

Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund

Evaluation findings from initial case study visits

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

Contents

	page
Acknowledgements	i
Executive summary	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aims and objectives	2
1.3 Research methods	2
1.4 Structure of the report	7
2. Context and history of youth participation	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Context of local area	10
2.3 History of youth participation	10
2.4 Management of the Funds	12
2.5 Relationship between the Funds and the LAs' strategic aims	13
2.6 Summary	14
3. Models of delivery for the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund	15
3.1 Introduction	15
3.2 Approaches to managing and delivering the Funds	16
3.3 Outcomes of different approaches	19
3.4 Summary	22
4. Marketing and promotion	23
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Approaches to marketing and promotion	23
4.3 Involvement of young people	25
4.4 Reaching hard-to-reach young people	26
4.5 Summary	29
5. The application process	31
5.1 Introduction	31
5.2 Application procedures	31
5.3 Experience of applying for funding	35
5.4 Summary	37
6. The decision-making group	39
6.1 Introduction	39
6.2 Structure of the panel	40
6.3 Models affecting decision-making panels	41
6.4 Membership of the panel	43
6.5 Reasons for involvement	47
6.6 Training provided for young people	48
6.7 Summary	49

7.	Decision-making process and nature of projects funded	51
7.1	Introduction	51
7.2	Process of reviewing applications	52
7.3	Applications not approved for funding	56
7.4	Applications awarded funding	58
7.5	Summary	63
8.	Funding and monitoring processes	65
8.1	Introduction	65
8.2	Mechanisms for providing funding	66
8.3	Use of central fund of £15,000 or five per cent	68
8.4	Allocation of Funds	70
8.5	Monitoring approaches	71
8.6	Summary	73
9.	Early outcomes	75
9.1	Introduction	75
9.2	Panel members' views on outcomes for young people	76
9.3	LA staff's views on outcomes for young people	77
9.4	Outcomes for young people who applied for the Funds	79
9.5	Outcomes for the LAs	82
9.6	Summary	83
10.	Challenges and future developments	85
10.1	Introduction	85
10.2	Challenges and lessons learned	86
10.3	Future developments	88
10.4	Summary	90
11.	Conclusion	91
11.1	Introduction	91
11.2	Have the structures for the Funds been established?	91
11.3	How far have LAs involved young people in designing the Funds structures?	92
11.4	How far have LAs involved a range of young people, including those from target groups, in the Funds structures?	92
11.5	Have appropriate projects been funded by the YOF/YCF?	93
11.6	How far was the decision-making process led by young people?	93
11.7	Have the LAs reached a range of young people applying for funding including target groups?	93
11.8	What has been the impact to date on empowering young people and engendering a culture of participation?	94
11.9	Has giving young people control and decision-making power about resources in their area increased levels of participation in positive activities?	94
11.10	Has giving young people a voice (through funding and consultation) led to an increase in the provision of quality positive activities?	95
11.11	What are the implications for the next phase of research?	95
11.12	Recommendations	96
	Appendix A Implementation of the Funds across 150 Local Authorities	99

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Executive summary

Background

The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund (YOF/YCF) were established in April 2006, as part of the proposals in the Youth Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’. This ring-fenced funding of £115 million was made available for two years to Local Authorities (LAs) to work with young people to administer. The overall aim of the Funds was to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving young people power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. Young people are able to apply for finance to support the development of facilities and positive activities in their area, and these applications are assessed by other young people who make decisions on whether applications are successful through a decision-making panel.

The YOF/YCF guidance notes state that all young people aged 13-19 should be able to participate in YOF/YCF, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and hard-to-reach groups. These include young people who traditionally face barriers to participation such as *‘young disabled people, young care leavers, looked after young people, young offenders, young carers, young refugees, young lesbians and gay men, young black and minority ethnic people, travellers and those in rural areas’*.¹

The Department for Education and Skills (as from 28th June 2007 replaced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and, hereinafter, referred to as DCSF in this report) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to conduct an evaluation of the YOF/YCF. This summary presents the main findings from the interim report of the evaluation (the final report will be available in summer 2008).

Key findings:

- **Involvement of young people** – The evidence indicated that the LAs had met the objective of the Funds, which was to give young people a voice, through consultation and control over resources. The LAs had involved young people in the design and development of the Funds processes and procedures, and the young people involved in the decision-making panels felt that their views were generally respected.
- **Activities and facilities funded** – Early indications show that a wide range and variety of projects and activities had been funded through the YOF/YCF. It was generally reported that these projects were providing young people with an opportunity that they would not otherwise have had,

¹ Department for Education and Skills (2006). Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes, Nottingham: DfES.

either because the LA or other agencies would not have thought of the ideas in the applications, or because of lack of resources.

- **Reaching target groups of young people** – LAs had, to some extent, involved young people from a range of backgrounds and with a variety of characteristics, including those from hard-to-reach groups. However, this was an area of development for LAs. Although some funded projects included those from young people from hard-to-reach groups, at the time of the case-study visits, applications tended to come from young people in established groups that were related to the Youth Service.
- **Outcomes to date** – The Funds were helping to strengthen or broaden LAs' existing systems for consulting young people. Involvement in the Funds had enabled LAs to gain further insights into what young people need, to identify gaps in provision, to engage with new groups of young people and to develop their confidence in combining empowering young people with finance. Young people's responsible and altruistic approach to distributing the Funds was also contributing to engendering a culture of empowerment and an ethos where young people's views were sought and valued.

Aims and research methods

The evaluation aims to explore the impact of the YOF/YCF and the first stage of the evaluation had the following objectives:

- to explore the context in which the LAs were implementing the Funds, with particular reference to the extent to which there was a history of involving young people in decision making
- to investigate the approaches adopted to implementing the Funds and the rationales underpinning these
- to examine the processes established to facilitate and support young people in their role as decision makers
- to ascertain the initial outcomes from the Funds.

In order to achieve these objectives, a programme of case-study visits to a sample of 12 LAs was carried out in January and February 2007. During this first stage of the evaluation, 204 interviews were conducted with LA staff, young people, and staff in organisations that provided services for young people. Further details are provided at the end of the summary.

Context

The aims of the YOF/YCF aligned with the views expressed by young people in the case-study LAs that services and activities for young people in their areas could be improved. The YOF/YCF was felt to fit well with LAs' strategic aims and priorities and all but three of the 12 LAs had made use of their existing structures for consulting young people, to a greater or lesser extent, when implementing the Funds. In the LAs that had not built on their

existing youth participation structures, staff had sought to create new YOF/YCF structures that they considered to be more appropriate and inclusive.

The presence of pre-existing structures to involve young people did not appear to be a determinant of the extent to which LAs adopted a youth-driven approach from the outset or had allocated Funds within the financial year. Although similar approaches to individual elements of the delivery of the YOF/YCF were adopted across the 12 LAs, overall, no prevailing model or approach that combined these elements in the same way emerged among the LAs visited. Rather, they appeared to have established structures that reflected their local contexts, priorities and strategic aims, and the time and resources available.

Involvement of young people

In general, the LAs had actively involved young people in the **design and development** of the Funds processes and procedures, including the design of promotional materials and the application processes and criteria. The young people interviewed who had been involved in this process reported that their views were generally respected and that the outcomes reflected their preferred approach. Some areas had involved consultation of the wider community of young people about the design, including through surveys and by voting on a range of options. LA staff commented on the length of time required to consult fully with young people and, in some instances, had not consulted as much as they would have liked, as a result.

LAs were reviewing their approaches to the implementation of YOF/YCF, together with young people, and making appropriate changes such as extending decision-making panels to incorporate a wider range of young people, amending promotional materials and application forms and targeting promotion at specific groups of young people.

Young people were actively involved in the Funds through the **decision-making panels** that approved applications. LAs had adopted a range of approaches to the structure and membership of the decision-making panels that were established, with some operating just one panel and others operating both devolved area panels, and a LA-wide panel.

Panel members felt that their groups were largely representative of the local youth populations they served, and involved young people from a range of backgrounds. However, most LAs found it a challenge to encourage a wide and diverse group of young people to get involved in the panels. Interviews with LA staff indicated that the structure of the panels may develop further in future through, for example, the addition of area panels or a greater focus on hard-to-reach groups.

The prevailing view among LA staff, and supported by the views of the young people who were panel members, was that the young people made decisions independently about the applications and that these decisions were generally respected by LA staff. Panels had generally established criteria for making decisions and benefited from training and the guidance of LA staff. Panel members in all LAs were rigorous in ensuring that applications were based on the ideas and wishes of young people and rejected applications that appeared to have been written by adults. Adults sometimes supported applicants by discussing project ideas with them and providing guidance with the more complex aspects of the application.

