: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will work through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme and the Change Up programme to make hostels places of positive change that benefit young people.

- 5.46 The aim should be clear pathways out of hostels to facilitate the transition into more permanent accommodation. Local authorities and hostels should identify together the needs of the hostel residents and the current routes out of that hostel. Where there are gaps the local authority should identify ways to fill those gaps (and therefore identify clear pathways out of the hostel) through Move on Plans (MOPs). The MOP will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is up-to-date.

- 5.47 The outcome of the MOPs should be a better movement through hostels, with residents staying only as long as they need the additional support, and not getting stuck because there is no suitable accommodation for them to move on to. It should also lead to a reduction of the use of inappropriate accommodation such as bed and breakfast for young people.

Action Point 22: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will support Homeless Link to develop and evaluate the concept of ‘Move on Plans’ (MOPs) into a workable prototype which facilitates partnerships between local authorities and voluntary sector hostel providers in agreed areas.

- 5.48 There are also issues around the accommodation that is seen as suitable for young adults. One particular issue is the need for accommodation for younger adults (and especially 16- and 17-year-olds) that comes with some support and help, both in sustaining their tenancy and in other areas of life. It is particularly unhelpful for 16- and 17-year-olds to be housed in bed and breakfast accommodation (which we now consider unsuitable for families with children up to this age). This is a particular issue for the most vulnerable young people. This type of accommodation should not be considered suitable for care leavers for anything but very occasional, short-term, emergency use.

Recruitment, training and skills of trusted adults, and evidence on effective mentoring

- 5.49 The second area where more work is needed is around the recruitment, training and skills of trusted adults; and particularly, more evidence on what makes for effective mentoring and support.
- 5.50 Here again, the developments in support of the children’s workforce outlined in *Every Child Matters*,¹⁷ and extended explicitly to cover those who work with young people in *Youth Matters*¹⁸ are positive and helpful. But we believe that these standards need to be extended to reach the upper range of the 16-25 age group; and that more could be done to involve young adults themselves in helping to develop the service standards and expectations for those that work with them. As we have shown above, young adults have very clear views about how service providers should treat them and respond to them; and they are able to acknowledge that they need challenge as well as support. We know that some Connexions Partnerships have involved young people in recruitment exercises; but we believe it is also important to involve them early on in the development of overall service standards.

Action Point 23: The Department for Education and Skills to consider what role a trusted adult might play in supporting young people, including beyond the ages of 19, taking account of the views of young adults themselves.

- 5.51 This might also include taking young people's views about the recruitment and composition of the workforces who work with young people. We have noted above that there is a need for a balance to be struck between workers who share young people's experiences and world-views, and those who can help to challenge and extend them.
- 5.52 Despite widespread support for mentoring and peer mentoring programmes, the evidence base for mentoring is very patchy and inconclusive. A report on mentoring by the Youth Justice Board¹⁹ concluded that although it was hard to establish overall evidence for the success of mentoring approaches, there were some schemes and some mentors that seemed to show more success than others. It will be important that as the proposed Targeted Youth Support Service²⁰ is developed, more work is done to explore the effectiveness of different kinds of mentoring approach, to try to isolate what makes a good mentoring programme, and what makes a good mentor.
- 5.53 Volunteer mentors also seem to add particular value when circumstances mean there is likely to be some tension between the young adult and a statutory worker – for example, a Social Worker or Probation Officer. A volunteer mentor who is perceived as neutral can help to re-engage disengaged young people with services and support.

Action Point 24: The Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office will undertake research to explore in more detail what makes for an effective mentoring relationship, both in terms of the characteristics and competencies of a mentor, and the roles and responsibilities they might be given to best complement the roles of statutory workers.

Data

- 5.54 One of the most commonly cited barriers to joined-up services is difficulty with data sharing. The Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Inclusion through Innovation*, published in November 2005, looks at this issue in more detail including safeguarding privacy or personal information. Our work has independently supported one of the main findings of that project – that most people are happy for information about them to be shared, and will give permission if asked, because they think the sharing of information will be helpful to them:

"That's good isn't it 'cos if probation spoke to housing they might be able to get you a place to live."

