Transforming Lives
Re-engaging young people through community-based projects

GOOD
PRACTICE

NSF
Acknowledgments/Contents

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Chapter 1: CONTEXTS AND AIMS

The Neighbourhood Support Fund

The young people
For young people to succeed educationally, the rest of their lives needs to be in reasonable order. The hard evidence on this, presented in the 1999 Social Exclusion Unit report Bridging the Gap, is vividly brought to life by our own three ‘before-and-after’ case studies (see pages 3, 24 and 44). Disillusion with schooling, poverty, insecure housing, poor physical and mental health, personal and family stresses - all militate against such success. In both style and content, the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) has taken, as its essential starting point for re-engaging young people in further learning and employment, this need to respond to them ‘in the round’.

Policy and organisational contexts
NSF was launched in September 1999 as a £60 million, three year pilot funded by the Department for Education and Skills. A key component of the Government’s strategy for 13-19 year olds, its origins lay in a 1999 Social Exclusion Unit report, Bridging the Gap. This identified 9% of 16-18 year olds not at any one time in education, employment or training (NEET) and often struggling with complex personal and social problems. An explicit aim of the NSF programme was to develop an innovative approach to re-engaging these young people, through local voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups.

The programme was managed by three Managing Agents (MA): The National Youth Agency (NYA), the Community Development Foundation (CDF) in partnership with the Community Education Development Centre (now ContinYou) and the Learning Alliance (LA) - a partnership of four national organisations. Direct support to projects was provided by teams of advisors, with CDF and the LA also working through ‘intermediate organisations’ - regional or local bodies or branches of national agencies. Phase 1 of the programme generated 650 projects in 40 of England’s most deprived areas. A second three year, £10 million phase, which started in October 2003, allowed 220 projects to sustain their work in Phase 2.

The impact of the programme
- Over its three years, NSF Phase 1 exceeded its yearly target of 15,000, by working with over 50,000 13-19 year old young people. 67% were male and 30% black, Asian, Chinese or ‘other than white’.

Of those involved, 25% had been excluded from school and 16% long term non-attenders. 55% had low levels of educational attainment and 13% special educational needs. 25% were identified as young offenders or at risk of offending. The programme also engaged young people with drug and alcohol and mental health problems, teenage parents, young carers, looked after, homeless young people, refugees and asylum seekers.

68% moved on to further learning or employment - a significant contribution to the Connexions target of reducing ‘NEET’ numbers by 10%.

Participants said they found project activities interesting (98%); workers treated them with respect (98%). They had been encouraged to do things for themselves (95%), learnt new skills (61%) and been helped in their education (two-thirds).

Participants consistently reported gains in 'soft' skills - for example, in confidence, getting on with others, controlling anger and taking responsibility for their behaviour. These were recognised, as indicators of the ‘distance travelled’, by young people from their personal starting points while on the programme.

One small survey revealed that, over an 8 month period, over 90% (389) of former participants sustained participation in education, training or employment.

Core principles underpinning the good practice

Underpinning the NSF practice was a ‘community-based approach’, aimed at tapping into young people’s shared loyalties and identities. ‘Community’ here thus refers to communities of interest, (for example as young parents or young carers), as well as those defined by geographical area.

Other core principles, on which the best practice rested, included commitments to:

- ensuring flexibility in overall programme’s design and delivery and responsiveness to how local community organisations operate
- providing support from within the young people’s own neighbourhood
- listening to and respecting what young people say and striving to keep their experiences and definitions of needs at the heart of what was done
- negotiating clear ground rules with them - for their and the adults’ behaviour
- developing structured, individually tailor-made programmes based on their interests, concerns and requirements, using a range of methods and settings
- developing informal styles of work and of adult-young person relationships
→ making available to young people a wide range of expertise and opportunities, through partnerships with other organisations and services

→ involving young people in deciding on project design and implementation

→ monitoring their progress against ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ criteria and offering a wide range of incentives, rewards and awards recognising their achievements

→ providing staff, at all levels, with support, information, advice and training

→ thoroughly evaluating practice and applying lessons from evaluation findings.

The Guide
Based on an analysis of Phase 1 materials (see Appendix 1), this guide highlights the key elements of the good practice needed to generate positive outcomes. Wherever possible, we have encouraged key stakeholders (especially young people) to speak for themselves, through quotations and brief case studies. We have also sought to present the material in ways consistent with a document, which is meant to be used as a training and management tool, rather than simply read.

In highlighting good practice, we recognise that not every project reached all of these high points all the time. Each faced challenges and setbacks along the way, which were tackled with hard work and resilience. What is presented here is a synthesis, intended to capture the very best of what worked, why and how, together with some of the key ‘learning points’ stemming from these struggles. Throughout, the Guide seeks to illustrate these messages in relation both to those who worked directly with young people and also to operational and strategic managers. The intended audiences are therefore:

→ Face-to-face practitioners

→ Line managers needing to understand, support and promote good practice

→ Middle managers responsible for partnership working and infrastructure support

→ Senior managers/policy makers
Case study 1

Starting points

Terry was on a supervision order when he was referred to the project by a YOT worker. Initially, he was very negative about the project and on occasion became quite vocal about this. **He hadn’t attended school for about two years** and was considered at risk of offending on a more serious level.

He had difficulty forming relationships with teachers and other young people and had spent some time in a children’s home due to his behavioural problems. His very poor level of basic skills made him quite defensive. As a result, he would reject any help offered to him, as he did not know how to handle it and was extremely embarrassed about his lack of skills.

Moving on

With one to one support and in a non-confrontational environment, **Terry gained confidence in the staff and his own abilities.** He often attended earlier than required and became active in discussions and activities. He eventually agreed to return to the school which had originally excluded him, on a part-time basis, so he could complete some of his exams.

**He maintained excellent attendance at the project** and went on attending after his supervision order ended, returning even after missing sessions because of hospital appointments. He continued to make good progress, with the aim of progressing from school onto to an E2E programme. **He was also put forward for an Achiever of the Month for the NSF project.**
CHAPTER 2: ENGAGING AND SUSTAINING YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT

2.1: The NSF Model - how was it distinctive?

Evaluation findings
- 91% of intermediate organisations said the NSF programme had prompted innovative ways of working with young people.
- Over two thirds of project managers saw NSF funding as adequate.

Senior policy maker
The NSF programme was intended to challenge the mainstream to come up with something innovative.

Practice that worked: by realising local VCS groups’ potential.
- The programme endorsed and worked with and through the young person and community-centred values and principles of VCS organisations.
- Local VCS groups could take on NSF projects because of its flexibility - for example, funding was guaranteed for three years, paid quarterly in advance.

Projects felt able to take risks in using innovative approaches because:
- recruitment targets allowed for work with young people at risk of ‘disengaging’ as well as those who were actually ‘NEET’
- project monitoring generated vital ‘hard’ data - for example, on progression into further learning and employment
- ‘soft’ outcomes were also given high priority - particularly ‘distance travelled’ by participants, as expressed in improved confidence, social skill, team working and anger management
- monitoring systems were made as straightforward as possible.

Young person
This is a cool setting. You can come here and just be yourself. You get to work at your own pace and there’s no-one at your back like there would be at school.

Partner (school)
It is a flexible structure led by young people.
Project staff

- Cash up front to get establishment of project correct to start with. This is critical.
- As a funding stream, NSF has been a breath of fresh air. Its flexibility and awareness of practical on-the-ground issues affecting delivery have made things possible, that otherwise could not have been achieved.
- The minimum but effective paperwork and admin allows one to concentrate on delivery. We’ve been able to develop our own outputs & not develop the project to fit preconceived ideas.

Learning point

- The processes needed to recruit ‘hard-to-reach’ young people were complex & labour-intensive. Projects, therefore, needed time to get work on the ground, up and running.

2.2: Setting the aims; evaluating the impacts

Evaluation finding:

- Organisations found the aims of the NSF programme very or fairly clearly laid out - 100% in one evaluation study.

Practice that worked: to ensure that the NSF programme was soundly based and appropriately focused.

- Research into the situation of ‘NEET’ young people and what blocked their re-engagement, prompted a search for alternative approaches and hence the development of the NSF programme.
- Some projects carried out their own research to establish the young people’s specific needs in their own communities.
- Throughout its life, the programme was rigorously evaluated for both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ outcomes. Findings were continuously fed back to project managers and workers.

Managing agent

- Background research is important in establishing a project which meets the needs of the target group and makes it attractive to them.
- Research done locally, included identifying those young people at particular disadvantage and mapping existing provision for them, in order to identify gaps in local services.
Project
NSF certainly has a down to earth focus on the issues surrounding young people and the social and political circumstances affecting them.

Case study
Research done by the local health authority in Newham resulted in an NSF project in the Borough, for young Asian women at risk of self-harm. Its activities provided support & advice as well as culturally-appropriate activities & development opportunities, to encourage them to continue their education, participate in the wider community & experience activities which might otherwise be closed to them.

Learning point
Projects needed to find ways of targeting young people’s priority needs, without stereotyping them and so contributing further to their sense of being different and excluded.

Worker
I do not feel it’s appropriate to label young people ‘status zero’ or ‘potential teenage parent’.

2.3: Working and learning close to home

Evaluation findings:
→ 80% of participants lived within 20 minutes of the NSF project they attended.
→ 61% of participants had friends involved in the project they joined.
→ Strong positive relationships existed between projects’ use of volunteers and the successful recruitment and progression of young people.

Practice that worked: by being located in local community organisations and so overcoming young people’s lack of money to travel outside their own area, fears of the unknown and of meeting discrimination or harassment.
→ Young people lived close to where projects were based. This meant:
  → they had one less risky first step to take when joining a project
  → projects were more likely to have a constant and familiar presence in their lives and their neighbourhood
  → The local community base helped projects recruit and train local people. Many were seen by young people as supportive because;
    → they had a first-hand knowledge of the area
    → they had a personal stake in what went on in the community
    → as locals they could challenge negative local stereo-types of young people - for example, that only ‘bad kids’ get rewards
they could be more credible in advocating for them

they shared their local problems (crime, drugs, poor environment)

many shared their cultural identity, including their first language

The local base opened up opportunities for young people to work across the generations and within and for their community.

**Project staff**

- I live here. I’m here whether there’s anybody here or not.
- We are mothers on the estate and we’ve been through it with our children. We know the kids and we are passionate about the work.
- The ‘bottom up’ approach (is) enabling communities to help themselves
- We’re trying to get people to think differently about the young people.

**Project user - member of peer support group**

The project will definitely improve the area. There are lots of teenagers. That have no access to facilities. They’ll feel confident talking to us...