Activities and facilities funded

In the 12 LAs, the number of projects funded ranged from six to 123 and LA staff reported that the number of applications was increasing as the Funds became more established. Early indications from the 12 LAs visited suggest that a wide range of types of projects and activities have been funded through the YOF/YCF by January and February 2007, including projects related to the arts, sports and learning and the development or improvement of facilities where young people could go. The types of projects funded could be characterised as:

- those where a finite group of young people participate for a finite period of time (e.g. a residential trip)
- provision of facilities or equipment that can be accessed by an unspecified number of young people for an extended period of time or indefinitely (e.g. a youth shelter)
- provision of a service that can be accessed by an unspecified number of young people but in a finite period of time (e.g. a week-long course working with DJs)
- a project or activity for a finite number of young people which involves the development of skills that can be used to benefit other young people over a period of time (e.g. being a peer mentor).

At the time of the visits, in January and February 2007, some LAs had allocated all their funding to projects. However, this was not the case among all the LAs, and some had concerns that they would not be able to spend all of their allocated funding by the end of the financial year. This was particularly the case in LAs that paid funding to projects in arrears.

Reaching target groups of young people who traditionally face barriers to participation

The YOF/YCF was particularly targeted at young people from disadvantaged areas and those from specific target groups detailed in the YOF/YCF guidance. In order to make contact with specific target groups, LAs often worked with existing contacts to raise the awareness and involvement of hard-

to-reach young people. Detached youth workers also undertook YOF/YCF-related outreach work in some areas.

There were examples across the case-study areas of successful applications from young people in disadvantaged areas and from target groups, and LA staff considered that the number of applications was increasing and diversifying. However, at the time of the visits, many of the applications were said to be from established youth groups that were most commonly related to the Youth Service and, although these groups included the target groups of young people, LA staff were seeking to further increase the diversity of applications from voluntary and community sector organisations and ‘harder-to-reach’ young people. Approaches to achieving this included: outreach work, targeted promotion and protected sub-funds for specific target groups.

Outcomes to date

Many young people had become involved with the panels because they wanted to make young people’s views heard and take ownership of the activities and resources being developed for young people in their local area. The panel members were key beneficiaries at this stage of the implementation of the Funds. Young people and LA staff reported that panel members had gained a sense of empowerment that resulted from being respected, listened to and valued by adults and from the distinctive value of the Funds in combining decision-making power for young people with resources.

The positive attitude and altruistic approach of young people who participated in the panel, and those who applied for the Funds, had impressed adults. This was said to be helping to address negative perceptions of young people and to engender a culture whereby adults were more willing to consider involving young people in decision making.

At this early stage in the Funds development, the YOF/YCF were reported to have contributed to enriching and enhancing provision for young people and had provided those who had applied with an opportunity that they would not otherwise have been able to access, either because of the novelty of the idea or because of lack of resources. A sense of ownership, due to developing an idea and applying for funding, was said to contribute to young people’s engagement in these activities.

The Funds were also said to have supported the further development of LAs’ work in involving young people by strengthening, refreshing or broadening existing systems for consulting young people. Involvement in the Funds had enabled LAs to gain further insights into what young people need, to identify gaps in provision, to engage with new groups of young people and to develop their confidence in combining empowering young people with finance.

Research methods

This summary is based on findings from research visits to a sample of 12 LAs that were carried out in January and February 2007. All nine Government Office regions were represented within the sample, which was broadly representative in terms of the types of LA. While the aim of the sample was not to be representative of all characteristics, such as size of LA and levels of deprivation, the sample comprised LAs with a broad range of demographic characteristics.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 47 LA staff, including senior managers and operational managers with responsibility for the Funds and supporting staff. A total of 54 young people who were members of decision-making panels were interviewed and 70 young people who had successfully applied for Funds. In addition, interviews were conducted with 33 individuals from organisations that functioned as service providers to the young people and whose services had been commissioned as a result of a successful Funds application, and staff from successfully funded projects. The authors would like to extend their thanks to the interviewees who made time to discuss their experiences of the YOF/YCF.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund (YOF/YCF) were established in April 2006, as part of the proposals in the Youth Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’. This ring-fenced funding of £115 million was made available for two years to Local Authorities (LAs) to work with young people to administer. The overall aim of the Funds was to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving young people power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. Young people are able to apply for finance to develop projects with a revenue requirement (activities), through the YOF, and a capital requirement (facilities), through the YCF. These applications are assessed by other young people who make decisions on whether applications are successful through a decision-making panel. Thus there are three groups of young people who may be affected by, and benefit from, the YOF/YCF. These are: those who participate in the decision-making group, those who apply for Funding and the wider community of young people who may access facilities, projects and opportunities that have been developed as a result of a successful application to the YOF/YCF.

The stated main purpose of the Funds was to:

- give a voice to young people, particularly disadvantaged young people, in relation to things to do and places to go, conveying a powerful message to young people that their needs and aspirations are important
- change the way that local authorities and their partners provide activities and facilities for young people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, increasing the responsiveness of providers to what young people want
- improve things to do and places to go in line with what young people want in their neighbourhoods
- provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities, gaining recognition and accreditation
- increase the well-being of young people by contributing to the achievement of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes
- increase young people's engagement with services and with the democratic process at local level.

The YOF/YCF guidance notes state that all young people aged 13-19 should be able to participate in YOF/YCF, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and the hard-to-reach. These include young people who traditionally face barriers to participation such as *‘young disabled*

people, young care leavers, looked after young people, young offenders, young carers, young refugees, young lesbians and gay men, young black and minority ethnic people, travellers and those in rural areas’.²

1.2 Aims and objectives

The evaluation aims to explore the impact of the YOF/YCF on young people and to examine the following hypotheses:

- that giving young people control and decision-making power about resources in their area will increase levels of participation in positive activities
- that giving young people a voice (through funding / consultation) will lead to an increase in the provision of quality positive activities.

In meeting these aims, the first stage of the evaluation had the following objectives:

- to explore the context in which the LAs were implementing the Funds, with particular reference to the extent to which there was a history of involving young people in decision making
- to investigate the approaches adopted to implementing the Funds and the rationales underpinning these
- to examine the processes established to facilitate and support young people in their role as decision makers
- to ascertain the initial outcomes from the Funds.

This interim report focuses on the processes and structures established by LAs, and young people’s experience of informing and implementing these processes. The relationship between these approaches, and the outcomes for the Funds, will be explored through the follow-up visits (in autumn 2007).

1.3 Research methods

The research entailed two main phases of data collection:

- telephone survey of all 150 LAs in England
- case-study visits to a sample of 12 LAs.

² Department for Education and Skills (2006) Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes, Nottingham: DfES

These data collection exercises were supplemented by a review of reports submitted to Government Offices by the 12 case-study LAs.

1.3.1 Telephone interviews

In order to set the context for the evaluation, and to establish the development of the Funds in advance of the case-study visits, a programme of telephone interviews with the manager with responsibility for the YOF/YCF in all 150 LAs was conducted in November and December 2006.

The targeted telephone interviews aimed to provide an insight into the implementation of the Funds, and the context in which LAs were operating. The semi-structured interviews focused on the:

- existing structures within the LA for involving young people
- approaches adopted to marketing and promoting the Funds
- application process
- structures established for young people to assess applications
- funding process
- number of applications received and Funds awards made.

All 150 LAs participated in an interview and the findings, which provide an insight into the operation of the Funds across England, are presented in Appendix A. In addition to providing an overview and wider context, analysis of the telephone interviews informed the selection of the sample of 12 LAs for the case-study visits.

1.3.2 Selection of the sample

A stratified sample of 12 LAs was selected to be visited for the case-study research. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the characteristics of the 12 LAs. All nine Government Office regions were represented within the sample, which was broadly representative in terms of the types of LA. Three were County authorities, three were Metropolitan authorities, three were Unitary authorities and three were London Boroughs. While the aim of the sample was not to be representative of all characteristics, such as size of LA and levels of deprivation, the sample comprised LAs with a broad range of demographic characteristics.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of the sample of LAs

Government Office	Type of LA	Urban/Rural area	Size of LA (population)	Level of deprivation (IDACI score)**	% population who are white British	YOF/YCF Funds (rounded figure)***
North East	Unitary	Mixed	Small	Medium	97%	£150,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Small	High	43%	£400,000
Eastern	Unitary	Urban	Small	Medium	86%	£200,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Medium	High	52%	£400,000
South East	County	Rural	Large	Low	90%	£650,000
Yorkshire & Humber	Unitary	Semi-rural	Small	Medium	96%	£200,000
West Midlands	Metropolitan	Urban	Medium	High	78%	£450,000
North West	Metropolitan	Urban	Large	High	92%	£800,000
East Midlands	County	Semi-rural	Large	Low	97%	£700,000
Yorkshire and Humber	Metropolitan	Urban	Large	Medium	89%	£600,000
London	London Borough	Urban	Medium	High	34%	£400,000
South West	County	Rural	Large	Low	97%	£500,000

*The size of LA has been categorised according to population figures, as follows: small – up to 158,200; medium – 158,201 to 239,500; large – 239,501 to 1,062,700.