SEU focus group

- 5.55 Although there are sometimes technical issues around data sharing (for example, relating to the compatibility of ICT systems), there is some evidence that the biggest issues are cultural and arise from some service providers being very reluctant to share any data at all – perhaps because they are not clear enough about the provisions of the Data Protection Act. As part of our work to make sure that central government barriers don't stand in the way of joining-up, it may be helpful to issue further (and clearer) guidance on the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Funding, targets and incentives that support joined-up working

- 5.56 A further issue, which is explored more widely in *Improving Services, Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes*, is around the funding, targets and incentives that impact on how services are delivered to young people. Although a great deal of progress has been made by government in promoting and funding partnership work, it is still the case that partnerships are time consuming, complex and require a great deal of commitment in order to be effective.²¹ Funders need to recognise the process and time required to make a partnership operate effectively.
- 5.57 It is also not clear that targets and funding streams always come together to help support joined-up working. Here again, there have been some improvements. Local Area Agreements should make it easier for local authorities to pool budgets to support more joined-up services, for young people and others, as well as developing more shared targets to encourage services to work together.
- 5.58 At the national level though, and as shown in chapter 1, there are still a wide range of Public Service Agreement targets that relate to the problems faced and caused by young adults. These targets have different focuses, but there is a very large overlap in the groups of young people that affect their achievement. In particular, there is evidence to suggest²² that reducing the group of young people who are not in education, employment or training will also help to tackle teenage pregnancy, drug misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour. Linking these targets more explicitly – perhaps by brigading them into a single, overarching target with supporting indicators – would send a powerful message about the interconnection of these issues, and the importance of addressing them together. It might make it easier for agencies on the ground to pool their efforts in solving problems together – taking away the worry that if they divert any energy away from their own individual target they will suffer.

Action Point 25: Government to explore in more detail whether and how targets focused on disadvantaged young adults could be linked more explicitly – perhaps by brigading them into a single, overarching target with supporting indicators.

Good practice and pointers for the future

- 5.59 During the evidence-gathering phase of this report, we came across a number of promising examples of good practice in joining-up services. Because this is an area that has been examined often before, we have tried to set out here the approaches that are relatively new, or which go a little further than past work on joining-up.

5.60 *Meeting Complex Needs: The Future of Social Care*²³ sets out a vision for meeting complex needs in a holistic and community-centred way. In particular it sets out the vision of connected care, with Connected Care Centres in deprived areas. These centres not only present one way of addressing the complex needs of 16- to 25-year-olds (who make up over a quarter of the client group of the charity, Turning Point, with whom the Department of Health is working²⁴) – they also offer a way of bringing together support for the wider needs of the whole community, from cradle to grave.

Connected Care Centre Pilot, Hartlepool

Hartlepool PCT and Turning Point, together with local organizations, are currently piloting the Connected Care model. This model aims to provide managed transitions between services and be designed to fit the needs of the community.

One of the main features of a Connected Care Centre is a connected care audit undertaken by members of the community, together with professional researchers. This model builds capacity by enabling those within the community to gain experience of research and have the opportunity of working towards a qualification.

It is envisaged that each Connected Care Centre will have:

- a navigator for each client who will have an understanding of the local services, and be able to work with the services to provide a sustained and personalised pathway of care;
- co-location of a variety of NHS, social care and voluntary professionals;
- common assessment procedure;
- established procedures for sharing information;
- shared training;
- single point of entry;
- round-the-clock support;
- managed transitions; and
- continuing support.

This first Connected Care Centre is due to be launched in early 2006 with support from the Department of Health and the Social Exclusion Unit. It will be evaluated and a toolkit will be produced.

Contact: Ali Wilson, alison.wilson@hartlepoolpct.nhs.uk, 01429 285 079

5.61 We have also seen some good practice on building information systems that help services share information about young people effectively.

Essex County Council

Essex County Council take a forensic and strategic approach to the statistics they collect. The Social Services department use the information they collect on care leavers to keep a check on the number of care leavers 'out of touch' (the national average is 15% – Essex County Council's rate is 3%). The Housing Department use the data kept on care leavers to plan housing need. They build their data into housing planning and are able to share this information with partners to negotiate housing around the county.

Contact: Christopher Giles, christopher.giles@essexcc.gov.uk, 08457 430 430

- 5.62 The Social Exclusion Unit welcomes the work, as part of *Every Child Matters*, to develop a Common Assessment Framework and system for sharing information about children and young people, which will not only help service providers to identify and safeguard vulnerable children, but which should also make it easier for services to support young people in a holistic way. Of course, given the concerns about age boundaries set out in Chapter 3, we are keen to consider whether similar provision is needed for older young adults, or indeed for all vulnerable adults.
- 5.63 There are also certain groups of young adults, such as young fathers, who have not in the past had their needs taken into account, for example: contact with their child; appropriate housing to facilitate contact; and financial responsibilities to their child(ren). The key to raising awareness of these issues and getting young fathers' needs met is to ensure that when agencies assess young men and their needs the question of fatherhood is raised. This will ensure that this important aspect of a young man's life can be properly catered for, this could also be of benefit to their child.