**Partners**

**Youth Service:** It’s alright for a professional to say your child’s got a problem, but if your next door neighbour, or your next door neighbour but three is going to say the community’s got problems with your child, it’s far more effective.

**Youth Offending Team:** There’s a far bigger network that supports this young man, than ever I could have had access to, if I didn’t know he was attending the NSF Project.
Case studies

Breaking stereotypes
Children as young as five, in the Whinney Banks area of Middlesbrough, were setting fires. When the CALM Project gave young people a chance to meet with fire-fighters from their local fire brigade & to use their equipment, stereotypes on both sides were dispelled - of the firefighters as ‘fire bobbies’ & of the young people as ‘fire-starters’.

Recapturing a community’s past
The young people with SHARP, Tyne & Wear, transformed one wall of the Project premises into an artistic representation of the cultural heritage of the local community. To bring in the history of the whole community, older residents, ex-miners and others shared their stories.

Group member’s poem
This piece of work that you can see, Is a tribute to our community.
We may be young but we have our say, About the things that have gone astray.
We researched memories of time gone by, And asked ourselves the reason WHY
There is no difference that we can see, There is even a similarity.
Remembering how, remembering WHEN, The differences between now and then,

No work, no jobs, no coal, just dole, A full working week is still the goal.
The pit is closed, the mine has gone, But the hard times still live on.
So let us all stand together and not apart, And take our community into our HEART!

Learning points
➔ Young people’s strong ties to their home area could be limiting and disempowering. Therefore:
➔ Project programmes needed to build in opportunities for young people to experience a wider world – through visits, residentials & exchanges (some cross-national as well as within the UK).
➔ When they needed to move onto learning or employment outside it, the young people often needed special preparation and support.
➔ Where organisations hosting projects had a specialist focus, they had to take special promotional steps to make their community-based approach clear to partners and others.
2.4: Attracting young people onto projects

**Evaluation findings**

- In the early stages, 31% of young people heard about a project through a project worker; 26% through a friend.
- Schools later became the main source of recruitment, referring 19% of participants.
- Projects recruited offenders or those at risk of offending (24% of all participants), SEN young people (14%), drug users and teenage parents (each 7%), homeless young people (5%), looked-after young people, those with mental health problems, young carers and refugees/asylum seekers (each 4%), and young disabled people (2%).

**Practice that worked:** aimed at contacting and engaging young people with a range of educational and personal needs and challenges in their lives.

- Projects used detached, drop-in and outreach approaches.
- Their style of work and the programmes they offered enabled projects to present themselves as attractive local facilities filling gaps in the lives of young people with little money and little to do.

**Projects used peer contacts and influence to recruit young people.**

**Projects worked through young people’s local ‘word-of-mouth’ and family and friendship networks to encourage others to join.**

**Project worker**

I wasn’t sure how to find the ‘disaffected youth’, but they found me!

**Workers used their local community knowledge or a shared cultural background as a basis for contacting young people.**

**Project worker**

Young people see me everywhere - they have a chance to get involved in school but if they don’t want to do that they can find me out and about in the community. It’s easier for those who feel disaffected to come along - they can come with their mates.

**Young people**

The area has nothing. They have things if you have twenty pounds, or the bus fare.

I was watching TV. I didn’t have friends & nothing to read. Now I meet good friends in the street.

**Projects increasingly devised active ‘marketing strategies’ based on their growing local reputation. They used promotional materials, open days, award presentation days, outreach visits to partner agencies and other personal contact to attract referrals.**
Projects responded to specific, identified local needs - for example, those of young parents and young offenders - and of key partners such as schools, Connexions and health promotion agencies.

Projects developed culturally sensitive arrangements to make projects accessible to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Learning points
- Projects extended by word-of-mouth and detached work approaches, by working with partners to target ‘hidden’ young people - asylum seekers, BME young women, young parents, young carers.
- Projects set ‘solid boundaries’ for referral routes to guide partner agencies in making appropriate referrals. They also sought to establish protocols for sharing information on young people.
- Projects which counter-attracted young people from school were proactive in agreeing with heads & teachers how best to respond - including how the young person could participate in the project.

Young Asian woman
Our parents don’t like us going out. So with the group they know we come here between 4 & 7 on Tuesday & we get dropped off at the door & we are not going anywhere else.

Case studies
Rathbone project Oldham
As it often took time for a young person to engage, project staff realised, requiring regular attendance could be off-putting at first. Drop-in sessions meant that participants could not be ‘late’ and so wouldn’t have a sense of failure from the start. Structure was added as they were ready for it.

NACRO project Gateshead
The project’s sports activities were used to attract young asylum seekers & refugees. Racism was addressed through games and training, to break down racial barriers.

2.5: The role and skills of project workers

Evaluation findings
- 99% of participants saw project staff as friendly and approachable.
- 99% saw project staff as treating them with respect.
- 98% said workers listened to them and treated them with respect.
- Young people in 25% of the projects rated workers’ attitudes towards them as the most important measure of its success.
Practice that worked: because of the values, understandings and skills of staff working face-to-face with young people.

- Most staff had prior relevant experience of working with young people and had taken some relevant training during the previous year.

- By developing open and informal ways of relating to and communicating with young people, staff gave them new experiences of relating to adults in authority roles.

**Young person**

They treated us like adults not kids, not like at school.

**Partner (school teacher)**

They are going into an environment where relationships are very different from school. They've formed incredibly strong, positive and lasting relationships, support and faith if you like to explore some of the problems they're facing.

- Staff negotiated young people's early 'tests' and built up trust by:
  - being consistent and reliable
  - delivering on promises made
  - dealing with immediate problems and obstacles they presented
  - advocating, on their behalf, with other adults and key agencies.

**Young person**

It's important to have someone to talk to, someone you can trust.

**Project worker**

Being able to help them practically, you establish trust & you can do all the other work.

**Partner**

Trusting relationships gave workers a bank of credit on which to draw for challenging young people.

- Staff based the development of their relationships with young people on commitments to honesty, equal treatment and mutual respect.

**Young person**

I don’t get told; I get asked.

**Project worker**

We accept them for who they are and what they are. They receive huge amounts of respect from us but we get it back, ten times over.
Staff held high expectations of young people - expressed in rewarding responses and avoiding ‘put-downs’.

Young people
If I don’t understand, the staff will help, rather than tell us off.

Project workers
We’ve kept them going and we’ve kept telling them what they are doing wrong, but we’ve kept praising them for things they are doing right.

Staff sought to understand individual young people’s circumstances and get beyond & behind labels previously attached to them.

Project worker
They’re only bad for a reason. If there’s a change in someone’s behaviour it’s easy to see where it is coming from.

Staff committed themselves to a ‘holistic approach’ by:

- making themselves as available as possible
- actively listening to what young people were saying

responding non-judgementally to them, within explicit boundaries and ground rules, dealing flexibly with what the young person presented as they defined it.

Young person
Well they helped me get into the place where I am now and help me out with other stuff, like doctors, and getting me out of trouble and all that.

Project worker
I am a paid advisor, mum, sister, nurse, welfare officer, I don’t have just one title, that is youth worker.

Staff stressed participants’ responsibility for their choices and decisions.

Based on judgements on when and how they were needed, a range of practical & creative staff skills were made available to young people, including through links with external organisations.
**Case studies**

**Young person** Before coming here I was shy & lacked confidence. I spent a lot of time with the counsellor at the start. She encouraged me to take part & helped me get to know people. She also said things which made me more confident. I got to know two project workers who taught me about how a confident person acts. I got to talk to one of the workers for quality time. She made me feel a special person. I started to contribute to discussions & my opinions were accepted.

**Young person** When I was 14 I was living with my mum & never went to school. I was angry, confused, lonely & we were always arguing. The workers listened, were understanding & really helpful. They got me away from home and my boy friend. They made me feel happy and reassured. If it wasn’t for the project I would still be with a violent partner. They put me in touch with a project that helps families get on better. The project also helped me get a flat. I’m now part of the driving course which will really help me get on in life and find work.

**Roshni Asian Education Sisters Project (AESis), Sheffield** Twenty young women who were not performing well at school researched what stops Asian young women getting the most out of the education system. In training them in research skills, a university tutor, after breaking down barriers within the group, motivated them to set the research questions, role play interviews applying the techniques they were to use with their peers & learn how to analyse, write up and evaluate their findings. They also disseminated these to their parents and within their community.

**Learning points**

- The work with the target group of young people was intensive and emotionally demanding on project workers. The support and training they received was therefore critical to success.

- Project workers needed adequate clerical back-up to deal with monitoring returns & other admin tasks, if they weren’t to be diverted from their face-to-face work with young people.

- With project workers being so critical to success & young people often reacting negatively to staff leaving, problems in recruiting suitable workers could disrupt a project’s development.
2.6: Alternative curricula and approaches: structure within informality

Evaluation findings:

- Many young people had negative school experiences - because of teachers’ attitudes and approaches to them, inappropriate teaching and learning methods and conflicts with other students, including bullying.

School

We’re desperate for alternative curriculum. Particularly in year eleven in this borough.

- Young people chose to join an NSF project because they:
  - were interested in the activities and thought they would be enjoyable
  - wanted to learn, gain skills and build up their confidence
  - were bored, wanted something to do and to keep out of trouble
  - thought they would get advice on future options and help to get jobs
  - wanted to be with, or to make, friends.

Project worker

We do activities such as football. This involves diet, health, timekeeping, communication, taking instructions from a coach, literacy - doing a match report & a magazine.

- As participants became more comfortable and confident, less familiar activities were offered.
- Curricula addressed specific issues and risks for young people - offending behaviour, drug use, sexual health, parenting.

OFSTED report: Some good use is made by Knowsley Youth Service of a range of specialists (for example in sexual health, drugs and alcohol awareness, sports coaching and the performing arts) to enhance and extend the learning opportunities on offer. Workers were able to combine their specialist knowledge with sound, group work skills to motivate young people and extend their skills and knowledge.

Young person

I heard about it from a friend. It was something to do. To keep us off the streets.

- Most valued activities for young people were ‘general advice’, outdoor activities, job application skills, computer skills and interview skills.
Programmes were developed within an overall environment, which young people felt safe and welcoming, including using mobile facilities, trips and visits, residential and international contacts.

Project worker
I think the traditional youth work skills are all essential but also focus on direction. An organised curriculum has worked for this project. So a framework really is important.

Young person
I liked all the activities here because the learning is made more enjoyable.

Within this informal approach, structured alternative curricula of practical activities and small group work were developed. These provided positive learning experiences to young people ‘turned off’ by schools’ academic demands - for example, they improved basic skills, developed vocational and social skills, increased confidence.

Teacher
I was gob-smacked at the amount of work the participant was doing! We struggle to get him to write the date on a piece of paper in a whole lesson. Here he has written sides of good stuff.