**IDACI is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, a measure devised for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This score relates to Lower Level Super Output Areas (similar size to electoral wards).

***Amount of Funds received have been rounded to maintain anonymity.

In addition to the characteristics detailed in Table 1.1, the stage of progress and the extent to which an LA had a history of youth participation were taken into consideration to ensure that LAs with a range of contexts and experiences were included in the sample.

1.3.3 Case-study visits

Case-study visits to the 12 LAs were conducted during January and February 2007. Each visit was tailored to the context of the LA and the stage of progress in implementing the Funds but, in general, a visit entailed interviews with the following:

- Senior manager in the LA with overall responsibility for the YOF/YCF (14 interviewees in total).
- Operational manager in the LA or partner organisation with responsibility for the Funds (15 interviewees).

- Other staff in the LA with involvement in the Funds (18 interviewees). These included staff with administrative and financial management responsibilities, area or district Youth Service managers, and individuals who provided training to young people.
- Representatives of the decision-making panel of young people with responsibility for the YOF/YCF (54 interviewees).
- Representatives of young people who had successfully applied for the Funds (70 interviewees).
- Staff from organisations that functioned as service providers to the young people and whose services had been commissioned as a result of a successful Funds application, and staff from successfully funded projects (33 interviewees).

Details of the interviews undertaken in each LA are provided in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Numbers of interviews achieved in each case-study LA

LA	LA senior managers	Operational managers in LA/ partner organisations	Other staff from LA	Young people on decision-making panel	Staff from 'service providers'/ successful projects	Young people from projects that had successfully bid for funding
1	1	2	0	0	0	5
2	1	1	2	4	3	0
3	1	2	1	7	1	0
4	1	1	1	6	2	2
5	1	1	2	4	5	3
6	1	1	2	5	0	5
7	2	2	0	5	6	0
8	1	1	2	7	1	13
9	2	1	2	3	2	5
10	1	1	1	3	4	15
11	1	1	3	4	3	18
12	1	1	2	6	6	4
Total	14	15	18	54	33	70

The visits aimed to explore the experiences, to date, of LA staff, young people and service providers in implementing the Funds and the outcomes thus far. More specifically they explored:

- the local context and history of youth participation

- the model for implementing the Funds, and influences on this, and perceptions of the relationship between the Funds and the LAs' strategies and priorities
- LAs' use of the five per cent, or £15,000 (whichever is the larger), of YOF/YCF funding which may be used centrally by LAs
- approaches adopted to marketing and promotion and young people's awareness of the Funds
- strategies adopted to targeting young people who are 'hard-to-reach'
- the experience of applying for the YOF/YCF
- the structure of the decision-making panel and young people's reasons for involvement
- the process of assessing applications and criteria for selection
- the nature of successful applications
- the mechanisms for providing the funding to successful applicants
- training, support and guidance provided for, and received by, staff and young people
- approaches adopted to monitoring and evaluating the Funds and successful projects
- the main outcomes to date
- the challenges experienced and lessons learned
- perceptions of future developments.

The analysis of the case-study LAs was supplemented by a review of supporting documentation and the first biannual reports to Government Offices, which were submitted in October 2006.

The views of LA staff, service providers and supporting adults, and young people, are presented in this report. In relation to some aspects, the numbers of LAs where an approach was found, or where a view was expressed are detailed. This is to provide some guidance as to the extent of an experience or approach within these 12 LAs. However, in considering these figures, it is worth taking into consideration that, during the interviews, respondents were not all asked identical questions with a range of responses, as they would be on a questionnaire. Rather, the views expressed in response to a semi-structured set of interview questions will reflect the issues, priorities, concerns and context for each interviewee.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 of the report explores the local context of the case-study areas, from the perspective of young people, and examines the extent to which LAs had a history of youth participation prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF.

Chapter 3 summarises the key elements that comprised the models of delivery adopted across the case-study LAs, and investigates the relationship between the approaches adopted and the outcomes to date.

Chapter 4 discusses the strategies used by LAs for marketing and promoting YOF/YCF to young people, including those from hard-to-reach groups, and explores the extent to which young people were involved in the design of materials.

Chapter 5 presents findings relating to LAs' YOF/YCF application procedures, including the extent of young people's involvement in the design of the procedure and materials. It also explores young people's experiences of applying for funding.

Chapter 6 describes the structure and membership of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels in the case-study LAs. It also explores the extent to which LAs have encouraged the involvement of hard-to-reach young people, the reasons why young people became members of the panels, and the training provided to these young people.

Chapter 7 explores the process of decision making in the YOF/YCF panels, and the support and guidance provided to the young people involved in this process. It also examines the nature of the projects funded through the YOF/YCF, and the number and characteristics of young people involved in applying for funding and benefiting from projects.

Chapter 8 discusses the mechanisms for providing YOF/YCF funding to successful projects, and LAs' approaches for monitoring and evaluating projects. It also examines the way in which LAs had spent the five per cent of YOF/YCF that was allocated for LA use.

Chapter 9 explores the early indications of the outcomes from the Funds, for members of decision-making panels, applicants, the wider community of young people, and for LAs.

Chapter 10 presents LA staff's reflections on implementing the Funds, including the key challenges and lessons learned and the future development of the Funds.

Chapter 11 concludes the report by highlighting the key issues arising from the report, and providing recommendations for policy makers, Government Offices, LAs and panel members.

2. Context and history of youth participation

Key findings

- Most of the young people interviewed felt that services and activities for young people in their area could be improved. This was particularly the case in more rural areas, where the lack of adequate transport systems limited young people's ability to access provision.
- All of the case-study LAs had some existing structures in place, prior to YOF/YCF, for involving young people in local decision making, and all but three had made use of these existing structures, to a greater or lesser extent, when implementing the Funds. In the LAs that had not built on their existing youth participation structures, staff had sought to create new YOF/YCF structures which they considered to be more appropriate and inclusive.
- There was general consensus among LA staff that the aims of the Funds complemented their authority's strategic aims, and fitted well with other policies and agendas within their LA, particularly with their Children and Young People's Plan and Youth Participation Strategy, and with the Every Child Matters agenda.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the local context of the 12 case-study areas, and the extent to which LAs had a history of youth involvement prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF. It draws largely on the interviews conducted with LA staff, but it also includes findings from interviews with young people involved in YOF/YCF decision-making panels, and those who successfully applied for funding. More specifically, the chapter examines:

- The extent to which LAs had existing structures in place for involving young people in local decision making, and how far they built on these structures when implementing the Funds.
- The way in which YOF/YCF had been managed within LAs, including the personnel involved, and their roles and responsibilities.
- The perceived aims of YOF/YCF, and the relationship between the Funds and the LAs' strategic aims and priorities.

2.2 Context of local area

On the whole, the young people interviewed (both those who were involved in a YOF/YCF decision-making panel, and those who had successfully applied for funding), felt that services and activities for young people in their area could be improved. There appeared to be some differences in young people's views, however, depending on the nature of the area in which they lived.

In the seven urban areas visited, for example, young people generally felt that there was quite a lot of provision, including leisure centres, cinemas, parks and youth clubs, as one young man commented: *'There is a lot...we are not deprived of opportunities'*. However, another young person in the same authority stated that there was *'nothing new and exciting'*. Interviewees in two of these LAs indicated that there was a lot of variation in provision, depending on which town young people lived in and that, while there were activities for young people in the borough as a whole, there was not necessarily much provision in their local area. Young people in one LA also indicated that, while there was sufficient provision in the area, young people's concerns about their safety hindered them from participating in such provision: *'There's too many gangs...you're too scared to go out in case you get shot'*.