Action Point 26: The Department for Education and Skills to review and amend guidance to be issued next year as part of the Common Assessment Framework to strengthen references to assessments of the needs of young fathers.

- 5.64 The Youth Offending Team model has been successful in tackling the multiple problems of young offenders through multi-agency working. And there are other specific projects working with young adults with complex problems in a holistic way. There are good examples where services are pulled together under one roof. Youth Access is a national membership organisation which provides a common framework for its members.

Youth Access

Youth Access is the national membership association for young people's information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS) across the UK.

YIACS provide a combination of services under one roof to young people, including counselling, advice, information, outreach and personal support (drop-in, befriending, informal support and sexual health). Many different projects belong to Youth Access but they all agree to abide by a set of core principles. Their strategy, *Breaking Down the Barriers*, funded by the Department of Health, identifies ten barriers and sets out an action plan in order to address some of these issues.

'Young people want quick and easy access to someone to talk to.'²⁵

Contact: Catherine Wilson, catherine@youthaccess.org.uk, 020 8772 9900

- 5.65 There are many different designs for services that are working in a holistic way. The Streetwise Community Law Centre is particularly innovative in providing legal advice, casework and personal support for young people.

Streetwise Community Law Centre - South-East London

Streetwise Community Law Centre is a specialist young person's law centre providing expert advice, case work and advocacy services to young people aged 13 – 25 who live, work or study in the London Boroughs of Bromley or Croydon.

The law centre is based in a youth centre that offers advice and information, Connexions Personal Advisers, an Education to Employment music training project and outreach drug counselling.

Advisers at the centre help young adults think through their options and the consequences of their actions. They provide support and advice to young adults. Streetwise is innovative and involve young adults in the decision making process. A young adult sits on the board of directors and takes part in all interview panels.

Contact: Roselle Potts, rosellepotts@youthaction.org.uk, 020 8767 4461

The Targeted Youth Support Service

- 5.66 *Youth Matters* proposed the development of targeted youth support teams,²⁶ which will build on the successes of Connexions but help to integrate services for the most disadvantaged young people even more. It is proposed that each young person has a named 'key worker' who leads and co-ordinates their support; and it takes a sensible approach to this, with flexibility about who acts as the key worker and a recognition that it will be important to have someone in this role that the young person knows and feels comfortable with, where possible.
- 5.67 We welcome this development, but think there is a risk that separate and distinct targeted support may raise issues of stigma and might make mainstream services less easily accessible to disadvantaged young people.

Action Point 27: The Department for Education and Skills, in developing its Youth Strategy, will work with the Social Exclusion Unit on the details of the proposed Youth Support Service, in particular helping to make sure that mainstream as well as targeted services are part of the joined-up offer for the most disadvantaged people; that targeted support isn't seen as stigmatising; and that young people (and young adults) are fully involved in the design of the service.

CHAPTER 6

Principles of service delivery for young adults in transition

Summary

In this Chapter, we have gathered together the things that we were told by service providers and by young adults themselves, along with the results of our own research, and put together a list of principles of service delivery for young adults in transition. They are intended to be set alongside (and not to replace) more general service principles like the *Every Child Matters* outcomes – but they add a particular focus on young adults in transition.

These are:

- **actively managing the transition from youth to adult services;**
- **taking thinking and behaviour into account, and building on it;**
- **involving young adults in designing and delivering services;**
- **giving effective information about services, and sharing information between services; and**
- **offering young people a trusted adult who can both challenge and support them.**

The intention is that this list of principles might be helpful for local authorities, voluntary and community sector providers, and individual services that support young adults in transition. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to act as a starting point for discussion or perhaps as a backbone on which individual services might build their own, more detailed and tailored, service principles.

- 6.1 The actions set out in this report have been agreed with central government departments, and are about changes to the national system. These are listed in the next Chapter.
- 6.2 But many of the comments made by young people and service providers were more about how individual services should work with young adults. Sometimes these things needed changes at the national level to help them happen; but sometimes they were down to individual, local service providers. We wanted to capture the things that providers and others had told us about what made services particularly effective for young adults in transition to adulthood. To do this, we have drawn up a list giving some principles of service delivery for work with young adults.