Clear boundaries for their behaviour were negotiated with young people, including responding proactively to poor attendance and disruptive behaviour.

Asian young person
I’ve been to a youth club and they are good as well but they are not as good as this one. They let you just chill, find a space to do what you like but here we learn communication skills, learn how to defend ourselves in a non-confrontational way.

Project worker
We are involving the quiet ones & making the young people realise they are bullying them. We have a massive group discussion, making them aware that it’s unacceptable.

Programmes were individually tailored, supported and user led.
Learning plans were agreed with participants, taking account of their personal starting points, age, gender, cultural background and special circumstances - for example, as young parent or carer.

Young people were given time to gain motivation and progress at their own pace.

Other agencies’ expertise was used to meet young people’s diverse needs, including skilled role models such as professional DJs.

With training, young people helped plan and run activities.

Peer mentor support and peer education methods were used: older participants worked with younger ones. Groups developed a special expertise to be shared with other young people.

Case studies

**The Learning & Information Access Zone (LIAZe)** bus visited the winter grounds of Tyneside traveller communities to help young people develop their IT skills, offer extra help with homework so they felt more comfortable attending school & explore other learning opportunities. Visits - for example, to an outdoor education centre - helped build confidence in new environments.

**TOYS (Training Opportunities for Young Parents)** in Oldham targeted a ‘hidden’ group. Based in a youth club & with its own crèche, the project focused on budgeting & cooking, sexual health, domestic violence, drugs & parenting skills. The group took an accredited play training course, ran an after school club & acted as peer educators to share their parenting experiences with pupils.

**ACAP (African Caribbean Achievement Project)** in Bradford worked with young men experiencing barriers to participation in education, training or work. Its group work drew on African-centred resources & focused on culture, history & identity, using black mentors to support participants. It involved them in sports coaching with other young people, to help relieve local community tensions.

Learning points

Projects had to be proactive in countering peer pressures against learning.

**Project worker**

At first they were saying I’m not doing that because they were ridiculed and that most of it is down to peer pressure. You try to get to the main one. Putting on pressure.
Specialist expertise was sometimes scarce - for example, for someone who was dyslexic.

For sustaining innovative programmes, high quality equipment and facilities were needed.

Young person
They give us access to equipment we hadn’t used. We put together a song. They put together a studio for us & showed us how to do it.

Young people wanted programmes to last longer and projects to be open longer & at weekends.

2.7: Involving young people in planning and decision-making

Evaluation findings
- Projects were more successful in keeping participants engaged when they were involved in decision-making, took responsibility and felt they had choices.
- 95% of participants said workers encouraged them to do things for themselves.
- 84% of participants reported they had been encouraged to be involved in planning activities.

Practice that worked: aimed at developing young people’s capacity for acting independently, ‘owning’ personal decisions and the work of projects and participating in their communities and the wider society.

- When first joining, young people were asked what their needs were and to make choices from a menu of activities.
- They were part of individual and group decisions on what activities programmes should include, including where to go for residential and contributed to programme reviews and evaluations.
- They were trained to take on contributory roles in recruiting other young people, as mentors, peer educators and volunteer workers, to deal with project finances and staff recruitment, on steering/advisory groups and in the running of the project’s host organisation.
- They were encouraged to join youth forums or councils and take part in consultations, run by the Connexions Service or the Council.
- They participated in conferences and workshops, acting as advocates for young people, with politicians and professionals.

Young people
We’re now being hired to do workshops and perform the play, so it has already led to paid work.
I manage myself better.
I’m more independent.
Case studies

**Doncaster YWCA** Seven young women ran a workshop for professional workers on the wants & needs of young people at the launch of the Voluntary Sector Connexions partnership.

PA
The young women obviously feel they have ownership of the group & the space.

**Reaching Out Project, Sandwell** Joe had missed three years mainstream education before joining the project. Because of his outspoken personality, he was referred to a youth forum, which elected him vice-chair of the Housing Committee.

**Joe’s mother:**
Joe’s gained a lot of confidence since joining (the project) & will tackle anything.

2.8: Supporting young people to move on

**Evaluation findings**
- On leaving the programme, 57% of participants progressed onto further learning or employment, with another 11% being referred to Connexions.
- Six months after leaving projects, 75% of young people were still in the same destinations or in another learning or employment opportunity.
- Two-thirds said NSF involvement had helped them in their education.

**Practice that worked:** to enable young people to return to school and/or move on to, and then sustain their involvement in, further learning or employment:
- Projects’ informal approaches, alternative curricula and advice on future options helped re-motivate participants to stay in further learning or employment.
- Projects’ brokerage service and advocacy eased and sustained relations between young people and their schools.
- Teachers, Connexions and other agency’s staff kept contact and/or worked directly with young people within projects.

**Young people:**
I don’t flip at teachers like I used to.  
My listening skills in school really improved.  
Helped me with developing a routine & get a job.

**Learning points**
- Because most participants were unused to being consulted, many needed time & encouragement to make, and then accept responsibility for, their own decisions about their learning programme.
- Young people needed to build confidence, learn relevant skills and have on-going support to participate effectively and sustain their involvement, especially in adult forums.
Projects developed clear referral-on routes, arranging visits and personal contacts for participants to relevant institutions and facilities.

Projects used job placements to introduce participants to workplace experience and short ‘tasters’ to allow them to try out different kinds of work. Project staff supported young people while they adjusted.

**Project worker:**
You say listen lads, you’re getting paid, you can’t be doing this, you know, if he’s flicking the paintbrush at him... I say to them you know if you go into a factory, & youse were employed, no employer would put up with that..

In both structured and informal ways, staff maintained contact with young people after they had left the project.

**Managing agent**
Often the project becomes or remains their family & this helps to sustain their transition. Projects have drop-in sessions & also they are just there when there is a major change in the life of the young people.

**Learning points**
- The better young people sustained their participation in an NSF project, the more likely they were to keep up an involvement in further learning or employment.
- Many young people joined projects because they were located within their own neighbourhoods. They then often needed extra support, for crossing the cultural as well as geographical divides, necessary for moving on to further learning or employment opportunities outside their home areas.
- Resources and mechanisms, to support & sustain transition, were needed as a core project component, especially to respond to ‘graduates’ expectations of continuing contact.
- Young people, experiencing stress or instability in their personal lives – those with disabilities, parents, carers, those who were homeless or had mental health problems, drug users – needed extra time & intensive support to make a successful transition.
CHAPTER 3.
MEASURING YOUNG PEOPLE’S PROGRESS AND MOTIVATION

3.1: Assessing young people’s needs and potential

Evaluation finding:
88% of projects had an induction process for new recruits.

Practice that worked: to identify young people’s needs and potential when joining the project and provide baseline information, against which to measure their personal progress and the impact of the project on them.

- Using formal and informal approaches, projects developed specific schedules and questionnaires to prompt young people to identify their expectations, strengths and learning gaps and agree individual learning plans.

- Project workers explained why they were seeking personal information, who would see it and how it would be stored and used.

- Staff assessments of young people’s needs and potential, including their basic skills, were developed.

- Within the rules of confidentiality and data protection, projects negotiated with partner agencies to provide relevant information and risk assessments for referred young people.

- Managing Agents and intermediate organisations provided model frameworks and training for carrying out initial assessments.

Case studies

Family Friends, Lambeth
Aimed primarily at excluded black & ethnic minority young people, the project asked new participants to complete a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis.

Walsall Foyer
Referred by YOT, Brian had recently moved to a single person housing project. After attending drop-in sessions, an initial interview & needs assessment found he needed help to manage his finances, pay off his rent arrears & to keep his bed-sit clean. An action plan was agreed with him.

Learning points

- The need for initial assessments became increasingly clear, as workers & participants recognised the need to explain how far they had travelled while on the project.

- Projects also needed this information to demonstrate the value of their work to their local community, potential partners & the NSF & other potential funders.

- Projects needed to devise special approaches to one-to-one assessment when participants joined, because these needed to fit in with the project’s very open and informal setting & style.
Learning points cont.

→ As young people’s initial contacts were often very tentative, they could be put off by early & direct requests for personal information, which they experienced as intrusive.

→ Projects needed to negotiate with partners and agree protocols, to ensure they received background information, essential for young people referred to them. Refer to appendix 2.

→ Effective initial assessments called for specific skills, for which workers needed training.

3.2: ‘Hard’ and ‘soft’ measures of progress

Evaluation findings:

→ 87% of participants said that their self-confidence had increased.

→ 89% said their communication with other people had improved.

→ 65% said they felt better about attending school.

→ 74% said they were more likely to be able to get a job.

→ 88% said they were more likely to take training.

Practice that worked: to recognise and use a range of criteria for providing evidence of young people’s progress while they were attending a project based on each young person’s starting points.

→ Projects adopted a range of ‘hard’ criteria for assessing young people’s progress. These included evidence of:

→ regular participation in the project over an extended period

→ qualifications, other awards and forms of public recognition of their achievements gained by participants

→ participants’ continuing engagement or re-engagement, with further learning and/or employment after leaving the project

→ reduced risk of offending and other kinds of anti-social behaviour.

→ In identifying evidence of their progress, projects recognised young people’s self-assessments and views of ‘soft’ gains made – such as:

→ in the context of very stressed lives, the pleasure and relaxation they derived from participating in stimulating activities, often normally unavailable or not accessible to them

→ their growth in self-confidence

→ improvements in how they organised their lives – evidenced in their arriving on time, attending regularly and meeting deadlines

→ increased self-awareness leading, for example, to better anger management

→ improved skills in communication and working with others.

→ Staff also adopted ‘soft’ measures of participants’ achievements, when assessing and feeding back to them on their progress.
Young people's views of 'soft' outcomes

- I had a bad temper – they really cooled me down.
- It’s unbelievable I’ve got this far. To be honest, I feel that it’s the first thing I’ve ever achieved.
- I’ve got this idealistic view of being a working mother with two kids and a husband who loves me very much and a nice house with three bedrooms. Not living in a crummy Council flat.

Young people's views of 'hard' outcomes

- At school I wanted to be a PE teacher, but I didn’t think I would get the qualifications. I’m doing a coaching course now.
- Getting the police off your back. They ask questions, have you got a job and all that.
- All I ever wanted when I was on smack was a normal life. It sounds boring, but I just wanted a job, a proper boyfriend. Not having to wake up and think ‘Where’s my next fix coming from?’
- Who knows what I’d be doing without (the project). I would end up labouring for the rest of my life.