In the five rural and semi-rural areas, there was general consensus among the young people interviewed that provision for young people was limited, as the following comments illustrate: *'There is nothing at all to do'*; *'There is not a lot happening'*; *'Even if you can find something to do, it's not long before someone's telling you, "you shouldn't be doing that".'* The lack of provision appeared to be compounded by the limited transport systems in operation in rural areas. One young person, for example, stated that *'one of the problems is the transport is really bad around here...it's not easy to get into town, where all the stuff is'*, while another highlighted the difficulty of *'making sure that people in rural areas have the same opportunities as people in other areas'*. The extent to which young people perceived the Funds to have had an impact on provision in their area is explored in Chapter 9.

2.3 History of youth participation

All of the case-study LAs had some existing structures in place, prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF, for involving young people in local decision making. These included county-wide and district level youth councils, assemblies, forums and youth parliaments through which young people are consulted about services in their area.

As well as having experience of consulting with young people, and involving them in local decision making, five LAs also reported that they had prior experience of actively engaging young people in grant-making. Staff in these

LAs indicated that they had previously been involved in similar initiatives to YOF/YCF, which involved young people making decisions about what funding should be spent on, although interviewees noted that the amount of funding available was on a smaller scale than YOF/YCF.

However, the extent to which youth participation structures were fully embedded within LAs prior to the Funds, and the level of youth participation they reportedly generated, varied among the LAs. The length of time that such existing structures had been in place, for example, ranged from two to eight years. While some LA staff felt that they had a strong history of youth participation, and were *'good at involving young people at every level'*, others felt that their youth participation structures could be improved. The operational manager within one LA, for example, described their youth participation work as *'hit and miss'*, while in another, a member of LA staff reported that they *'have a chequered history of working in this area, with pockets of young people doing something'*.

Consequently, there was some variation across the case-study LAs in the extent to which LAs had built on their existing youth participation structures when implementing the Funds. Staff in nine of the case-study areas stated that they had made use of their existing structures and strategies, and they noted that this had eased the implementation of the Funds. For example, the operational manager in one LA that had a youth parliament, youth forum and Young Mayor system indicated that they had been able *'to build on some of the things we had got going successfully at a borough level'*. The senior manager in another LA, with an established youth parliament, consisting of area youth forums, felt that their *'sophisticated decision-making structures'* gave them *'an initial base'* from which to implement the Funds.

However, three LAs reported that they had not built on existing youth participation structures. The first of these LAs felt that they did not have appropriate structures in place for implementing YOF/YCF as, although they had some history of consulting with young people, the LA did not have any experience of engaging them in youth-led grant-making. The senior manager in this LA described the authority as *'pretty much at a standing start in this respect'*. In contrast, the remaining two LAs had deliberately chosen not to build on existing youth participation structures (such as their youth council or youth parliament), but preferred instead to create new structures. The operational manager in one of these LAs, for example, felt that their youth parliament had tended to involve *'the same middle class, academically able young people'*, and she wanted the Funds to involve a more representative group of young people.

2.4 Management of the Funds

2.4.1 Roles and responsibilities

In ten of the 12 case-study authorities visited, the YOF/YCF programme was being managed by the LA itself, with the Youth Service taking the lead role in implementing the Funds. Two LAs had taken a different approach, and had subcontracted responsibility of the Funds to partner organisations with experience of engaging young people in grant-giving, although the LA still retained overall management responsibility.

All LAs had appointed a senior member of staff, usually the Head of Youth Service, or similar, to have overall management responsibility for the Funds. The more operational aspects of implementing the Funds tended to be undertaken by a youth worker or participation worker within the authority, who was responsible for the day-to-day organisation and delivery of the Funds. In the two LAs that were working with partner organisations, however, this role was being undertaken by support workers from these organisations. This operational role tended to involve setting up and coordinating the YOF/YCF decision-making panel, and facilitating their meetings, promoting the Funds and liaising with applicants.

A range of other personnel were also involved in supporting the delivery of the Funds, including finance managers, who had responsibility for the financial aspects of the Funds, and administrators, who were responsible for sending out and receiving application forms and dealing with queries from applicants. In addition to the support of the lead operational manager in the LA, five LAs had employed supplementary youth workers or youth participation workers (on a full-time or part-time basis) to help support young people on the decision-making panel, or those submitting applications for YOF/YCF funding. Two authorities also reported that staff with particular expertise, such as web design or marketing, had supported the delivery of the Funds.

2.4.2 Support and training

The majority of operational and senior managers said that the main support they had received to help them implement the Funds was through attendance at conferences and other information sharing events, such as those organised by the National Youth Agency, YouthBank and Government Offices. As most of the operational managers were experienced at working with young people, few thought that additional training was necessary, as one interviewee explained: *‘Once the processes are set up, it’s just everyday work’*. Operational managers also said they felt they had good line management and collegiate support when needed. However, a minority said they would have liked additional guidance, face-to-face, to get a personal overview of the programme. An operational manager explained: *‘Training would have been*

helpful. I think it would have been beneficial to have a clear briefing from the government office, rather than lots of paperwork’.

Youth workers and adult facilitators were the main group to undertake structured, formal training. Training was provided by LA and GO staff and by specialist external organisations. Training typically covered funding criteria, working with the hard-to-reach group (where necessary), and guidance on how to best support panel members. Participants described this training as being relevant and useful.

2.5 Relationship between the Funds and the LAs’ strategic aims

The comments given by LA staff on the aims of YOF/YCF revealed that they considered the Funds to have two main aims: to engage young people in decision making; and to improve services and activities for young people.

Most of the LA staff interviewed felt that the main aim of the Funds was to **involve young people in local decision-making** and give them ‘*voices and choices*’ about services in their local area. One operational manager, for example, stated that the Funds aimed to give young people ‘*a real say in the development of activities in their local communities*’, while another indicated that YOF/YCF aimed to give young people the opportunity ‘*to have some control over what money is spent on and be able to identify things that they want to do and for them to take responsibility in organising that*’. Interviewees also reported that by engaging young people in decision making, the Funds aimed to ‘*empower*’ young people, as illustrated by the following comment from one operational manager:

It’s about increasing power of decision making in young people’s hands, so they are gaining an opportunity to be decision makers, panellists and also beneficiaries of the projects.

A small number of interviewees also noted that the Funds aimed to engage all young people in decision making, particularly those from hard-to-reach groups.

The second main purpose of the Funds mentioned by LA staff was **to improve services and activities for young people**. Several interviewees referred to the terminology used in the YOF/YCF guidance notes and indicated that the Funds aimed to ‘*increase places to go and things to do for young people*’, and in particular to lead to provision that has been decided ‘*by young people, for young people*’.

Staff in all the case-study LAs felt that the Funds complemented their authority's strategic aims, and other policies and agendas within their LA. Most commonly, interviewees stated that YOF/YCF fitted well with their LA's priorities of involving young people in decision making and improving provision for young people, and that the Funds fitted with their Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), and with their Youth Participation Strategy. The senior manager in one LA, for example, stated that the Funds *'fit in very well with the authority's overall ambition to improve services for young people'*, while another described the Funds as *'a key arm of the youth participation strategy...it fitted in and slotted in beautifully with what we were trying to do'*. LA staff also considered YOF/YCF to *'sit squarely with the Every Child Matters agenda'*, and interviewees felt that the Funds would contribute to all five outcomes, particularly 'enjoying and achieving' and 'making a positive contribution'.

2.6 Summary

In summary, all of the case-study LAs had some existing structures in place, prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF, for involving young people in local decision making, and all but three of the LAs reported that they had built on these existing structures, to a greater or lesser extent, when implementing the Funds. Where LAs had not made use of existing structures, this was because they felt that their existing structures were not appropriate or sufficiently inclusive. There was also general consensus among the LA staff interviewed that the Funds complemented their authority's strategic aims, and fitted well with other policies and agendas within their LA, particularly with their CYPP and Youth Participation Strategy, and with the Every Child Matters agenda. The following chapter identifies the key elements of the models adopted by LAs, and the reasons for these approaches.

3. Models of delivery for the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund

Key findings

- No clear evidence emerged of any one approach or model for delivering the Funds prevailing among the case-study LAs. However, there were some similarities between the four LAs that had allocated or spent all of the YOF/YCF within this financial year. These LAs had all taken a youth-driven approach from the outset, had used gatekeepers to access hard-to-reach young people and young people applied to join the panel, as distinct from being elected by their peers.
- The existence of structures to involve young people before the implementation of the Funds did not appear to be a determinant of the extent to which LAs adopted a youth-driven approach from the outset, or had allocated the Funds within the financial year.
- In two LAs, young people had been less involved in the design and delivery of the Funds, and both of these LAs had experienced restructuring and reorganisation within their authorities. It appeared that the extent to which they had involved young people in the design and delivery of the Funds was more closely associated with this restructuring than whether they had existing youth participation structures prior to the Funds. However, these LAs had targeted sub-Funds to hard-to-reach young people and reported that they had used outreach approaches to access such young people.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key elements that comprised the models of delivery adopted across the 12 case-study LAs. It outlines:

- the approaches adopted to managing and delivering the Funds across the 12 LAs
- the relationship between the approaches adopted and the outcomes to date.