How we have developed our ‘principles of service delivery’

- 6.3 We have developed these suggested principles of service delivery by drawing together the themes from our report. We have used the responses to our consultation, the focus groups we held with young adults, the visits we made, the research we conducted, and the good practice examples we collected. Our aim was to put together a list of high-level principles for services that work with young adults in transition – because we recognised that many of the suggestions made to us, and much of the good practice that was highlighted, relied on local services as much as on central government action.
- 6.4 The key issues for effective service delivery to young adults are:
- actively managing the transition from youth to adult services;
 - taking thinking and behaviour into account, and building on it;
 - involving young adults in designing and delivering services;
 - giving effective information about services, and sharing information between services; and
 - offering young people a trusted adult who can both challenge and support them.

Suggested principles of service delivery for young adults in transition

Actively managing the transition from youth to adult services

- 6.5 Young adults with a range of problems will need help from a range of services. Much has been done to promote horizontal integration to address such issues: Youth Offending Teams, Drug and Alcohol Action Teams and the Connexions Service are all examples of recent developments to address the complex needs of young adults. And, as described in Chapter 5, good examples exist of one-stop-shops where young people can access a range of services all under one roof.
- 6.6 But less attention has been paid to the benefits of vertical integration from youth or adolescent services to adult services. This report has shown the problems associated with young adults moving out of adolescent services and into adult services.

“As soon as I got to 16 she said right you’ve got to go to adult services, which is totally different to the young people’s one, they treat you like you’re suddenly ten years older when you’re not.”

SEU Focus Group

- 6.7 This issue can be addressed in one of two ways: establishing good working relationships between the youth service and adult service or ‘holding on’ to those young adults who need more support until they can benefit from services for adults.

Fairbridge

Fairbridge, a personal development charity working with 13- to 25-year-olds, offers young people long-term support. While statutory agencies often have to move young people onto adult services, Fairbridge allots every young person a key worker who will be their primary source of support.

The key worker will have strong relationships with a variety of statutory agencies, and as such can act as a source of stability and an advocate for a young person’s needs during the often confusing and difficult transition between Connexions and Jobcentre Plus provision or CAMHS and Adult Mental Health services.

Half of the over-16s that Fairbridge has worked with over the last year have progressed onto education, training or employment.

Contact: Jennie Butterworth, JButterworth@Fairbridge.org.uk, 020 7902 1106

Taking thinking and behaviour into account, and building on it

- 6.8 People and organisations that make policies and run services aimed at disadvantaged young adults need to take their thinking and behaviour into account if they want the service to be effective.
- 6.9 Interventions that directly address thinking or attitudes are more often found in the voluntary and community sector than in statutory services; for example, schemes designed to encourage and measure progress in attitudes and behaviour (often called ‘soft skills’ or ‘distance travelled’).
- 6.10 For young people with complex needs, work to address thinking and behaviour directly is often a necessary first step on the road to harder outcomes, such as engagement with the education or labour markets.
- 6.11 Services working with young adults should also embody principles of respect and help to develop young people’s sense of responsibility. This means that, as well as expecting young people to show respect for the service and those who provide it, adults working with young people should treat them respectfully and model the behaviour that they would like to see in the young person: it is a two-way process.

Weston Spirit

Weston Spirit is a national youth organisation tackling issues of social exclusion in 13- to 25-year-olds through a range of activities and personal development programmes.

From intensive long-term membership programmes to short courses and mentoring schemes, Weston Spirit engages, supports and motivates young people to confront the consequences of their actions and take control of their own lives.

Each programme is designed to improve confidence and self-esteem, help young people gain essential life and social skills, and find ways to deal with their problems and enable them to go on to realise their full potential.

Contact: Paul Oginsky, paulo@westonspirit.org.uk, 0151 258 1066

Involving young adults in designing and delivering services

- 6.12 The *Every Child Matters* agenda recognises that participation by children and young people is crucial in determining the success of services aimed at this age range. The same is true for young adults. Young adults want to be involved in the design and operation of the services they use. A young person's participation and involvement in a service can result in increased confidence, personal development and better awareness of what the service can offer. It can also result in a more successful service.
- 6.13 Asking young people what works, what doesn't and what could work better, and involving them on an ongoing basis in the design, delivery and evaluation of services is key to the effective delivery of services. Seeing young adults not as passive recipients of services, but as 'co-producers', helps to ensure buy-in to the aims of the service and evidence suggests such an approach can also improve outcomes:

Archway

Young people who used Archway, an advice and support centre for young people in Leeds, explained how they had been involved in the recruitment of staff, through a young people's panel: "We basically get a vote on who we like and if they agree with the vote they employ that person" (Male, SEU Focus Group)

Every shortlisted applicant for a job at Archway is interviewed by a panel of young people, who devise their own series of questions with support and training from a member of staff. Archway staff take their feedback very seriously and on occasions have changed their minds about who to employ, based on the young people's assessment of the candidate. The Archway staff feel that this gives Archway members more of a stake in the centre, as well as increasing their confidence generally and also when the young people attend interviews themselves.