Case studies: identifying 'distance travelled'

Young person

Was and Is

I was, every day waking up
Feeling down, nobody care
Blacking out the world out there
Money short, Never eat
Walking round the empty street
Desperate pains inside my head, Got a bag …
soon pain dead
Stop! Stop! Then, Need an out, Nobody heard me cry or shout
Trap pulled me further in and further down, Got to get out this fucking town
A day I woke and felt like shit
I thought and thought, Right! This is it
Took my pain my eyes wide shut, Look at me I’ve woken up
I stood my ground, got rid of death, Now I look inside my head
Heart rose up, things going right, Even now I sleep at night
Got my feet back on the ground, Help from NSF I found, Now I’m leaving just next week
They helped me climb, walk and sometimes fall, I’m going to train the KIDS football.
Young person

After I had my baby, I suffered from depression. I needed to get out of the house more & meet new people. I noticed a poster in the doctor’s surgery advertising a programme for young parents. I don’t feel self-conscious & I can be myself now. I have the confidence to do what I want & don’t let people knock me down.

Project workers

He has cerebral palsy & uses a wheelchair; he was becoming isolated. His confidence & self-esteem has grown so much that he now supports some of the other young people. His positive contributions have led him to be invited by the Connexions Service to be trained to be part of the young person’s interviewing panel for its PAs.

Our way of measuring is spending four months working on estates and four kids will say ‘wotcha’. A kid will offer to carry your bag who doesn’t have the time of day for women.

One young man we had for nearly two years. He just avoided a custodial sentence. In August the light went on that people on the programme with him were moving on. He got a job. It was moving at his pace.

Learning point

➔ The voluntary tradition of many of the organisations running projects, meant that they often had to adapt their approaches to the ‘professional’ expectation that they monitor and record young people’s progress.

➔ Given the starting points & difficulties of many of the young people involved in the programme, projects found they needed to be persistent in identifying ‘hard’ evidence on young people’s progress.

➔ Projects needed to negotiate on the credibility & acceptability of some of its ‘soft’ measures of ‘success’, with some referral agencies, whose criteria were ‘harder’ & less flexible than those recognised by the NSF programme.
3.3: Methods for identifying progress and achievement

**Project worker:**
Evidence of progress is hard to record but clear to observe.

**Evaluation finding:** The majority of projects produced monthly reviews and individual profiles of participants.

**Practice that worked:** to implement appropriate methods for tracking young people’s progress—both ‘hard’ outcomes on their move to further learning and employment and the personal distance travelled while with the project.

- Despite the intensity of the work with young people, with the support of Managing Agents and/or intermediate organisations, projects carried out regular monitoring of young people’s participation.

- Projects developed criteria and procedures to ensure appropriate referrals from partner agencies.

- Projects devised or adapted a variety of methods for recording young people’s participation, achievements and progress, including ‘distance travelled’. These assumed participants’ active and critical involvement and were integrated into the on-going practice. In addition to the regular informal exchanges within the projects’ overall style and approach, more formal methods included:
  - adoption as appropriate of The National Youth Agency’s unit-based Development Framework or other ways of recording individual young people’s participation
  - monitoring attendance records
  - participant portfolios providing written, photographic, video- or audio-tape evidence of work done and of staff observations
  - participants’ reflective diaries
  - participants’ public presentations, performances and web pages
  - self-completion questionnaires
  - staff-participant feedback sessions (one-to-one and group)
  - periodic one-to-one review meetings to consider progress on implementing their action plans or contracts
  - worker recordings of one-to-one and groups sessions
  - staff meetings for discussing participants’ progress
  - use of recognised tools for measuring ‘soft’ outcomes, such as motivation and self-esteem (Richter Scale; Spirit Level)
  - feedback from and/or joint reviews of individuals’ progress, with staff partner agencies.
Projects used key workers and mentors, including in some cases, peer mentors, to support and guide individual young people through the monitoring and recording processes.

A workshop enabled project workers and representatives of the Managing Agents and the DfES to clarify methods for identifying and recording ‘distance travelled’ and the challenges this posed.

**OFSTED report:** At Route 2, (Hull) some 15-16 year olds, in the most challenging circumstances and with the least hope of educational success, had been helped to identify their own progress and to record for themselves their work with the project.

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**The Rage Ensemble, Birmingham**

The project, operating as a real company, involved 15-19 year olds in all aspects of theatre performance, presented in a variety of community venues & theatres. Groups had weekly meetings, to discuss their progress, which were recorded to show the distance they had travelled. Staff also met with each young person to discuss their progress in developing their personal, social & artistic skills.

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**Case studies**

**Chrysalis-Club 2000, Birmingham**

The project worked with a range of young people, including young offenders & those leaving care. In order to have their work accredited, participants kept a folder of their work to record challenges they set for themselves and their successes. Mandy’s challenges were:

- I am going to look after my bicycle & be able to repair it - 4 hours.
- I am going to make a toy for a child that is safe & hygienic - 6 hours.
- I am going to organise & take part in a First Aid course - 7 hours.

Mandy’s progress and achievement were monitored by a staff member.

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**Learning points**

- Small community groups and organisations needed adequate admin support to carry out the monitoring procedures for young people’s participation effectively.

- They also welcomed consistency in the tools and procedures used for this monitoring.

- Because few tested transferable models existed, developing methods for recording and measuring ‘distance travelled’ by young people could be ‘a serious methodological and operational challenge’. This required on-going and creative development work involving a range of key stakeholders.
Learning points cont.

- Recording methods had to be developed which were reliable & credible, without being experienced by young people as intrusive, or disturbing delicate balances in their relationship with workers.

3.4: Recognising, rewarding and accrediting young people’s achievements

Evaluation findings:

- Over 50% of NSF participants said they had gained, or were working towards, a qualification.

- 74% of 428 CDF- sponsored projects offered young people opportunities to gain certificates; 70% in partnership with another programme. Qualifications included Open College Network (OCN) (25%), Millennium Volunteers’ (MV) (18 %), and NVQs or GNVQs (12%).

- NYA-sponsored projects had enabled young people to gain over 4000 certificates; 28% were internal awards, 22% national awards and 21% ASDAN accreditation.

- In one three-month period, 143 young people on LA projects gained some form of accreditation or recognition of their achievement.

Practice that worked: aimed at giving young people public as well as personal forms of recognition for their achievements, including certification and accreditation, which helped them progress to further learning and/or employment.

- As integral elements of their work with young people:
  - Within their on-going relationships with young people, workers consistently offered praise for their efforts and achievements;
  - Projects used individual reviews and progress meetings to give positive feedback;
  - Projects ensured young people’s achievements got wider public recognition - through music, dance and drama events, newsletters circulated within their local community, photographic and art exhibitions, and presentations of CDs and videos they had made.
Projects organised special events to showcase the success of participants’ work – for example, through award ceremonies open to family, friends, the wider public, VIPs and the local media.

Projects entered participants for established forms of external recognition – for example, a local Mayors Award, young carers awards and commendations for personal bravery.

Participants were trained and supported to present their views and achievements to local and national politicians, professionals and the media, at events which gave them personal recognition.

Projects designed their own certificates of achievement and other forms of reward and award – for example, for consistent attendance and punctuality and for the personal ‘distance travelled’ by individual participants. Some were based on the Getting Connected and NYA Development Framework units.

Projects gave young people opportunities to get a wide range of externally validated accreditation and qualifications.

Subjects and areas covered included key skills, basic numeracy and literacy, maths, science, music, English and Urdu, health education (smoking, drugs, sexual health, healthy eating), the arts and media, voluntary work, outdoor education, driving, motor mechanics, child safety, sign language and in a range of vocational areas.

The most common forms of accreditation and qualifications for which NSF participants were entered included:

- GCSEs, NVQs and GNVQs, City and Guilds and OCN credits
- CLAIT and other forms of computer/IT certificates
- Sport and coaching certificates
- First Aid and Health and Safety certificates
- Millennium Volunteers
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Youth Achievement Awards
- ASDAN accreditation
Young people

- People believe you when you go for jobs... they're not going to take you on for a job without qualifications.
- It's important when I get older & go for a job interview so that they can see that I've done something for the project & they say 'Oh this is good. He has been involved in the project.'
- We did courses in health & safety & how to use the equipment & got certificates.

Partners

- High School Learning Mentor: For some students there has been a marked increase in their attendance and for lots of others, the course has boosted their confidence and self esteem, which has seen an improvement in their academic achievements.
- Connexions PA (commenting on a project participants’ contribution to the public launch of a Connexions partnership): The young people made a terrific difference to the day & were a real credit to your project.

Case studies

Reach Project, Tipton:
At a special ceremony, the local Primary Care Trust awarded project participants, certificates of achievement for their artwork, for Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which was displayed in the terminal cancer ward to help patients from ethnic communities to feel at home.

St Marks Youth Project, Gateshead: The project offered integrated informal education to the deaf & hearing with a commitment to giving the young people a more positive identity. As part of the programme, it trained up to 60 members in British Sign Language at levels one or two.

Wybourn Youth Trust, Sheffield: Four project members completed their open water Scuba diving course which included several days reef diving in Egypt in the Red Sea. Young people supported by project workers raised funds for this trip.

Young person

Having another young person qualified to assist the dive masters will make a real difference because other young people can see what can be achieved.
A showcase event

At a regional showcase of young people’s achievements, thirty-two NSF projects came together in Blackpool to demonstrate their talents. Performances included a poetry reading by the Young European Muslim Group, which was simultaneously translated in sign language by a group of Asian, deaf, young women; singing, dancing, rapping, break-dancing, stories, circus skills, drama and music. Videos highlighting project work were also shown.

Young person

Popstars eat your heart out – I felt like a pop star out there. It was sound – my family can’t believe I’ve done it.

OFSTED reports

At the Halewood Project, young people at risk of exclusion from school were eagerly recording their development in portfolios. At the Learning and Skills Development Project (LADS), young men, identified as disaffected from education and training, were participating in a ten-week go-karting and mechanics course.

The work at Alford House successfully utilised the Youth Achievement Award and Royal Society of Arts (RSA) word processing programmes to provide young people with opportunities for accrediting learning, while simultaneously developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Learning points

- NSF funding made it possible to give young people greater access to accreditation routes, which required their own resources, including staff time.

Project manager

I think it was not believing that this sort of accreditation could be undertaken within a youth club. Whereas with the resource of NSF it has been possible.

Learning points

- Workers based in local voluntary & community organisations & operating in informal settings often needed to be convinced that accreditation processes would not ‘over-professionalise’ them and that it could be integrated effectively into their practice.