3.2 Approaches to managing and delivering the Funds

The 12 case-study LAs had adopted approaches to managing and delivering the Funds that were appropriate to their local history and contexts. The main elements of these approaches are characterised in this chapter and discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters. In considering these elements of management and delivery, it is worth noting that the visits were undertaken in January and February 2007 and that the approaches identified through the analysis of these visits were not static but were evolving over time as LA staff, and the young people involved, reflected on their experience and progress. Moreover, the broad typology detailed in Figure 3.1 presents the approaches in exclusive categories for analytical purposes. In relation to some elements, such as the involvement of young people or reaching the harder-to-reach groups, the LAs may be at varying points along a continuum, however.

Figure 3.1 summarises the approaches adopted across the 12 LAs at the time of the visits. Each column represents an LA and each row represents an element of the management and delivery models used. As can be seen, across the 12 case-study areas, the LAs had used a **variety of approaches** to delivering each aspect of the Funds. However, while there were similarities across areas in relation to an element, these **elements were rarely combined into an overall model that was the same in more than one area**. There were two areas where the same approaches had been used across all elements. A London Borough and a Metropolitan LA with similar characteristics (LAs 8 and 11) were both LA managed, had used existing youth participation structures for their panel, had young people who applied and had a central panel and area panels and had sub-funds. They also both used gatekeepers to access young people who were hard-to-reach, were youth driven from the outset and had allocated or spent all of their Funds. However, this was the only example of the same elements featuring in more than one LA's model and it appears that LAs adopted an approach that met their individual needs.

Figure 3.1 Summary of approaches adopted across 12 LAs

LAs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Management (Chapter 2)												
LA managed (ten LAs)		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Managed by partner voluntary sector organisations (two LAs)	•								•			
Use of existing youth participation experience or structures (Chapter 2)												
Existing forums or groups of young people used as the decision-making group (four LAs)		•				•		•			•	
Existing forums or groups of young people drawn on to form the decision-making group (five LAs)			•	•	•				•			•
Entirely new groups of young people established as the decision-making group (three LAs)	•						•			•		
Selection for the panel (Chapter 6)												
Young people elected (two LAs)		•			•							
Young people were self-selected or applied (ten LAs)	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Structure of the panel (Chapter 6)												
One central panel (six LAs)	•	•			•				•	•		•
A combination of a central panel and area panels (five LAs)			•	•		•		•			•	
No panel of young people yet established (one LA)							•					
Distribution of the Funds (Chapter 8)												
One central YO and YC Fund (five LAs) from which young people from any area within the LA could apply for a large or small amount		•	•		•					•		•
Sub-Funds (seven LAs). This comprised two approaches. Firstly separate Funds for larger applications and smaller applications (for example less than £5,000) and, secondly, a sub-Fund that was specifically targeted at particular hard-to-reach groups or areas.	•			•		•	•	•	•		•	
Principal strategies for engaging with the hard-to-reach (Chapters 4 and 6)												
Via gatekeepers (seven LAs)		•		•		•		•		•	•	•
Directly through outreach (five LAs)	•		•		•		•		•			
Extent of involvement of young people in the design of the delivery model (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7)												
Youth driven from the outset (eight LAs)		•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•
Service led but increasingly youth driven (two LAs)					•	•						
Service led with plans to increase youth involvement in future (two LAs)	•						•					
Progress towards allocating or spending the Funds in January and February 2007 (Chapter 8)												
Funds allocated and spent (four LAs)				•				•		•	•	
Funds not allocated, but anticipated that this would change before the end of the financial year (four LAs)			•		•	•			•			
Funds not allocated and LAs considered it unlikely that they would spend the full amount (four LAs)	•	•					•					•

Chapter 8 will explore in more detail the progress made by LAs in allocating or spending the Funds. Figure 3.1 shows that, at the time when the interviews were conducted in January and February 2007, there were differences in the extent to which the Funds had been allocated or spent, or interviewees anticipated that this would be the case, before the end of the financial year. Some interviewees observed that the number of applications was increasing and therefore perceptions of whether the Funds would be fully allocated may have changed since the interviews were conducted. There is provision within the Funds for 40 per cent of the YCF, that has been committed, to be carried over to the next financial year. However, interviewees who expressed reservations about allocating the Funds within this year were referring to the YOF. It should be noted that there is also provision for 'four star' LAs to carry over some of the YOF and three of the four LAs that anticipated that they would not allocate all of the Funds this year indicated that, as four star authorities, they would be using this flexibility to carry over a proportion of the YOF.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the case-study LAs had varying histories of youth participation which they could choose to build on and, as illustrated in Figure 3.1 and discussed in this report, they had taken a variety of approaches and routes to achieving the aims of the YOF and YCF taking into account their local history, context and priorities. To illustrate further the progression through the implementation and early delivery phase of the YOF/YCF, the approaches adopted in three LAs are summarised below.

Active involvement of young people from the outset using an existing youth forum

In this LA an established youth forum, which had been elected by young people in each of the LA's districts, undertook the role of the YOF/YCF decision-making panel alongside their wider role as the LA youth forum. This group of young people were involved in the design and delivery of the YOF/YCF from the outset and this included designing and administering a survey to young people that gathered their views on what facilities and activities they would like for young people in the area. Analysis of the responses of thousands of young people to this survey formed the criteria for the types of projects and activities that the forum would approve to receive the YOF/YCF. The central decision-making panel had approved a number of applications but the LA did not anticipate allocating all of the YOF/YCF within this financial year and they attributed this in part to the time taken to consult widely with young people at the outset through the survey. As they approached the second year, the LA was considering mechanisms for other young people to become involved in decision making through developing district panels and specific sub-groups of hard-to-reach young people which could send representatives to the central panel.

Distribution of Funds into smaller sub-funds and the use of area panels

One case-study LA had set up five divisional young people's forums prior to the introduction of the Funds. The LA had decided to build upon and use these existing panels to deliver the Funds, in addition to using a central county-wide panel which was set up following the introduction of the YOF/YCF. The Funds were evenly distributed across the central panel and the area panels and, while applications for projects that had a county-wide benefit were evaluated by the central panel, the area panels evaluated projects that would benefit young people in their local area. The area panels operated from a standard set of rules and selection criteria, although they were free to amend these to best fit the needs of their local youth population. While no formal targets had been set at the district level regarding the type and number of projects to be funded, senior managers were confident that panel members '*know what is needed in their area and what is a luxury*', and would commission projects that were in the best interests of their local youth populations.

Outreach to access the hard-to-reach young people

One of the LAs, which was working in partnership to deliver the funds, had targeted existing contacts such as youth and voluntary groups working with disadvantaged young people to raise awareness of YOF/YCF. This involved postal mail-outs to youth groups in the LA and launch events with media coverage. The LA had also undertaken outreach work with groups such as black and ethnic minority groups, lesbian, gay and bisexual groups and disability groups. LA staff visited these groups in the community, as they considered it to be more effective to meet people on their own territory. In addition, this LA wanted to target hard-to-reach young people who did not have links with established youth organisations. Detached youth workers had, therefore, raised the awareness of the Funds through talking with young people in the community about the availability of the Funds and helped them to think of ideas for projects. These strategies led to the involvement of young people in YOF/YCF who did not previously have links with the Youth Service.

3.3 Outcomes of different approaches

As noted above, there was no evidence of any overall prevailing model, or models, of delivery among the 12 case-study areas. At this stage, it is not possible to comment on the success or otherwise of a particular approach, or group of approaches, because there is no overall outcome against which to assess the effectiveness of different approaches. Nevertheless, there are two possible aims of the YOF/YCF for which there are some early indications of progress. These are:

- the involvement of young people in the process
- progress towards allocating the Funds.

This section explores the relationship between the approaches adopted and these two early outcomes. It is worth noting that the progress towards allocating the Funds reflects, to some extent, the quantity of funding that had been allocated to young people who applied, and therefore the LAs' achievements in terms of distributing finance to young people in their areas. However, it does not reflect the nature, range or quality of the activities and projects that were funded. This will be a focus of the second phase of the research which will be undertaken in the autumn of 2007 when a greater number of projects and activities are likely to have received funding through the YOF and YCF.