Contact: Sally Hoy, SallyH@archway-leeds.org.uk, 0113 383 3900

- 6.14 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are successful at reducing anti-social behaviour. One of the reasons for this is because the young people who are committing the anti-social behaviour are actually involved in the design of the Contract. In Islington, for the first six months of the Contract, fewer young people came to the attention of the police and housing officers for anti-social behaviour than in the previous six months – 62 per cent prior to the Contract and 43 per cent during the Contract.¹
- 6.15 Similarly, E15, a foyer in Stratford, London, found that house rules which were drawn up with extensive input from the young person were less likely to be breached than agreements imposed upon the young person.

Giving effective information about services, and sharing information between services

- 6.16 Services need to be accessible, responsive and available. Information about the existence of services is crucial.

“Yeah, because lots of people come here and don’t know anyone so how are they going to find out what’s out there?”

“It’s good if you know it’s there [a support service] but I didn’t know it was there until it was too late.”

SEU Focus Group

- 6.17 And the information needs to be easily understood. Young adults have said that they need to know their way around ‘the system’ to get the most out of services – this is often difficult.

“Jobcentre is the worst... They don’t help you at all, unless you know the system yourself you’re not going to get help.”

And on the issue of benefits:

“You end up in such a muddle about where all your money’s coming from.”

SEU Focus Group

- 6.18 As the development of the Common Assessment Framework recognises, it is important that information is shared, where consent is given, between organisations working with young adults.

Offering young people a trusted adult who can both challenge and support them

- 6.19 The benefits of a lead professional are set out in *Every Child Matters*. This recognises the role of the lead professional in ensuring that organisational involvement with the child or young person is rationalised, co-ordinated and communicated effectively.
- 6.20 *Youth Matters* recognises the importance of young people with complex needs having the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with one lead professional – the ‘trusted adult.’ This person could come from either the statutory or non-statutory sector and should have the authority to speak with professionals from a range of services.
- 6.21 But we feel that the role of the trusted adult needs to go further than acting as a co-ordinator of services and ‘a friendly ear’. It is important that those acting as trusted adults are able to offer some element of challenge to young people, and to help them move on in their thinking.
- 6.22 It is also important that young people are, as far as possible, given continuity in their support from ‘trusted adults’ and other workers. Services could draw up protocols that cover the efforts that will be made to prevent unnecessary changes of worker; and that also set out what will happen to make sure that when a change of worker is unavoidable, there is a smooth and full hand-over.

How these principles might be used

- 6.23 We did not want to lose the good insights and suggestions that were made during the course of our project about what made individual services work best for young adults. But we recognise that it is important for individual services and service providers to consider whether these principles are helpful, and whether they apply to the service they are running. So we do not want to prescribe how the principles should be used. However, we think they might be helpful:
- for local authorities, as they consider what provision is made in their local area for older young people, and perhaps as they commission services;
 - as a tool for individual services to use, to consider whether their service already incorporates these principles, or whether, as part of their continuous improvement, any of the principles might need to be incorporated or strengthened; and
 - as a starting point for local authorities or service providers to develop their own tailored set of principles, adapting and improving these to suit their own local circumstances or specific client group.

How to comment on these principles, and on this report as a whole

6.24 We are sure that many people who provide services for young adults will have more ideas about how these principles could be improved or developed. We also welcome your comments on our report as a whole.

6.25 If you have comments you would like to offer, please write to:

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Or email youngadults@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

A summary of this report is available in easy read and on audio cassette.