Project manager

The accreditation part has been marvellous yeah. I haven’t witnessed anything like it for twenty years of youth work, never.
Case study 2

Mariana was in care for most of her childhood and experienced a
difficult relationship with her parents. At 14 she feared she was
pregnant and not knowing what to do, or where to go, in desperation she
phoned a local chemist. While trying to explain her situation, she burst in to
tears. The pharmacist arranged to meet her and, **when a pregnancy test
confirmed Mariana was pregnant, she suggested Mariana contact the
local NSF young mothers project.**

Here she attended a 12-week course for young parents which built up her self-
esteeam and confidence and allowed her to meet other young mothers. She
also did her GCSE’s at the local Mother and Baby Unit. The project also
continued to support Mariana, providing her with training in setting limits for herself and in
behaviour and anger management. She also attended a Brook Advisory peer education
course for young parents.

**Starting points**

**Moving on**

After her training with Brook, Mariana undertook voluntary work for
them, advising other young people in schools and sharing her
experiences as a young parent. This included running ‘Reality Workshops’
focused on questions like: ‘How would you feel if you were pregnant’;
and ‘What would your day be like if you were a young mother’.

Mariana recounted how these sessions were a real eye-opener to the
tenagers. They think it’s not real and it’s like Coronation Street. **Only after the sessions did she reveal that she was 19 years old and (by
then) a parent with three children.**

Mariana subsequently set up a drop-in centre for young parents offering
a range of activities, advised a Connexions service on setting up a similar
drop-in centre & was asked for her views on accommodation for teenage
parents in a new local mother and baby unit. **She was involved in staging an issue-based play on teenage pregnancy and became a member of the NSF project management committee.**
CHAPTER 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP – BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

4.1: Why has partnership been important?

Evaluation Findings:

- Partnership work was central to the success of the NSF projects. By the mid-point of the NSF pilot, projects were working with, on average, six different types of partner organisation.

- Projects worked with a wide range of different organisations; more than three quarters worked with local schools. They were highly valued by schools and other local partners such as YOTs and Connexions. Through their more flexible, informal and individually tailored services, they were seen as able to engage young people, that the statutory services found hard to reach.

- Projects, with the largest networks of local partners, were the most likely to succeed. There was a positive relationship between the number of partners worked with and the numbers of young people who moved into education, training or employment.

- Most project managers:
  - welcomed the development of the Connexions Service
  - saw its objectives as close to those of their own organisations
  - believed the Service would enhance their own effectiveness and offer a valuable additional source of advice and support for young people

NSF Project

The NSF has allowed our organisation to work with other organisations to identify needs and develop solutions for individual problems. This has enabled us to move a significant number of young people towards more productive and worthwhile lifestyles.

Partners

Schools We were on the verge of kicking them out, couldn’t cope with them. They worked with the NSF project and we put some staffing into it. They’ve now ended up in full time work. They’ve got NVQs, bit of a miracle story.

Connexions It is very important that the voluntary sector is involved in the Connexions delivery, as they are already working with young people, who are disconnected and are already providing an accessible high quality service, which is needs based and appropriate
Partners

**Probation Service**

Quality interventions, such as those promoted by the NSF Project are a proven and effective tool in the crime reduction programme.

NSF projects used a range of agencies to support the delivery of NSF locally.

The main reasons why NSF projects worked with partners included:

- referral and recruitment of young people
- identifying other provision in the area and ensuring that there is no duplication
- linking into specialist local networks to help address a new priority in a project
- partnership, working directly with young people and professional development, especially where project staff are lone workers
- sharing resources or facilities – for example, some young people from one NSF project attending a residential run by a second project
- supporting a neighbourhood objective – for example, working with the police in areas with high crime
- funding and strategic development
- identifying potential progression routes for young people
- sharing effective practice
- supporting transition for young people – for example, through establishing a link between a young person and a Connexions Personal Adviser when they leave the NSF project.

**Partners**

NSF has provided us with a chance as a community-led organisation to get involved and work with schools and statutory organisations and has allowed us to become active partners in the process of supporting vulnerable pupils.

**Partnership gives young person a voice**

When I first started the school group at the project in 2001, I expected an easy ride. After a week or two, reality set in and I realised there was a lot of work to be done.

I’m currently representing Sunderland Young Peoples Advisory Group and another Young Peoples Health Advisory Group. I have also started the Sunderland City College accredited Lifeskills Course and have enjoyed every minute of it. I have taken part in all activities, gaining self-knowledge, building my confidence and self-esteem. By taking part, I have done a lot of hard work, such as fundraising, computer technology and issue based subjects such as drugs, crime and bullying.

I hope to gain a lot of accreditation to add to my Record of Achievement and pass my City of Guilds college course, but I’ve also found the course different since I became employed at the project as the new Peer.
Advocate Trainee for Hendon Young People’s Project, where I am going through the transition period from young person, hopefully to become a qualified youth worker.

I would also like to thank all the staff at the project, for their guidance and support on the School Group, Connect and the Peer Advocacy and for the opportunity to become qualified as a youth worker.” Kyle

**Examples of partnership**

The Islington NSF project was represented on the local authority’s Connexions Management Committee. As a result of the constructive relationship between the project and Connexions, during the summer of 2001, the project took lead responsibility for the Connexions Summer Activities Programme.

“The Walton Young Parents Project provides the opportunity for good practice to be shared across the city as it is an excellent example of a locally developed scheme clearly focusing on delivering positive outcomes for young people”. Liverpool Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator

Awaz Utaoh was a community safety project aimed specifically at Asian young offenders or potential offenders. It worked in partnership with the police, Avon Fire Brigade, Bristol Youth Offending Team, Youth Community Action and the Drug Action Team. Part of the project brought the police and other youth agencies in, to provide workshops and activities that helped build relationships and eased tension.

**Learning points**

- Building and maintaining effective and valued partnerships was time- and resource-consuming for projects, especially for smaller organisations

- Projects needed to be persistent because of the time it took to build credibility with statutory partners.

- The need to market what is distinctive about NSF projects to encourage appropriate referrals and help partners to identify the specific contribution NSF can make to their service.

- The NSF umbrella model has helped to facilitate local partnerships, particularly for the smaller projects.
4.2: Who are the partners?

Evaluation Findings:

- Most local projects delivered the work, in partnership with a range of other local agencies, that worked with young people locally to support the NSF’s aim of re-engaging young people who were.

- As an indication of the wide range of organisations with which NSF projects had working relationships, staff in 60 projects said they worked with a total of 162 organisations. In addition to schools and the Connexions Service, projects identified the following partners:
  - Voluntary Organisations (67%)
  - Local Authority Youth Services (53%)
  - YOTs (25%)
  - Health bodies (25%)
  - Housing associations (25%)
  - The police (25%).

- Project managers believed that the NSF had increased partnership working in their areas:
  - 80% said that they had expanded the range of organisations with which they worked ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot’ since their involvement with NSF.
  - 86% said that they had established links with new organisations as a result of their involvement with NSF.
  - 84% indicated that their involvement in NSF had helped to encourage local networking and 73% said that they engaged in ‘successful joint working with other local agencies’.

- The most common type of partnership, which had been formed by more than three quarters of NSF projects (77%), was with local schools. Schools made use of the NSF projects in order to provide an alternative to mainstream provision for some students, including those at risk of exclusion. As one young person says: “projects are schools with a difference.”

- The Connexions Service was not in place at the start of the NSF programme but it became increasingly important during the course of the pilot, with about half the project managers reporting they had developed effective links with Connexions.

Projects

You don’t stop making and reinforcing links with other agencies.

It is so important to keep engaging other agencies.

The NSF has enabled us to work with a wide range of other agencies and increase the number of young people we contact and work with.

Examples of the wide range of partners

Eaststreet and Befrienders in Barking and Dagenham were able to offer increased activities, thanks to partnership working with their local Behaviour improvement Programmes. BiPs main aim is to ensure attendance and improved
behaviour in schools, one of the main elements of which is alternative educational provision for excluded students. Both projects accessed funding through the summer to run courses for their young people.

Partnership working in the West Midlands between an NSF project, Primary Care Trust and local health project enabled isolated young mums to form a self-help group and develop their parenting and life skills. The idea for the support group came from the Connexions Youth Information Shop, based at the Meadway Project, in an area of Birmingham with a high teenage pregnancy rate. With funding from the Eastern Birmingham Primary Care Trust, the project approached the local Young People’s Health Project to jointly design and deliver the programme. According to the project manager, the partnerships brought a variety of benefits:

‘It’s a great way to share knowledge, expertise and resources. By tapping into different pots of funding with a particular focus, such as teenage pregnancy, we have been able to add real value to other agendas’.

4.3: The benefits of partnership working for both YP and partners

Evaluation Findings:

- NSF projects had established working relationships with other local agencies to support project delivery and to make a contribution to partners’ aims and targets. The partner agencies benefited from access to the projects, which offered:
  - an alternative approach
  - community-based support
  - funded support for vulnerable young people.
  - positive outcomes for the agencies’ young clients and their service.

Partners

We make young people feel like they belong in the community.

- For schools and other key local partners such as Connexions Partnerships, youth justice services and local authority youth services, where the partnerships worked well, the NSF projects were seen as highly valued partners, helping them to reach specific service targets.

As far as the school is concerned the knock on benefit is that we can point and say we’ve got more kids that are a success, that are placed in full time education or work, rather than just being lost.
Benefits to partners and young people.
The NSF Programme is based on the premise that many voluntary and community groups are in direct contact with 13-19 year olds, who are not participating in education, employment or training. They are in an ideal position to offer local opportunities to these young people, to re-engage them with learning and their community. The projects’ partners all have a shared aim of providing support for young people, to enable them to achieve their potential, through participating in education, training and employment.

The NSF projects, working with partners, contributed to the realisation of this aim by offering the following benefits:

- An overall contribution to provision for young people, which improved the quality of provision locally and supported more young people towards a successful transition to further education and training than would have been expected.

- The alternative approach that NSF projects were able to offer, because projects were in a position to respond to the needs and priorities of each individual young person and, for example, to ‘challenge offending behaviour within a more flexible and effective framework’.

- The funding to support this group of ‘hard-to-reach’ young people, one effect of which was to free up resources for other young people in the area.

- An additional link into the local community for the statutory agencies.

- Strong commitment to collaborative working to extend opportunities.

- Easy access to young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET was one of the major benefits for Connexions. The projects also offered Connexions an easy access point, with a variety of other priority groups of young people unlikely to visit a Connexions centre. They also contributed to PAYP, drawing on their experience of achieving positive outcomes for young people ‘at risk’ through the NSF experience.

- The local nature of NSF provision was another strong feature of the partnership, as it provided help to young people in familiar surroundings.

- NSF projects provided a valuable complementary service to the education system. NSF projects supported disengaged young people, to progress and learn in ways they sometimes cannot do in school.

- Projects were able to offer disengaged young people, access to a wider range and breadth of activities and learning opportunities than they can get at school.