In relation to LAs' progress in allocating and assigning the Funds, it was evident from some interviews that some LAs had taken a less youth-driven approach from the outset because their primary aim was to ensure that the Funds were allocated within the financial year. They considered that fully involving young people in the design and delivery of the Funds could delay this. On the other hand, some LAs that had taken a more youth-driven approach to the design and delivery indicated that this took longer in the start-up phase and this was associated with less progress towards spending the Funds.

The characterisation of the LAs' approaches, presented in Figure 3.1, indicates that the approach of eight LAs could be described as youth driven from the outset (LAs 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) and four indicated that they had spent the Funds within the financial year (LAs 4, 8, 10 and 11). As can be seen, the four LAs that had spent the Funds had all adopted a youth-driven approach from the outset. This suggests that involving young people from the outset may not necessarily be responsible for delays in allocating the Funds. Other characteristics that were shared by the four LAs that had allocated the Funds were that:

- young people applied to participate in the panel, as distinct from an approach whereby young people put themselves forward for election by their peers
- gatekeepers were used in order to promote the Funds to young people who were hard-to-reach.

In three of the four areas, the Funds had been separated into smaller funds and a larger fund and there was a combination of a central and area panels. These elements may have contributed to the outcome of allocating and spending all of the YOF/YCF. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, there were also similarities in their mechanisms for paying successful projects in advance,

which may have had more of an influence on this outcome than the elements of the model they adopted.

The different combinations of elements chosen by LAs may be associated with the different outcomes. For example, as noted above, all of the four LAs that had spent all of their Funds had used gatekeepers as their principal method of reaching hard-to-reach young people, as distinct from outreach. It could be argued that gatekeepers help to facilitate contact with **one sub-group** of hard-to-reach young people, that is those who have characteristics that place them at risk of being hard-to-reach, but who are **already known to the Youth Service or other agencies**. Nevertheless, many of these agencies will have a presence in an area, or among a group of young people, which may draw in new young people over time and, as such, are constantly engaging with young people who are in the second sub-group of hard-to-reach young people. This **second sub-group** are those young people who are **not in contact with any service or agency** and the aim of the Funds is also to reach such young people. In addition to using gatekeepers, outreach work by LA staff is one approach to achieving this and five LAs (none of whom had allocated all their Funds at the time of the visit) said that they had adopted this approach.

It might be expected that the extent to which an LA adopted a youth driven approach from the outset, or had made progress in allocating and spending the Funds, would be associated with a history of youth involvement in the LA and the extent to which existing structures were in place on which an LA could build. However, this did not appear to be the case among the 12 case-study LAs. For example, two of the four LAs that had been youth driven from the outset and had allocated all of their Funds, had used existing forums as decision-making panels for the Funds. However, one of the remaining two LAs had drawn young people from existing forums and the fourth had no pre-existing forum in place.

An exploration of the two LAs that appeared to be least youth-driven and were predominantly service led at the time of the visit (as distinct from being youth driven), and planned to increase the involvement of young people in the future, reveals some similarities in approach and background. One of the two LAs had yet to establish a panel and the second had recently done so. It is notable that these two LAs were also the two who stated that they had recently undergone considerable restructuring in the authority. This suggests that the YOF/YCF was being implemented at a time of instability. Neither had used an existing youth forum or youth parliament when establishing their decision-making panel (and they accounted for two of the three LAs for whom this was the case). One felt that existing structures were not sufficiently representative of the characteristics of young people who they were seeking to encourage, including those who were hard-to-reach and the second did not have a history of youth involvement. Nevertheless, an absence of existing structures did not

appear to be a determinant of progress in all cases as one of the LAs that had allocated all of their Funds, had also not made use of existing structures.

While this analysis provides some insights into similarities and differences between those LAs who seemed to have made progress in terms of allocating and spending the Funds, and those who had less involvement of young people, it may be that other factors are more influential than the management and delivery approaches adopted. For example, restructuring and reorganisation within the LA, the role of the key coordinator of the Funds, and the extent to which an LA was driven by the need to spend the Funds, or to try and ensure that young people were involved in a meaningful and constructive manner, may all influence the progress made by these LAs.

3.4 Summary

In summary, although the approaches adopted by LAs to different aspects of the management and delivery of the Funds can be categorised, it was rare for a similar group of approaches or ‘model’ to be adopted in more than one LA. Moreover, there were no clear indications that any one approach appeared to have been more effective than another, although there were indications that the four LAs that had allocated or spent the Funds within the first financial year, had also adopted a youth-driven approach and used gatekeepers to access hard-to-reach young people. The relationship between the different approaches characterised in this chapter and the outcomes in terms of the extent to which positive projects and activities were funded through the YOF/YCF, and the nature and number of applicants and participants, will be a key focus of the second phase of this research.

4. Marketing and promotion

Key findings

- Marketing materials such as flyers and web-based information were perceived as effective and quick methods of raising *awareness* of the Funds. Outreach activities such as workshops or visits to youth centres encouraged young people to *participate* in the Funds.
- The extent to which young people were involved in marketing and promotion varied across LAs. In areas where young people were actively engaged in promotional activities, this was viewed as highly effective in raising awareness and applications. In areas where LA staff had led the marketing, young people gradually became involved in the process or were to be involved in the future.
- LAs usually worked with existing contacts to raise the awareness and involvement of hard-to-reach young people. Detached youth workers also undertook YOF/YCF-related outreach work in some areas.

4.1 Introduction

The telephone interviews with all 150 LAs (see Appendix A) revealed that LAs were using a range of strategies to publicise YOF/YCF including publicity through statutory and voluntary organisations, paper-based materials such as flyers and leaflets, and websites. Other methods included publicity in local media such as newspapers and radio, and launch events.

This chapter presents findings relating to the case-study LAs' strategies for marketing and promoting YOF/YCF, including:

- marketing and promotion methods used to raise awareness of YOF/YCF
- young people's involvement in the design of YOF/YCF marketing and promotion
- strategies used to engage hard-to-reach young people.

4.2 Approaches to marketing and promotion

Most LAs used approaches to marketing and promotion already available to the Youth Service including advertisements, articles in youth magazines, flyers, leaflets and posters. These marketing and promotion strategies were usually directed at existing contacts such as Youth Service networks and

voluntary organisations, and were viewed as effective in raising awareness of YOF/YCF in the community and among youth-related services. Promotional materials often contained branding for YOF/YCF and informed readers of:

- the purpose and benefits of the Funds
- ideas for projects for which YOF/YCF funding could be used
- how to obtain application forms
- the contact details of staff who could advise potential applicants.

Few areas had produced marketing and promotional materials in community languages³ or alternative formats such as Braille, but staff in some LAs said they were able to adapt materials if this was requested by young people.

Several LAs advertised the Funds through local radio or websites, and Youth Service websites, in particular, were perceived as an effective and quick method of spreading information about YOF/YCF to existing contacts. In some areas, youth advisors and members of the decision-making panels were also engaged in outreach work involving visits to schools, youth organisations, and talking about YOF/YCF with potential applicants. Other outreach approaches included launch events where young people from schools were invited to attend and received promotional materials such as YOF/YCF ‘goody bags’ and workshops about YOF/YCF application. Another LA held a YOF/YCF ‘bonanza’ to showcase examples of successful projects.

Marketing and promotional approaches such as launch events, workshops, visits to schools and youth centres, which involved face-to-face engagement with young people, were viewed as highly effective means of encouraging applicants. As one of the LA staff explained, *‘what young people are telling us is that one of the most effective methods of marketing is word of mouth’*. Approaches that involved showcasing examples of successfully funded projects were also seen as an effective means of gaining interest. Materials in one LA, for example, included photographs in newsletters of young people receiving large cheques to encourage applicants. As one of the staff working with the LA on YOF/YCF explained, *‘once people hear that the money has gone out and it’s not just a fictional pot of money they start to get interested’*.

A number of LA staff had ideas for future marketing and promotion to raise the profile and interest in the Funds including local radio, road shows, and newspaper articles. As outreach work was perceived to be an effective method of promotion, several LAs aimed to arrange for members of the decision-making panel to visit schools and youth centres in the future. These plans could reflect a concern to reach a wider range of young people.

³ Community languages are those spoken by members of minority groups or communities within a majority language context.