For details, visit www.socialexclusion.gov.uk or email youngadults@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

CHAPTER 7

Action points

- 7.1 This report has set out the Government's strategy for helping young adults with complex needs make the transition to adulthood. The analysis outlined in this report represents an important advance in our understanding of the needs young people have in making their transition to adulthood and how services can work better to make that transition smoother.
- 7.2 It is clear that the way to deal with the problems that we have identified is to build on the enormous amount of good work which is already going on, and the following list of actions will do just that.
- 7.3 The actions and analysis identified within this report are for government departments to take forward but the Implementation Team within the Social Exclusion Unit retains a role after publication in supporting the action plan in this report by:
- monitoring the progress made by other government departments on individual action points; and
 - ensuring that the overarching goals contained within the report are pursued across government.
- 7.4 The team will continue to work alongside delivery departments to ensure that a focus on smooth transitions between youth and adult services is maintained as new policy develops.
- 7.5 The Implementation Team is already working closely with the Department for Education and Skills in making sure that implementation of *Youth Matters* takes account of the wider group of young people with additional needs who are over 19.
- 7.6 As part of the implementation process, Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, will chair an ad-hoc ministerial group with representation from the key departments to ensure that work to achieve the agreed action points is pursued across government. In addition, progress will be overseen by Ministers on the Domestic Affairs (Communities) Cabinet Committee, who have agreed the report and its action plan.
- 7.7 The table below lists the action points that will be taken forward by Government in response to this report. These can be sub-divided into three goals to improve the outcomes for young adults with complex needs:
- pragmatic changes to policy and guidance to develop and challenge the thinking and behaviour of young adults;
 - smoother – and therefore more effective – transitions between different services; and
 - developing the role of the trusted adult and promoting the benefits of holistic services.

Actions Points	Government Department taking the lead	By when
Chapter 3: The thinking and behaviour of young adults		
<p>Action Point 1: The Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council will review the impact of funding and accreditation for learning (below level 2) aimed at those who are taking their first steps towards training or employment. The aim is to make sure that there are a wide variety of high-quality courses and programmes available which meet the different needs of a wide range of young people, including the most disengaged and disadvantaged.</p>	The Department for Education and Skills/The Learning and Skills Council	Foundation Learning tier provision will be trialled in autumn 2006.
<p>Action Point 2: Jobcentre Plus will consider the evaluation of the Learning Agreement pilots and any wider implications.</p>	The Department for Work and Pensions/ Jobcentre Plus	The Pilots run from April 2006 to March 2008. Implications of the pilots in relation to Jobcentre Plus will follow.
<p>Action Point 3: The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office will work with the Youth Justice Board and other relevant agencies to increase further take-up of Individual Support Orders for young people with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders as part of the wider Respect campaign.</p>	The Home Office/ Youth Justice Board	Ongoing.
<p>Action Point 4: The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office will monitor the duration of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders applied to young adults and promote the ability to review Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and vary or discharge them as appropriate.</p>	The Home Office	Anti-Social Behaviour Unit to monitor and review Anti-Social Behaviour Orders quarterly.
<p>Action Point 5: Dependant on the take up and effectiveness of the Intervention Order, the Home Office and other government departments will consider widening their use to non-drug related Anti-Social Behaviour.</p>	The Home Office	The Intervention Order will come into effect in April 2006. Following evaluation of take-up, consideration will be given to widening their use in mid-2007.
<p>Action Point 6: The Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health to consider whether existing psychological and counselling services could be helped to offer more comprehensive, consistent and reliable coverage, perhaps by including counselling in the offer to be made to young people through targeted youth support teams.</p>	The Department for Education and Skills/ The Department of Health	Ongoing.
<p>Action Point 7: The Government (in particular, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions) to take the opportunity of the proposed use of distance travelled ' measurement in the Activity Agreement pilots to assess how useful it is as a measure and whether it has potential for application elsewhere.</p>	The Department for Education and Skills/ The Department for Work and Pensions	Pilots run from April 2006 to March 2008. Consideration of evaluation will follow.