- Projects were able to offer young people access to more diverse methods and ways of working. “We can help young people to learn and get off the cusp of being expelled.”

- Projects were impacting on partners’ targets and enabling young people to experience success.

- Projects were offering respite to young people, their families and their schools.

- Partnership minimised the duplication of services and maximised on the specific strengths of organisations.
Partnership working gives young person a chance

Thomas’s YOT worker referred him to the project. Thomas had not attended school for approximately two years and was considered to be at risk of offending on a more serious level. A referral form was sent and Thomas attended an interview prior to his start. Initially, Thomas was very negative about the project and on occasion became quite vocal about this.

When Thomas began attending the sessions it soon became evident that he had a very poor level of basic skills. The project enlisted the support of another basic skills support worker, from the Literacy Trust, who was able to help Thomas with his skills and confidence levels. Thomas has also agreed to return to school on a part-time basis to improve his skills, in order to enable him to complete some of his exams. This has been agreed with the staff at the school that originally excluded Thomas, due to his behaviour and attitude. Thomas maintains excellent attendance on the project and has continued to attend after his supervision order ended.

Along with the support from the project, his literacy support worker, his YOT worker and the school staff Thomas continues to make good progress.

Partners

The partnership working between the Connexions Personal Adviser at a school in Coventry and a key worker at Yo-Yo was instrumental in securing a positive outcome for one young lad. There is no doubt, that without this joint effort and the contribution of the Yo-Yo key worker, this particular client would have been a NEET – Connexions Delivery Manager.

The St Giles Project is a prime example of the voluntary sector developing areas of learning that schools are unable to offer. It has had highly complimentary commendations in 2 OfSTED inspections of our pupil referral units – Pupil Referral and Exclusion Service Manager.
Young people's views

I came to the Fusebox and met the P.A. from Connexions and he helped me get onto e2e at Blackburn College. He was dead helpful and sorted it all out for me. Although I have been to the Connexions office to ask for help I have had better help from the Fusebox P.A.

It was a great experience, made me realise how easy it was to get from place to place. Before taking part in the project I hadn’t heard of Connexions; the staff were really friendly and easy to get on with. They told us what Connexions was all about and that we could just pop in if we wanted someone to chat to. The Treasure Trail was a fun way of learning.

Learning points

→ Connexions and other mainstream organisations were able to identify the community and voluntary groups, which were working successfully to re-engage key target groups of young people.

→ To demonstrate effectiveness and attract future funders, the projects needed to:

  → make more use of their partners to demonstrate the impact of their work.

  → have in place systematic ways of measuring ‘distance travelled’ by young people.

→ Voluntary sector projects had much to offer statutory sector organisations and learning was reciprocated.

Project worker

We complement what schools offer - add value- work hand in hand with schools.
4.4: How did the partnerships work?

**Evaluation Findings:**

- Individual relationships between NSF project staff and representatives of other organisations contributed to the success of working with partners. So too, did involving partners from the outset and having shared values and a commitment to working with this client group.

- School staff appreciated the responsiveness of the projects to emerging needs. Headteacher: ‘If I go and say I want this to happen, they will look and see if they can do it for us. The content of NSF work was generally very fluid, evolving to meet the needs of individual pupils and successive year groups. This responsiveness to changing needs meant that there were ongoing negotiations on content throughout the relationship’

- Partnerships were also assisted by the intermediate organisations, playing an important role in helping to build the capacity of the groups in their areas and in stimulating local networks that strengthened the voluntary youth sector.

- The use of Personal Advisers (PA’s) by NSF projects varied widely and this might reflect the Connexions Service’s role in ‘creating a tailored response to local issues’. The three main ways that PA’s worked with NSF projects:
  - PA’s undertaking detailed case work with individual young people and supplementing the work of the NSF staff, with regard to personal development and ongoing support
  - PA’s delivering youth work sessions alongside NSF project staff, in a ‘highly integrated approach’.

**Partners**

Working within the project 2 afternoons per week has me preparing CV’s, helping with interviewing techniques and introducing them to the Connexions Service.

**Personal Advisor**

The partnership between West Leeds High School and Interplay has allowed school staff to motivate the young people in their school work. Their attendance at the project is used as a ‘carrot to encourage good behaviour, attendance and hard work during the rest of the week. Learning Mentor.

**Practice that worked:** aimed at increasing the opportunities for young people by developing productive working relationships with other projects, partners and providers.
Projects developed promotion and marketing strategies, to inform and involve local agencies. They established durable networks, across the various local services, at an early stage to get referrals and involve partners in the development of the programme.

Projects developed a shared understanding with partners of each other’s contribution to a young person’s programme, which helped to build two-way trust and respect. Projects worked to enable partners to appreciate that the project was bringing different skills and ways of working to the partnership and to ensure that all parties acknowledged each other’s strengths and limitations.

Firm foundation for a partnership was laid through the way partnership arrangements were negotiated and reviewed. Negotiations included: agreeing the content of provision, target audiences and methods of monitoring and evaluation and putting in place mechanisms and processes to deal with any issues that arose. Some partnerships captured these understandings in written agreements and protocols, which clarified mutual responsibilities and expectations.

The good practice developed by the projects resulted in commitment to partnership working from other agencies.

The Managing Agents helped to develop links between NSF projects and their local Connexions Service by providing:

- training days for projects interested in developing their relationship with Connexions
- briefing papers for projects and individual guidance and support through the programme of assessment visits
- guidance to projects, including encouragement to seek involvement in local Connexions steering groups

Comprehensive, systematic processes for referring young people to projects were developed. These enabled projects to receive the necessary, relevant information about young people, tailor the activity to their pupil’s needs and reduce inappropriate referrals.

Regular communication with the partnership agencies, at all levels gained the projects a reputation as active partners, valued for the ability and drive to communicate with statutory services.

Projects and partners agreed what information sharing should take place and how young people were to be monitored and tracked by agencies. This also enabled young people to know the uses to which their information would be put.

"Clarity gets the project off to a good start."

Refer to appendix 2.
Joint reviewing of the young person’s progress and targets while on the project made a planned transition possible, resulting in a smoother reintegration into school or planning for an alternative progression route.

Through co-working on programmes, the projects and partners experienced each other’s skills at first hand. It also helped staff and young people to feel that the process was integrated into a planned framework. Though less common than other aspects of partnership work, this practice worked especially well with schools and Connexions.

Project workers, becoming qualified PA’s, contributed to Connexions delivery.

By giving each other mutual support, through forming local networks, projects provided the young people with complementary experiences on other local projects’ programmes.

Project and partner joint celebrations of young people’s progress and achievements helped boost their self-esteem and confidence and let a wider audience know of the partnership work.

Example of a procedures agreement with local YOT / ISSP teams

Developed by projects in the Manchester area, working with young offenders, that often display challenging behaviour on a regular basis.

The main points of the agreement cover:

- A joint approach to assessing, if the project is appropriate for the prospective client
- Sharing of information, regarding the nature of the offences the client has committed and joint assessment of the level of risk a client may represent to other clients or staff at the project
- A joint approach and involvement in planning and delivering a suitable curriculum for the client group.
- Regular visits from the young persons Community Support Worker, to confirm progress and provide additional support
- Invitations for project staff to be involved in the young persons formal reviews, held at YOT.
- Regular communication, regarding the young persons behaviour or attendance if they become problematic and an agreed code of conduct and procedures for excluding young people if their behaviour warrants it.
The keeping of files detailing action plans, asset forms, attendance records and review notes

A commitment to provide continuous, voluntary support to young people, when they move from high intensity to low intensity supervision.

Young person’s view
I was really scared when I was pregnant and didn’t know where to go for help. But the PA based at the project helped me sort loads of things out – a place to live, my benefits, even a course to help me find out more about my pregnancy. My life just seems to be getting sorted now!

Examples of partnership working

Connexions’ Community Chest funding allowed KMP project to work with local groups of young people to produce a website of students’ work. This work was created by young people from local youth clubs, ethnic minority groups and other local organisations for young people.

Joint working with Connexions consists of a Connexions Positive Activities Young People programme worker attending our NSF Linx project drop-in. He also supports us working on the various courses we are running. Our young people also have access to activities and courses that he and PAYP are running throughout Middlesbrough. PAYP also provide us with funding for our half term, Easter, Christmas and summer holidays. This enables us to provide a more varied itinerary for the young people.

St Giles project’s partnership, with the three Pupil Referral Units and the two High Schools, is co-ordinated with a link worker in each school.

Our Interplay project’s joint work with schools, involves working with three local schools to take referrals for our projects. TFTT:Exclusive is a programme devised exclusively for Alternative Programmes at Education Leeds. We receive £10,000 per 10-week term. Usually we meet with the learning mentors or education welfare officers from each school to pitch a project, to discuss the projects aims, the types of young people for whom the project might be most suitable, ways of celebrating the project within the school environment, monitoring behaviour and attendance and possibilities for future partnership work.
Good Idea

Some schools emphasised the importance of maintaining contact, so that the students did not feel unwanted by their school. In one school, the teacher had worked closely with the NSF provider to develop a programme through which students could achieve an ASDAN award and shared the delivery of this with the NSF project worker both on-site and off-site, because 'we didn’t want them in any way to feel that we were trying to get rid of them as a school'.

Top tips  The Sheffield Signposts Project gives their top tips for successful partnership working with Schools:

- Be involved at the planning stage; this allows greater flexibility in developing the programme.
- Develop positive working relationships with school staff.
- The work needs to be taken seriously by the school and treated as part of the school’s curriculum.
- Ensure that adequate resources and financial support are in place.
- Cross reference evidence to a form of accreditation, such as ASDAN.

Learning points

- The best work done with young people was with highly involved schools and agencies.
- Projects recognised that NSF cannot be “all things to all people”; appropriate referrals were important to the success of the individual young person and the programme.
- The partnerships with the schools varied from school to school. Good communication and clear expectations helped to avoid some schools placing young people in the project and then neglecting them.
- There was a need to keep paperwork to levels that are manageable for smaller organisations, with limited capacity to resource and sustain partnership arrangements.
- Agreeing an information sharing protocol with referral agencies, reduced the difficulty of projects receiving insufficient background information on young people.
CHAPTER 5 - WHAT DID PROJECTS NEED TO SUPPORT THEM?

Evaluation findings

The NSF support structure during the pilot was extremely successful. The best features of the support identified by projects were:

- 6 monthly assessment visits by Development Officers
- Management of the funding process
- Self-assessment evaluations in preparation for Managing Agent annual reports to DfES
- Local intermediate organisations (umbrella groups)
- The mutual support provided through the local networking of projects and sharing best practice both locally and nationally, which was supported by DfES centrally.