4.3 Involvement of young people

As the previous section has indicated, the decision-making panel was involved to some extent in the marketing and promotion of YOF/YCF in most of the LAs. In seven areas, young people had a **high level of involvement** in the development of YOF/YCF marketing and promotional material and they had been fully involved in the design and development of promotional materials such as leaflets and posters, with support from the LAs' publicity departments. As one of the panellists explained, '*we've had lots to say over things including on the marketing side*'. Panellists described designing leaflets and pamphlets for the Funds with the criteria that had been decided by the young people clearly displayed. Members of the decision-making panel in one area were also involved in producing a distribution list for promotional materials to be sent to:

We did a core list of all the youth centres, schools, community centres, anything to do with young people, we made sure they got the information.

Other young people were also engaged in outreach work such as visits to schools, libraries and youth organisations to promote YOF/YCF. The members of one panel, for example, were actively engaged in promoting YOF/YCF by taking leaflets out to libraries and schools and holding surgeries to advise potential applicants. In some cases, young people had also given YOF/YCF presentations and were involved in launch events or open days for youth organisations, as the following comment from one panel member illustrates:

We just went round handing out forms saying 'if you need any money, fill this in and send it in'...so we go and see people and advertise to them and tell them what is out there.

Decision-making panellists in another LA were planning a YOF/YCF celebration event to showcase all the successful projects in the LA. Local media were invited to attend the event with the aim of raising awareness of YOF/YCF in the LA. Other young people, in the larger LAs, took part in radio broadcasts promoting YOF/YCF to listeners.

Staff in these LAs thought the involvement of young people in marketing and promotion was key to its success. Decision-making panellists were described as '*great advocates and adverts*' because they had told other young people about the Funds. Young people's involvement was viewed as highly effective in those LAs where they had been actively engaged in promotional activities, particularly when, '*they have been instrumental in helping young people realise they can apply*' (LA staff member).

In three of the areas, young people had **more limited involvement in marketing**, as the design of marketing and promotional materials was the LAs' responsibility. In these cases, LA staff had led the marketing and promotional strategies and young people had gradually become more involved in the process. Members of the decision-making panel in these areas recalled being asked to comment on materials such as posters but were not involved in the design. There had, however, been some issues with young people disagreeing with the design of materials. In one of the LAs, for example, the decision-making panel wanted to present YOF/YCF information in a cartoon strip but the LA did not agree with this format. Another group did not like the brand name that the LA had chosen for YOF/YCF.

In these cases, the LA had reportedly led on the design of materials '*because of the speed with which things had to happen in the beginning*' (Operational manager), and LA staff did not feel there had been sufficient time for young people to lead on marketing and promotion. This was changing, however, as the operational manager in this LA explained '*now young people are having more involvement in the marketing than in the beginning, but it's quite time consuming*'. Members of the decision-making panel in these LAs were revising and designing new marketing materials to publicise YOF/YCF to young people.

In two other areas young people appeared to have had a **low level of involvement** in marketing and promotion at the time of the case-study visits. In these cases, the LA staff acknowledged that marketing and promotion at the outset had been devised by the Youth Service to ensure that messages about YOF/YCF were disseminated to young people quickly. Staff reported, however, that young people on the decision-making panels would be involved in future marketing and promotion plans, including designing new posters and other promotional materials. It is worth noting that LAs with different levels of involvement from young people in marketing and promotion did not share similar characteristics, such as the type or size of the LA.

4.4 Reaching hard-to-reach young people

The YOF/YCF Guidance clearly state that all young people aged 13-19 should be able to participate in YOF/YCF, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and the hard-to-reach. These include young people who traditionally face barriers to participation such as '*young disabled people, young care leavers, looked after young people, young offenders, young carers, young refugees, young lesbians and gay men, young black and minority ethnic people, travellers and those in rural areas*'.⁴

⁴ Department for Education and Skills (2006). Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes. Nottingham: DfES.

One of the challenges facing LAs was the need to balance universal provision with the need to engage young people from hard-to-reach groups. LA staff described adopting a ‘*two-pronged approach*’, but achieving this balance was said to be challenging, as one LA operational manager explained:

It is a challenge balancing the needs of the majority with the needs of targeted groups because you’ve only got so much money and you need to make it go around. But the young people do recognise there is a need to target young people with disabilities or young people whose facilities are not as good as theirs, which is probably how it will be seen.

LA staff highlighted the challenges of first raising *awareness* of the Funds amongst young people from the hard-to-reach groups and second encouraging young people from these groups to actually *participate* in the Funds. LA staff agreed that involving these young people could require a different marketing approach, as one explained, ‘*opportunities need to be available for all young people, but you need to work harder to encourage some young people*’. There was some variation in the approaches employed to raise awareness and involvement of hard-to-reach young people, as detailed below.

The majority of the case-study LAs **raised awareness of YCF/YOC among existing contacts or ‘gatekeepers’**, some of whom worked specifically with hard-to-reach young people. Operational managers described developing databases of organisations working with young people with a range of characteristics such as those working with travellers, those in care, those who are homeless, and young people with disabilities. In some areas, LA staff visited those working with hard-to-reach young people such as Youth Offending Teams to advise them on engaging the young people in YOF/YCF. One of the LA staff interviewed, who said she had run special promotions for young people with disabilities, young people in care/leaving care, young travellers, young offenders and asylum seekers, described using existing contacts, ‘*with each of these groups we tried to use the existing services and systems in place. If they had newsletters, we put articles in there; if they had user forums we went and spoke to them; if they ran events, we had a stall there...*’. LA staff generally agreed that the best way to raise awareness among hard-to-reach young people was through word of mouth, as one operational manager explained:

You have to be proactive in reaching the hard-to-reach group. You can’t rely on them responding to a leaflet or poster, you need a personal dialogue...As it happens, these are not the type of young people who read the LA newsletter and newspapers anyway, so a lot of it [publicity and recruitment of young people] happens by word of mouth.

One member of LA staff also observed that young people from some target groups could be mistrustful of a person or organisation with which they were not familiar, and the possibility of engaging with such young people would be enhanced by working with agencies which they trusted.

Some LAs allowed young people from hard-to-reach groups to apply for **smaller amounts of YOF/YCF funding** with the aim of attracting young people who may find big projects challenging. As a member of staff from a partnership organisation explained, *'no way are you going to engage hard-to-reach young people with large-scale complex projects over £2,000 – it's too daunting and just not going to appeal'*. Some LAs also allowed young people to submit **applications in video format**, rather than in writing, to encourage applications from young people who might find completing a paper-based application form too challenging (see Chapter 5 for further details).

A more challenging task for LAs was reaching those young people without connections with the Youth Service, or other agencies. Indeed, some of the successful applicants did not think other young people would hear about the Funds unless they had connections with a youth group. In their view, LAs need to think particularly about ways of informing those over the age of 16 who may be less likely to have connections with schools or youth groups. Panellists in some areas felt they would need to do more outreach work to target the hard-to-reach groups in the future.

Outreach work was one way in which some LAs attempted to promote the Funds to hard-to-reach young people that were not in contact with any services or agencies. One member of LA staff explained that it was not reasonable to expect such young people *'to respond to a leaflet'* and, therefore, it was necessary to be proactive and to meet young people on *'their own territory'*. Some LAs, for example, trained adult volunteer facilitators in the Funds process so that they were available to help young people to develop their ideas and support them in applying for funding. In other LAs, youth workers went out into the community, particularly in areas of urban or rural deprivation, to talk with young people about YOF/YCF and support them if they had a successful application.

At the time of the case-study visits (January-February 2007), many of the LAs reported that they were not able to judge the effectiveness of their strategies to engage hard-to-reach young people, particularly without comparing the strategies they were using against those in other LAs. Data relating to the numbers of hard-to-reach young people as applicants, recipients and beneficiaries of the Funds was gathered as part of the DCSF's six-monthly reporting process, but this data was not available for all of the case-study LAs at the time of the visits. However, as noted in Chapter 5, some LAs required application forms to include monitoring information, which asked applicants to state how they had become aware of YOF/YCF. Such data could be used in

the future to judge the effectiveness of LAs' marketing and promotion strategies, particularly with regard to hard-to-reach young people.

4.5 Summary

In summary, the case-study LAs were using a range of strategies to publicise YOF/YCF. In some areas, young people were actively engaged in marketing and promotion and had been involved in designing and developing the materials, and this was thought to be key to the success of marketing strategies. Most LAs directed marketing materials such as flyers, leaflets and posters at existing contacts such as Youth Service networks and voluntary organisations. Web-based information on Youth Service websites was perceived as an effective and quick method of promoting the Funds, as was raising awareness among existing contacts, some of whom worked specifically with hard-to-reach young people. Other effective methods of increasing awareness of the Funds and engagement of young people were reported to be outreach work such as visits to schools and youth organisations, workshops, and launch events. At this stage, there were concerns in some LAs about whether marketing strategies were reaching hard-to-reach young people, particularly those without connections with the Youth Service or other agencies. Some LAs had, however, employed detached youth workers to encourage the participation of such young people.