Actions Points	Government Department taking the lead	By when
Chapter 4: Age boundaries		
Action Point 8: The National Offender Management Service and the Youth Justice Board to promote the benefits of protocols between Youth Offending Teams and local probation services to manage 18-year-old offenders and the arrangements for transfer of responsibility from the YOT effectively.	The Home Office	January 2006.
Action Point 9: The National Offender Management Service will lead on work to link ASSET and OASys to enable two-way sharing of data. This will provide practitioners with valuable information regarding juvenile offenders moving into the adult system.	The Home Office	Interim report available by end December 2005.
Action Point 10: The National Offender Management Service to lead a project on the provision of services required for young adult offenders in custody and the community. The Social Exclusion Unit will be represented on the Reference Group brought together to oversee the work of the project.	The Home Office/The Social Exclusion Unit	September 2006.
Action Point 11: The Department of Health will monitor the progress on the development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 16- and 17-year-olds and ensure that progress is being made.	The Department of Health	Ongoing.
Action Point 12: The Department for Work and Pensions to take forward the recommendations of the Housing Benefit and Further Education review.	The Department for Work and Pensions	Action is continuing but is subject to agreement with other government departments.
Action Point 13: In developing the extended project proposed in the 14-19 White Paper, the Government will ask the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to explore how this project could be designed to meet the needs of young adults with complex needs. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● allowing for the project to be taken at non-advanced levels where young people would clearly benefit from flexibility in demonstrating attainment; ● allowing for young people with complex needs to complete the project after they have passed 19; and ● providing secure online storage facilities for young people to store work. 	The Department for Education and Skills	March 2006.
Action Point 14: In developing the new Local Housing Allowance, the Department for Work and Pensions will review the shared accommodation rules to ensure that they allow vulnerable young people under 25 to access appropriate accommodation.	The Department for Work and Pensions	Continuing to review – any changes will follow the national roll-out of the Local Housing Allowance.
Action Point 15: The Department for Work and Pensions will explore the position with regard to payments to former foster carers who continue to care for a young person after the age of 18 and consider any issues arising.	The Department for Work and Pensions/ The Treasury	The Department for Work and Pensions will initially explore what is possible under the current system.

Actions Points	Government Department taking the lead	By when
Action Point 16: The National Treatment Agency's essential guidance for local practitioners will ensure that treatment for drug misuse is dependent on need, not age.	National Treatment Agency	Ongoing.
Action Point 17: The Department for Education and Skills will review the Common Assessment Framework guidance to be issued in 2006, to ensure that there will be an assessment of older teenagers' readiness to make the transition to adult services, and that plans are made to address any issues identified.	The Department for Education and Skills	End March 2006.
Action Point 18: In developing its Youth Strategy, the Department for Education and Skills will consider how the proposed targeted youth support service can respond effectively to the needs of young people, rather than being bound by their age.	The Department for Education and Skills	The Government will respond to the public consultation on the Youth Green Paper in the New Year.
Action Point 19: The Department for Education and Skills and the Social Exclusion Unit will work together to help ensure that those working with vulnerable young people are supported and funded to help their clients make a successful transition to adulthood, and in particular, to make sure that the creation of Children's Trusts does not create a new and unhelpful discontinuity in the system between children's and adult services.	The Department for Education and Skills	April 2006.
Chapter 5: Holistic services and the 'trusted adult'		
Action Point 20: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will issue a revised <i>Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities</i> to prevent homelessness amongst young people and highlight the importance of collaborative working between housing and other services.	The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Revise Code by the end of 2005 and re-issue to Local Authorities.
Action Point 21: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will work through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme and the Change Up programme to make hostels places of positive change that benefit young people.	The Office of The Deputy Prime Minister	End March 2008.
Action Point 22: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will support Homeless Link to develop and evaluate the concept of 'Move on Plans' (MOPs) into a workable prototype which facilitates partnership between local authorities and voluntary sector hostel providers in agreed areas.	The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	April 2007.
Action Point 23: The Department for Education and Skills to consider what role a trusted adult might play in supporting young people, including beyond the ages of 19, taking account of the views of young adults themselves.	The Department for Education and Skills	March 2006.
Action Point 24: The Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office will undertake research to explore in more detail what makes for an effective mentoring relationship, both in terms of the characteristics and competencies of a mentor, and the roles and responsibilities they might be given to best complement the roles of statutory workers.	The Department for Education and Skills/ The Home Office	Ongoing.

Actions Points	Government Department taking the lead	By when
<p>Action Point 25: Government to explore in more detail whether and how targets focused on disadvantaged young adults could be linked more explicitly – perhaps by brigading them into a single, overarching target with supporting indicators.</p>	<p>The Social Exclusion Unit</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Action Point 26: The Department for Education and Skills to review and amend guidance to be issued next year as part of the Common Assessment Framework to strengthen references to assessments of the needs of young fathers.</p>	<p>The Department for Education and Skills</p>	<p>End March 2006.</p>
<p>Action Point 27: The Department for Education and Skills, in developing its Youth Strategy, will work with the Social Exclusion Unit on the details of the proposed Youth Support Service, in particular helping to make sure that mainstream as well as targeted services are part of the joined-up offer for the most disadvantaged people; that targeted support isn't seen as stigmatising; and that young people (and young adults) are fully involved in the design of the service.</p>	<p>The Department for Education and Skills</p>	<p>The Government will respond to the public consultation on the Youth Green Paper in the New Year.</p>

ANNEX A

Acknowledgments

The SEU visited a number of projects across England and Scotland and spoke to representatives of key organisations. We are very grateful to the following for their help with the project.