Projects

The Neighbourhood Support Fund has made a huge impact in the running of our organisation. Its effectiveness, delivery and support mechanisms are second to none. There were clear guidelines, appropriate training and prompt payment patterns which helped to reduce the administrative hurdles.

Managing Agents

Positive feedback from projects increased our confidence that we had established and ‘bedded-in’ appropriate admin and finance systems, reporting requirements and communication systems.

Umbrellas negotiated free access for NSF staff to local Youth Service courses.
Project Staff

NSF has enabled the organisation to work in ways that other funding bodies would not be able to do.

Local intermediate organisations (‘umbrellas’)

The support from managing agent staff, as well as the Regional Advisor, has been consistently supportive and professional. Queries are always answered promptly. Without this guidance and sometimes gentle prompting, our projects would not be the success we feel they are.

Our work with projects has proven ‘uneven’ – i.e. smaller/newer organisations have required and been given more support than established organisations, which require relatively little intervention.

Practice that worked: aimed at creating and developing capacity in neighbourhoods, to deal with the problems associated with disengagement and dissatisfaction amongst 13-19 year olds.

A key feature of NSF was that funding was channelled to local projects via 3 managing agents, who provided support and advice and monitored their performance on behalf of the DfES. This was an important, successful innovation, designed to test the effectiveness of this mode of delivery.

The Managing Agents adopted different models for managing the overall delivery of NSF, but they all offered projects strategic guidance, infrastructure to underpin the delivery, training and support, advice and help with supplementary/on-going funding, and facilitated links with other agencies.

In addition to formal training, Managing Agents provided ongoing support to projects through the following:

- NYA employed development officers who conducted assessment visits and were a point of contact for project staff. The development officers were described as a ‘critical friend’ who helped them to ‘take a step back’ and question and challenge their practice.

- CDF/CEDC projects could access their local umbrella organisation though networking and training events and individual project support. In 2002, nearly three-quarters (73%) did so and nearly two-thirds of these considered the support to be ‘good’. 6 Regional Advisers supported umbrella groups.

- Learning Alliance projects drew on the support of staff in the parent organisation and the national managers who advised and guided project staff with individual issues, drawing on existing organisational support structures.
Managing Agents made a distinctive contribution through:

- providing strategic guidance at a national level, for example ensuring that NSF projects were advised and informed about the development of the Connexions Service
- developing the infrastructure for projects, including policies and procedures, monitoring processes, and training and support for project staff.

The training and support provided, built skills capacity among project staff working in the voluntary and community sectors.

Networking meetings enabled projects to share systems and discuss practicalities. The solidarity between projects - networking meetings have been really important and projects genuinely want to work with each other

Appropriate administrative support partly alleviated the additional workload for monitoring and accreditation.

The training days were all excellent and also brought the opportunity to network with other organisations. Working with NSF has made me feel part of a team

They maintained regular contact with projects, making the NSF groups feel well supported.

Regional support and input from the Managing Agents helped to build the capacity of local groups and stimulate local networks that strengthened the voluntary youth sector. “The umbrella group has generated good local links between organisations that had previously been in competition for funding and clients.”

The funding application form was fairly straightforward and the application process was relatively painless and ‘community group friendly.’

Payment on a quarterly basis really helped groups.

Project Staff

The training days were all excellent and also brought the opportunity to network with other organisations. Working with NSF has made me feel part of a team

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The funding application form was fairly straightforward and the application process was relatively painless and ‘community group friendly.’

Payment on a quarterly basis really helped groups.
Project staff

I think the NSF project have listened well to the individual projects and tried to respond to concerns. This has enabled us to set up a flexible but accountable system that has learned from weaknesses and built on strengths.

In terms of monitoring requirements, it has been a low maintenance programme which has been very refreshing.

Good Idea

→ One of the Managing Agent’s approaches to Child Protection consisted of:
  
→ Making training mandatory and a condition of grant

→ Issuing projects with a briefing and guide on child protection

→ Giving all workers and volunteers a good practice, “Keep Young People Safe” card.

Project manager

Having the help and support from the umbrella organisation has been invaluable to us, as we had little experience of working with young people before this project.

Up with umbrellas!

Most umbrellas convene regular meetings of the projects.

In Coventry the Heads of the Learning Support Service, the Youth Service and the Connexions Service have all attended meetings with projects. In Stoke the Single Regeneration Budget (SRBS) Programme Director and speakers from the Employment Service have met with projects. The NSF umbrella co-ordinator at Coventry Voluntary Service Council (CVSC) said, ‘Having speakers from key services working with young people helps promote dialogue and co-operation, so that we can work together for the benefit of the young people.’

The NSF co-ordinator for Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) for 24 organisations in receipt of NSF funds, said, ‘NSF money in Sheffield is making a difference to our communities. 13-19 year olds benefit from active involvement in diverse projects. These projects offer them the opportunity to participate in their communities and realise their potential.’
Learning points

→ Effective managers were vital to the success of local projects. “The management training programme provides a good basis to work from, to assist managers”

→ Given the complexity of setting up a programme of this nature, many small, relatively inexperienced organisations need a longer lead-in time.

→ Developmental funding would have helped the initial process of establishing the projects.

→ An induction pack from the Managing Agents, for those coming new to the programme, would have helped people to get to grips with the NSF management and support structure more quickly.

→ Many projects were able to identify areas where they would have liked more support.

→ More site visits by NSF staff to see the work of projects first-hand.

→ More information and advice on other funding opportunities.

→ Training courses to have been run at an earlier stage of the programme.

→ The main areas in which training was required by some projects, covered both management skills and support with delivering NSF.

→ Small neighbourhood projects need payment in advance, in order to develop provision, as they do not have the resources to draw on to organise and develop activities otherwise.

→ Using voluntary sector umbrella organisations as local ‘managing agents’ proved highly successful and this model of delivery could be used more widely in other policy areas.

→ The type of support Managing Agents gave to neighbourhood projects, in return for their proven success in reaching the target group, is replicable for future models of working with young people.
My name is Mark. I am now 18 years old. From the age of 14, I was always getting myself into trouble for silly little things, getting involved in petty crimes... I knew I was heading (for) a youth offenders institute if I didn’t get my shit together. I used to just hang around street corners getting rotten at the weekend. **Doing stupid stuff not realising I was breaking me Mum’s heart.** Every night she would say to me “son this has all got to stop” but I wouldn’t listen to anyone, not even my Dad or older brothers... It was easy to get into trouble on our Estate coz we had loads of tinned up houses that we have used as a playground.

**Starting points**

My life started to change when I got involved with the (NSF) project. I have known (the workers) all my life coz they live on the estate... I started to believe in myself and realise my potential. I did have loads to give.

**Moving on**

I put all my energy into doing voluntary work in the project. **This has been recognised as the Millennium Volunteers have logged my voluntary hours.** I even volunteered to get up on stage in Blackpool and performed a dance in front of hundreds of people at the NSF Celebration Event, something I thought I would never have the confidence to do. I got the opportunity to do some training - first aid, basic skills, IT and sailing and windsurfing.

I got employment in construction work, got training in painting and decorating. I have done loads of community initiatives - like security work on the outdoor movie event and each year structuring a Christmas nativity scene outdoors for all the community. I became a peer mentor for the project; I accompany them on all camping and residential holidays, supporting other young people and I am told I am an excellent role model for them... **I am doing something I have always wanted to do work with young people. I am now employed by the community & youth service as a trainee youth worker.**
CHAPTER 6: NSF’S IMPACT ON THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

6.1: increasing capacity; raising profiles; enhancing credibility

Evaluation findings

- Projects said NSF involvement had:
  - increased their knowledge of child protection issues (over 70%) and improved their policies and procedures
  - increased their knowledge of disengaged young people’s needs (over 80%), extended their services to them and improved their monitoring systems
  - increased young people’s participation in running their organisations (68%)

- Over 80% of projects said involvement in NSF had raised their profile with other agencies and enhanced their credibility to work with young people.

- Intermediate organisations said NSF involvement had increased their knowledge of disengaged young people’s needs (88%) and of how to reach them (79%).

Practice that worked: to extend the vision of what the local community and voluntary sector could achieve with especially “hard-to-reach” young people, increase its capacity for doing such work, raise its profile and enhance its credibility, with a range of local statutory and voluntary agencies.

- Local VCS organisations:
  - took on new paid and volunteer staff (sometimes for the first time) and gave them the required support and training
  - used this extra staff capacity to develop both more flexible approaches to involving especially “hard-to-reach” young people; and structured, planned and individually-tailored programmes
  - diversified their approaches by:
    - opening at new times of day and staying open for longer
    - developing drop-ins and running residencies for the first time
    - running single sex groups
    - bringing in external trainers and tutors
    - developing mentoring (including peer mentoring), advocacy and one-to-one approaches.
  - used NSF involvement to access new sources of funding – from Connexions, local Youth Services, schools, LSCs, regeneration programmes and the Children’s Fund. The additional resources were used to extend the work of their NSF project, continue it after NSF funding ended and complement other work with young people.
  - developed or improved financial, performance management and admin systems and child protection, health and safety and equal opportunities policies and procedures.
  - Intermediate organisations developed new roles and capacity for supporting local groups and affiliated
organisations, through training and information and advice on key areas of management and practice.

Managing Agents:

- used their standing and capacity to provide essential, strategic guidance, support and resources to regional and grassroots organisations, delivering a high profile, national initiative;

- used the grassroots intelligence, derived from involvement in NSF, to support their wider advocacy roles, on behalf of young people and youth provision.

Local voluntary & community organisations: extending vision; building capacity

What projects said

- The NSF has helped us widen the work we deliver to young people and has helped us understand and address the issues which affect them.

- This funding has enabled us to work with a new age group (13 to 19).

- NSF has made a huge impact on the running of our organisation.

- NSF gave us the chance to build our capacity by establishing an office base, recruit & run new activities, which was the first of its type to be offered to young youth from this (ethnic minority) community.

What intermediate organisations said

- An achievement of NSF has been projects getting support with organisational infrastructure, enabling them to access more funds.

- Small projects are getting experience of managing DfES funding.

Local voluntary & community organisations: raising profiles; enhancing credibility

What projects said

- The NSF project has raised the profile of our organisation’s work in the local community.

What intermediate organisations said

- NSF is giving local communities a chance to raise their profile as good providers of creative activities and to demonstrate that there’s ‘another way’ for young people’s involvement, participation and development.

- NSF projects have earned respect from statutory sector/Connexions, both in reaching disaffected young people and in promoting the role of alternative curricula.
Intermediate organisations: increasing capacity; raising profiles

What intermediate organisations said

→ Valuable experience which has contributed to our success in securing a contract with the LSC, for delivering the Learning Gateway with “hard-to-reach” young people for addiction. We are currently negotiating a contract to perform an umbrella role for voluntary sector Connexions Services.

