

Participate: Policy and Context

Libraries, as one of the agencies specifically mentioned in the government's Aiming High strategy, are in a strong position to demonstrate and enhance their support for young people in the community. This work could open doors to increased youth involvement in planning and delivery; and result in new partnerships, increased recognition within the local authority, new funding opportunities and enhanced staff skills.

Libraries are free spaces, often open in places and at times when there are no other services available for young people, with knowledgeable staff and tailored collections and IT facilities. This is potentially a golden combination which can make your libraries appealing to a range of partners who lack these benefits. Through careful positioning and partnership working with youth providers, you could increase your reach; perhaps by:

- hosting youth celebration events during National Youth Week
- working with young people to develop local library forums and empowering them to help make decisions about service planning, delivery and peer advocacy.
- in offering opportunities for young people to get involved in budget devolution (a government priority)
- Create volunteering and accreditation opportunities for young people, with the aim of helping young people to move along a progression route: volunteering – accreditation – apprenticeship (e.g.) library work experience – employment (e.g. in the library service/ youth service).
- enhance opening hours staffed jointly by library staff and youth workers. Funding is available for Friday and Saturday night activities for young people living in areas of high social deprivation.

This document provides an overview of recent government policy and targets, the library sector response through the Library Offer and an outline of current funding opportunities and sources. Further more detailed information will be provided directly to Participate authorities through the seminars and training sessions and through individual consultancy support.

Supporting national priorities

We're at a point of huge opportunity for young people's services. The key policy agendas across government departments are about reducing inequality and building sustainable local communities. They include a commitment to empowering young people; which the government has set out in [Every Child Matters](#), [Aiming High](#) and the [Children's Plan](#).

[Aiming High](#) (2007), the government's 10 year strategy for young people, sets out the vision for how sustained participation should be achieved. At local authority level, services are required to consult **13** to **19** year olds and involve them actively in determining the shape and extent of provision. By **2018** young people will decide on the allocation of at least **25%** of total local authority spend on services for them, including positive activities and access to safe spaces. These activities should give young people opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and self esteem. Volunteering and opportunities for recognition and accreditation are seen as a vital part of achieving that.

It's crucial to future funding and sustainability that your libraries effectively engage and involve young people. Libraries which don't engage will risk becoming marginalised. With increased youth involvement, your libraries will be better placed to benefit from major new funding streams. Participate will help you develop the key skills, advocacy and partnerships that make this possible. It will help you respond to new local priorities and targets and provide opportunities for inclusion in your local Children's Plan.

Local authority targets addressed by Participate

Participate can help you to work in a variety of ways with a range of young people (including those who are socially excluded) with the result that you will be able to contribute to government targets and priorities such as Public Service Agreements, National Indicators and Local Area Agreements.

Public Service Agreements (PSAs) are cross-government priorities, agreed between government departments and the Treasury as part of the current Comprehensive Spending Review. Amongst the **30** current PSAs, **7** relate specifically to children and young people. Libraries' work with young people supports a number of PSAs, including:

- PSA 10 Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people
- PSA 11 Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers
- PSA 14 Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success
- PSA 21 Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

National [Indicators](#) (NIs) are a central part of the government's performance management regime for local authorities. The NIs provide a clear statement of the government's priorities for delivery by local government and its partners from 2008-11.

The 198 NIs focus on outcomes for the community. Participate will help your libraries to improve their performance in relation to key NIs including:

- NI6 - Participation in regular volunteering
- NI 9 – Use of public libraries (16+ only)
- NI 106 – Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education
- NI 110 - Young people's participation in positive activities
- NI 117 – 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Through targeted delivery, Participate can also help you to engage with young people who are socially excluded. Groups we have already reached through our young people's projects include:

- Black and minority ethnic young people
- Young People not in education, employment or training
- Looked after young people and care leavers
- Young people with disabilities
- Young people at risk of exclusion from school
- Homeless or vulnerably housed young people

Participate will help you to develop key partnerships with other youth providers and enable you to demonstrate your service contribution to Local Area Agreement (LAA) [local priorities](#) and delivery targets. As named deliverers in LAAs, you could unlock central funding, for example for delivering positive activities through the local Children's Plan. Participate will help you achieve against LAA priorities including:

- Support young people's mental and emotional health by helping them enjoy life and make a positive contribution (ref NI 69 - bullying; NI 115 - Substance misuse ; NI 119 - overall health and wellbeing)
- Strengthen community cohesion – through improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding (ref NI 1 - get on well together; NI 17 - Perceptions of antisocial behaviour; NI 23 - Perceptions that people treat each other with respect)
- Enrich individual lives, strengthen communities and improve places where people live through culture (ref. ; NI 2 - % who feel they belong to their community; NI 5 - overall, general satisfaction with the local area)
- Contribute to young people's enjoyment and achievement through increased participation in cultural activities. (ref NI 11 - arts ; NI 45 - Young offenders; NI 79 and NI 80 – Level 2/3 qualifications; NI 91 – Education or training; NI 106 – higher education; NI 110 - positive activities; NI 117 – NEET)
- Contribute to young people making a positive contribution to their community through empowerment, consultation, and volunteering opportunities (ref. NI 110 - Young people's participation in positive activities; NI6 - Participation in regular volunteering)

In addition, Participate will help you to address the following agendas:

- Change for Children (see Every Child Matters and Youth Matters)
- MLA's Action Plan based on Framework for the Future objectives (e.g. by developing workforce capacity and skills assisting in library modernisation).

And will help by providing valuable evidence you can use to support *Investors in People* and *Charter Mark* accreditation.

Library Offer to Young People

The [Library Offer to Young People](#)' (2008) was developed by the national Youth Libraries Board, a partnership between libraries, the youth sector and central government. It is based on extensive consultation with young people and encapsulates the vision for what every young person should expect from their library service. It demonstrates how libraries contribute to *Aiming High* and National Indicator targets. Participate supports you to develop the skills and delivery programmes to achieve the full Library Offer to Young People, helping you to put in place the strategic vision and values, key partnerships and practical service

¹Read the full *Library offer to young people* at www.readingagency.org.uk/young/library-offer-to-young-people/

improvements developed for young people, in partnership with young people. The Offer includes:

- Young people's participation in shaping the future of library services
- Volunteering opportunities
- A place to develop citizenship skills and community engagement
- Free, safe and welcoming spaces in the local community
- Formal and informal learning support
- Inspiring reading materials supported by positive activities
- Information on education, training and careers
- Use the Offer as a key advocacy tool for your library service when negotiating inclusion in LAAs and local Children's Plans, or briefing your Portfolio Holder. Full details of the Offer and resources including guidance notes, a PowerPoint presentation and briefings for Heads of Service can be downloaded from [The Reading Agency](#) website.

"Any authority that delivers the full national Library Offer to Young People is delivering Aiming High."

Katharine Davies, DCSF Youth Task Force **2008**²

Funding opportunities

The government is investing £679 million in local authority delivery of Aiming High. This includes the youth-led Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF). Every local authority has an allocation for these funds, although additional funding is available for the most deprived communities. The direct link between Participate and service improvement will enable you to develop a better position to find ways to access this wider local authority funding.

For example if you are able to demonstrate a contribution to LAA targets for young people, and the contribution is identified in the local Children's Plan, you may be able to fund part or all of Participate through the local Children's Plan budget, or access the YOF or YCF to support HeadSpace or Groupthing. If your activities are included in the delivery plans for individual indicators or targets, you may be able to access corporate funding to support or expand them.

For major capital investment, the MYPlace³ fund is the first of the national grant opportunities to support Aiming High. £160 million is available for local authority partnerships, including libraries, to create joint use youth facilities. The government is allocating a further £160m to generate positive activities with young people⁴. Other funding is becoming available to support young people, including funding for youth sector partners to provide positive activities for young people on Friday and Saturday nights.

Many of these funds will only be open to you if you are working in partnership with other youth providers and can demonstrate that young people have been actively consulted and involved in bid development as equal partners. Improved participation of young people will also open up a range of awards from grant-giving organisations to support project activities with young people. These awards include:

- Princes Trust-Community Cash Awards
- Big Lottery-Young People's Fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund-Young Roots
- Youth Bank-All awards
- V- V Cashpoint
- European Commission- Youth in Action programmes
- DCSF Youth Media Fund "MediaBox"

By working to involve young people at all levels of your service you can support local and national meet government targets and priorities and change the life chances of young people in your community.

In order to begin this work you need to ensure that your service is underpinned by the appropriate values and that your library's culture is hospitable to young people's participation.

For more information on establishing the right conditions for young people's involvement, see the Making Change Happen document Values and Culture. Also see the Making Change Happen Partnership Working document for support on developing strong youth focused partnerships.

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³ For more information about mYPlace, visit the Big Lottery website page www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_myplace.htm?regioncode=-uk&status=theProg

⁴ *Aiming High Implementation Plan* (DCSF, March 2008).