A National Voice	First Stop
Alcohol Concern	Foyer Federation
Archway, Leeds	Foyer E15, London
Audit Commission	Foyer Live Project
Barnardos	Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale (GALYIC)
Barrow Cadbury Trust	Gingerbread, London
Basic Skills Agency	Hartlepool Primary Care Trust
Blacon Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder	Home and Away project, London
Bodypower project, Southwark	Homeless Link
Catholic Children's Society	Hull Homeless and Rootless Project
Centrepoint	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Centrepoint – Vauxhall Cross	Kingsdale School, London
Charles Edward Brook School	Lambeth College
Colchester Mind	Lambeth Local Education Authority
Connection at St Martins	Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
Connexions, Edgware (London)	LSC Coventry
Connexions, Essex	LSC West Midlands
Connexions, West Yorkshire	Links, Hexham
Contact a Family	Mancroft Advice Project (MAP), Norwich
Crisis	Marsha Phoenix Trust, London
Depaul Trust	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
Devon Children's Trust Exeter	Motivational Systems
Dorset ADHD support group	National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)
Endeavour Training	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO)
Essex County Council	National Children's Bureau
Fairbridge	National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Fairbridge – Bristol	

National Development Team
National Family and Parenting Institute
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
National Leaving Care Advisory Service at Rainer
National Youth Agency
NCH (formerly National Children's Home)
New Horizons
New Horizon Youth Centre, London
New Start Training
Newham New Deal for Communities
One Parent Families, London
Oxford City Council
Peasholme Centre, York
Phoenix House, London
Plaistow/West Ham – NDC
Positive Futures – Arsenal/Islington
Positive Futures – Coventry
Positive Futures – Gascoigne/Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme
Positive Futures – Kickstart /Southwark
Positive Futures – SAFE – Sport and Further Education/Wandsworth
QA Research
Rathbone Training
Real Base Training, Camborne
Resource Information Service (RIS)
RPS Rainer
The Russell Commission
Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health
Samaritans
Save the Children Fund
Second Chance School, Leeds
Shelter, Liverpool
Single Homeless Accommodation Project (SHAP)
Sorted – Youth Transitions Project, Stockport
Southwark College
Southwark Education Business Alliance
Southwark Financial Inclusion Programme
Southwark Guarantee Pathfinder
Speakout
St Mungo's
Stockwell Park School, London
Streetwise Community Law Centre, London
Sure Start Plus Hackney and City, London
Tackling Skills Foyer Federation
The Children's Commissioner
The Fostering Network
The Junction, Colchester
The Market Place, Leeds
The Prince's Trust
The Prince's Trust Football Initiative
The Prince's Trust Live Programme, London
The Prince's Trust Team Programme – Jarrow – Leicester
The Roundhouse, London
The Smart Company
Thomas Coram Research Unit
Turning Point
University of Teesside
University of York
Urban Exchange, Preston
West Euston One Stop Shop, London
Weston Spirit, Liverpool
Whitechapel Centre, Liverpool
Work Based Learning Alliance, London
YMCA
YMCA – Hove

YMCA – Stoke

YMCA – West London

YOI – Hindley Young Offenders Institution

YOI – Huntercombe Young Offenders
Institution

Young Minds

Youth Access

Youth Enquiry Service, Perthshire and Kinross

Youth Voice

We are particularly grateful to the following people who have all worked closely with the SEU team on this project: Fekadu Debaba, Amy Doyle, Peter Lister (from The Prince's Trust), Reena Nandkishore and Omar Villalba. We would also like to express our thanks to all the young people who participated in the focus groups which informed this project and all those who responded to our on-line questionnaire.

End notes

Chapter 1

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- 2 Many people within these groups, of course, do not have poor life chances

Chapter 2

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Chapter 6

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Improving Services, Improving Lives

The Social Exclusion Unit's work programme, *Improving Services Improving Lives*, consists of five integrated projects that focus on a number of key groups and issues. **Its overall objective is to make public services more effective for disadvantaged people, in order to improve their life chances.**

The starting point for the programme was *Breaking the Cycle (2004)* – ISBN: 1 85112 724 0, a report by the Social Exclusion Unit which took stock of the Government's progress in tackling social exclusion and highlighted priorities for the future. *Improving Services, Improving Lives* is part of the Government's overall strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion, which has already delivered progress on many fronts. This report has a particular focus on the way in which public services are delivered.

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