→ NSF raised the credibility of the voluntary and community sector, in respect of their capacity to deliver effective intervention and re-engagement strategies for young people.

Learning point

→ Organisations had to be responsive to changing circumstances & demands as their projects evolved – for example, in how they recruited young people onto their projects & the type of curriculum they offered & how it was delivered.

→ Smaller VCS groups needed & welcomed support from MAs, intermediate organisations and advisors when they first acted as employers & in meeting requirements to devise and implement child protection, Health & Safety and Equal Opportunities policies & procedures.

→ Smaller voluntary & community sector groups’ desire & need for capacity building could exceed the resources available for this.
6.2: Extending and strengthening networks

Evaluation findings
→ 85% of projects said that involvement in the NSF programme had expanded the range of organisations with which they worked.

→ 66% of NSF projects were in contact with other NSF groups, outside specifically arranged networking events.

Practice that worked: to encourage the dissemination of good practice amongst NSF projects and to extend their and the NSF programme’s influence and impact of other agencies working with young people.

→ Managing Agents and intermediate organisations regularly provided advice and information to local projects, established forums for them to meet regularly and ran one-off training and other events. Focused initially on the bidding process and then on issues of direct delivery and management, this support enabled projects to build their capacity, reduce their isolation and gain mutual support and learning.

→ Organisations and projects developed less structured forms of support and networking with other NSF projects. These enabled them to share practice and problems and learn about other local provision.

→ Organisations and projects used the opportunities, provided by partnership working, to encourage other agencies to look again at their own approaches to young people and, where appropriate, modify them.

→ VCS organisations became resources for other agencies – for example, by offering advice on work with “hard-to-reach” young people.

→ Smaller VCS organisations – often for the first time – sought to engage with local strategic networks and partnerships.
Networking

Project

→ (NSF) increased our capacity all round. We have been instrumental in bringing others together for joint working.

Intermediate organisations

→ (NSF) has helped to make voluntary/youth organisations more aware of each other’s work & contributed to a more cohesive way of working.

→ (NSF) highlighted the common agenda between the voluntary sector and part of the statutory sector, especially education, youth offending and Connexions

Learning point

→ The development of sustainable networking amongst the VCS organisations running NSF projects, usually needed the impetus & continuing support of a Managing Agent or intermediate organisation.

→ The capacity of smaller local VCS organisations, to sustain their contributions to wider strategic partnership bodies & networks, was constrained by their limited staffing & other resources.
By helping them to address personal issues and pressures and develop understandings and strategies for dealing with these, NSF projects have been important in enabling young people, from the Government’s key priority target groups, to re-engage and sustain with learning and work.

Young people’s views
I’ve found out a lot about me and stuff I enjoy doing, and finding things out has helped me come to the decision of going back to college

The programme has thus made a significant contribution to the social inclusion agenda [and learning targets], through successfully engaging with some of the ‘hardest to reach’ young people, living in the most deprived areas of England. It has done this by:

- Helping individual young people to realise their own potential,
- Contributing to the capacity of organisations to respond to local need,
- Helping to build a body of knowledge about what works with this group of young people.

Key priorities in government policy for young people include:

- Targeted, cross cutting interventions for those most at risk of social exclusion
- Maximising opportunities and minimising risk for every child and young person
- Raising participation and achievement in education
- Promoting community cohesion and active citizenship
- Preventing offending/tackling antisocial behaviour
- Reducing teenage pregnancy
- Addressing alcohol or drug-dependency problems
- Improving life chances for looked after children
- Promoting the voice and influence of young people.

NSF succeeded with the ‘large minority’ of young people referred to, by the Prime Minister, in his foreword in the ‘Bridging the Gap’ report in 1999:

Young people’s views
I’m now saving up for a car rather than nicking them.

While most young people enjoy a fairly smooth transition to work, often passing through A levels and university, a large minority lack support or guidance to take them along the way to good jobs and career opportunities.
The case studies of young people on NSF projects speak for themselves. They demonstrate how projects challenged their attitudes and behaviour, in the process helping them deal with racism, teenage pregnancy, drug-dependency, offending and inter-generational tensions and supporting them through experiences in the care system and of disability, homelessness and carrying caring responsibilities. In these ways, the programme illustrates how its style, funding mechanisms and methods can help address the various strands of the Government’s agenda for young people and the potential for other departments and agencies to develop approaches similar to NSF for working with this ‘hard to reach’ age group nationally.
NSF worked for these young people

Kelly became pregnant in her GCSE year & hid her pregnancy. She was referred to the Young Parent Project by her social worker & started the pregnancy course, managing to complete seven modules before giving birth. She visited the centre regularly to use the drop-in facilities & successfully completed the parenting course.

Shokat had no job & ‘dabbled’ in drugs and petty crime. He decided to ‘give it a go’ at an NSF project & join in producing the newsletter. He then became skilled in desktop publishing, image manipulation and writing articles. He now has a part-time job.

Karl came from troubled circumstances, experienced learning difficulties, possessed little self-confidence, and did not attend school. Through participating in a range of activities his self-esteem and confidence gradually increased. He progressed on to the Learning Gateway programme and took part in a work experience taster with a local car spray company.

Lisa says that the best aspect of the NSF housing action project was: “Getting a tenancy in my name – before that I was homeless for two and a half months, living on the streets or staying at friends”. She says that if it hadn’t been for the project worker she doesn’t know where she would be today. “She’s really helped me. I had about a million problems before, but I don’t have many now”.

Two young men from Tower Hamlets who had spent time in prison and were regarded by local police as ringleaders were among the young people selected to launch the National Foundation for Youth Music’s ‘Plug into Music’ fund at the Ministry of Sound. The young men left prison and were referred to the NSF music project, where they formed a rap band & following their success have opted to remain with the project as trainee youth workers.

An NSF group in Hartlepool wrote & produced a film, charting the struggles of a multi-racial football team against racist players & officials. As he was awarded his certificate for his part in the film, Luke assured the audience: ‘I’m not a racist really’.

Amina spoke very little English when she arrived from Asia and joined the project. She now has skills in Basic English, is improving all the time and hopes to take either a fashion design or computer course.

Natasha became the first person in the public care system in Birmingham to receive a National Youth Award accredited by ASDAN. She received her certificate from the Education Minister at a special ceremony at her children’s home.

Young people’s views

I’ve got something to look forward to haven’t I? You just need that little push
APPENDIX 1

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5. Annual report, Learning Alliance, March 2003
6. Annual report, Learning Alliance, March 2002

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5. ‘Volunteering for achievement’, Angela Mulvehill, Volunteer Action 78, Spring 2003
6. ‘Pennywell Young Volunteers’, Angela Mulvehill, Volunteer Action 78, Spring 2003
7. ‘Joined-up Connexions’, Angela Mulvehill & Kerry Williams, Young People Now, Jan 2002
### APPENDIX 2

A list of working documents that Managing Agents or NSF projects have produced which readers are sign posted to as examples of documents that demonstrate effective practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSF Toolkit for Connexions Partnerships on working with the community &amp; voluntary sector</td>
<td>CDF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Design for Community &amp; Voluntary groups</td>
<td>Paul Woodcock (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application pack for community and voluntary groups</td>
<td>Chris Jones (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Chances</td>
<td>Chris Jones (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The community contribution to the alternative curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give them credit, Practical examples of recognising young people’s accreditation</td>
<td>Bruce Malkin (2003)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building on What community organisations can offer young people</td>
<td>Tony Taylor (2003)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moved on (Measuring the progress made by young people, 2003)</td>
<td>Tony Taylor (2003)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switched on (Running an ICT project with young people)</td>
<td>Tony Taylor (2003)</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directory of Community organisations delivering the Neighbourhood Support Fund - managed by Community Development Foundation</td>
<td>CDF (2004)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising school achievement; using community organisations to extend the school curriculum</td>
<td>Jan Docking (2004)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connexions where it counts; delivering the service with community organisation</td>
<td>Jan Docking (2004)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allied Against Exclusion</td>
<td>Learning Alliance (2002)</td>
<td>Telephone LA: 020 7713 6815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Contact Information</td>
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<td>YOT referral form</td>
<td>Learning Alliance (Rathbone)</td>
<td>LA, Paul Davidson – <a href="mailto:pdavision@csv.org.uk">pdavision@csv.org.uk</a> 207 Pentonville Road London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Manchester ISSP protocol &amp; procedures document</td>
<td>Learning Alliance (Rathbone)</td>
<td>As above</td>
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<td>Getting Sorted – (how Nacro works with disengaged young people - a handbook for staff)</td>
<td>Nacro</td>
<td>Telephone Nacro: 020 7582 6500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing Out: Key findings from Nacro’s research on children missing school</td>
<td>Nacro</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nacro.org.uk/">www.nacro.org.uk/</a> publications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alive and Kicking: Nacro’s Football projects for Young People</td>
<td>Nacro</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nacro.org.uk/">www.nacro.org.uk/</a> publications</td>
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<td>Newsletter - NSF Dialogue. Newsletter of The NYA – NSF – 2 issues per annum</td>
<td>The National Youth Agency (NYA)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rogerm@nya.org.uk">rogerm@nya.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NSF Development Framework</td>
<td>Wendy Flint &amp; Carol Jackson (2003)</td>
<td>£10.50 – <a href="mailto:sales@nya.org.uk">sales@nya.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Delivering social inclusion: An evaluation of NSF projects managed by NYA</td>
<td>David Turner Steve Martin (2004)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rogerm@nya.org.uk">rogerm@nya.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Working with Connexions for funding sustainability in NSF projects</td>
<td>National Youth Agency (2003)</td>
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<td>National framework of awards in non-formal educational settings</td>
<td>National Youth Agency (for the Network for accrediting Young People’s Achievement) 2003</td>
<td>£2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear by Right: Standards for the active involvement of children and young people</td>
<td>Harry Wade Bill Badham (2003)</td>
<td>£10.00</td>
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<td>Getting Connected Guide: curriculum framework for social inclusion</td>
<td>Dee Keane Bryan Merton Rosemary Napper Carol Jack</td>
<td>£90.00</td>
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<td>Recording and accreditation: Supporting young peoples achievement</td>
<td>(NIACE/ NYA 2002)</td>
<td>£3.50</td>
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<td>The next step: Learning from the NYA / NSF Programme</td>
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<td>→ Making it Last: Sustainability &amp; Fundraising</td>
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<td>→ Working in Partnerships</td>
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<td>→ Community Cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act by Right: a skills workbook for the active involvement of children and young people</td>
<td>NYA (June 2004) Bill Badham and Steve Beebee: NYA, May 2004</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>