5. The application process

Key findings

- In most of the LAs, young people were involved, in some way, in the design of the application procedure and materials and, in many areas, this reflected the LAs' desire for the involvement of young people throughout the process.
- YOF/YCF applications were usually made through the completion of a paper-based form, although alternative methods were used where necessary. While, for most young people, the experience of applying for funding had been positive, others had found application forms too lengthy and complex and felt that the deadlines for application submission were too tight.
- All of the LAs expected the ideas for projects to come from young people and required them to complete and submit the application. Adults sometimes supported applicants by discussing project ideas with them and providing guidance with the more complex aspects of the application.

5.1 Introduction

The LAs' application procedures and young people's experiences of applying for funding are explored in this chapter including:

- young people's involvement in the design of the application procedure and materials
- the application procedures and methods of application adopted
- applicants' experiences of the application process.

5.2 Application procedures

5.2.1 Young people's involvement in the design of the application procedure and materials

In eight of the LAs, young people were involved in the design of the application procedure and materials, such as the application form, and this was considered by LA staff to be important. This is summed up by one LA operational manager who explained:

I could have developed an application form myself in a day...decided on the criteria and what the decision-making process was going to be, but if it is truly about engaging young people it has to be throughout the entire process.

In LAs where young people had a high level of involvement in the application systems, this part of the process took longer to set up, but their involvement reflected the LAs' desire for young people to be involved in all aspects of YOF/YCF. The operational manager of an external agency running the YOF/YCF in one LA, for example, explained, '*the young people's panel has run the whole thing with support, guidance and training, but they have decided how the funds should be set up*'.

Young people on the decision-making panels were involved in influencing aspects of the **application procedure**, such as setting upper limits for Fund allocation to ensure that maximum numbers of young people benefited from YOF/YCF, and deciding on the method of application (for example, in paper or video format). They were also involved in the **design of application guidance and forms**, with support from LA staff (as the example below illustrates). Young people reported that they looked at existing application materials from both within the LA and from other LAs to help with the design of their own materials.

Working in partnership to develop the application form

In one of the LAs, the young people on the decision-making panel developed the idea of what they wanted the application form and guidance leaflet to look like and a LA member of staff took these ideas to a designer to draft. The young people reviewed the draft and made some changes to it. The young people tried filling in the application form themselves, as if they were applicants, to make sure it would be appropriate for other young people.

In other areas, young people were less directly involved in the initial design of application materials; instead they were consulted by LA staff regarding materials that had already been developed. In these areas, subsequent consultation, including web-based focus groups, led to adaptations being made to the materials at a later stage. At the time of the case-study visits (January-February 2007), several decision-making panels were in the process of adapting materials (such as changes to the guidance) in light of their experiences.

5.2.2 Methods of application

The most common method for YOF/YCF application was through the completion of a paper-based form. Applicants in three case-study LAs could also access the form electronically, via a website. LA guidance materials were commonly available for applicants, and these included, for example, in one LA, toolkit sheets to help young people plan and cost their project. Another

had included information about other funding opportunities such as YouthBank, the Prince's Trust and National Lottery programmes and a diagram showing the life of a YOF/YCF application.

Applicants were usually required to indicate if they required funding from the YOF or the YCF and supply further information such as:

- contact details of a lead young person with responsibility for the project
- a description of how they would use YOF/YCF Funds if they were awarded, and whether they had raised any complementary funding
- contact and bank details of a supporting adult or organisation
- detailed costing of all the items to be purchased with the Funds (including, in some cases, details of quotations and price lists)
- how their proposed use of the Funds would contribute to the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes
- how the Funds would benefit other young people and the community.

Several LA staff explained that contact details of a lead young person were required to reinforce the importance of applications being submitted by young people. In one LA, applicants were also required to indicate how they would evidence the benefits to other young people.

Monitoring information was often included on the application form at the LA's request. In these cases, applicants were required to indicate the group members' gender, ethnic origin and other characteristics, such as whether they were a young person with a disability or a young carer. This type of information was used by LAs to monitor applicants' profiles and the areas within the LA which would benefit from the Funds. Applicants in one LA were also required to provide details of their employment or training status.

Alternative application methods

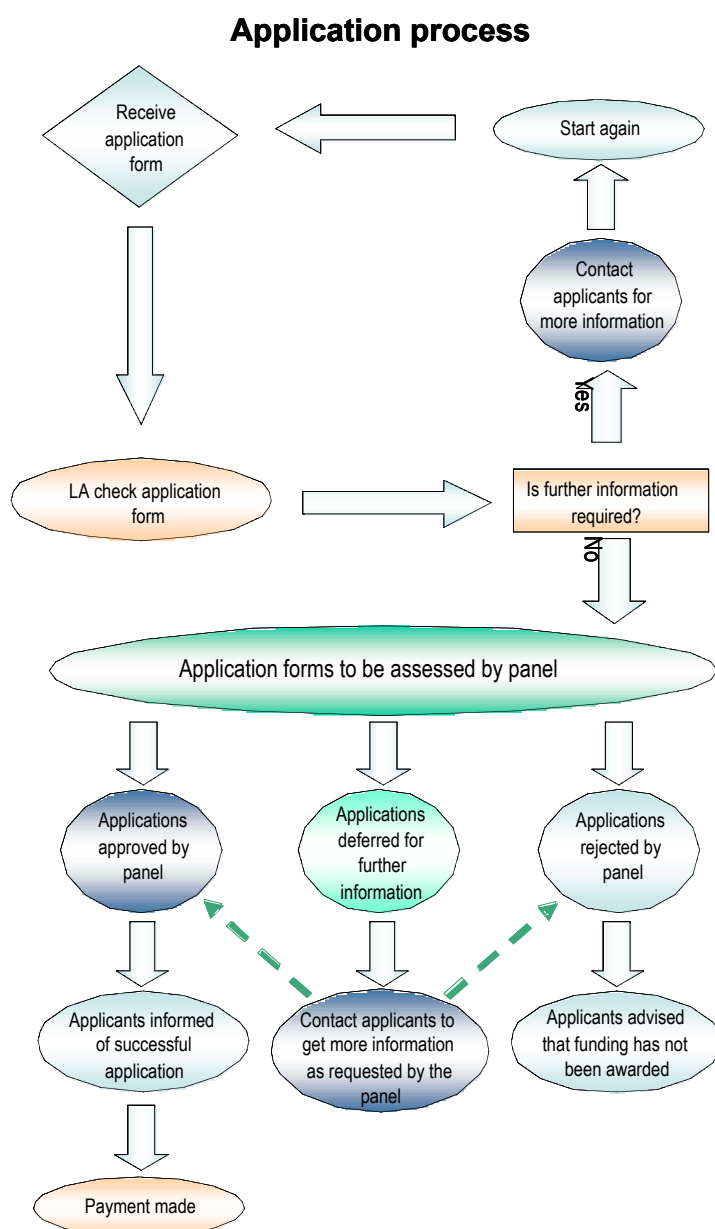
While a paper-based form was the most common mechanism for applying for Funds in these 12 LAs, in a few areas LA staff reported that young people could apply for funding through alternative means. These included youth advocates assisting applicants to make DVDs in sign language and young people from special schools producing drawings to illustrate their ideas. Applicants in several areas were able to submit video applications or receive guidance and application forms in Braille, large print or tape or disc. The LA had also developed forms using symbols for those with learning difficulties.

5.2.3 The application process

Applications were returned to the LA and then to decision-making panels for consideration. It was common practice for LA staff to check applications before they went to the panel to *'make sure they are in order'*. At this stage

LA staff checked for completeness and contacted applicants if important information was missing. Staff in one of the LA said that they would offer advice on alternative means of funding if applicants were not eligible because they were too young or not resident in the borough. Figure 5.1 provides a diagram representing the common application process.

Figure 5.1 The YOF/YCF Application Process (adapted from one of the LAs visited)



In a number of areas, applicants were also invited to attend an interview with the decision-making panel. Applicants were expected to discuss how they came up with the idea, how they worked on the application, and the potential benefits for young people. In some cases, interviews with the decision-making

panel were used if further information relating to the application was required or to help the decision-making panel to establish the extent to which the ideas for applications came from young people. For many LAs, it appeared that the increasing number of applications being received, following promotion of the Funds, meant that it was not feasible for panel members to interview every applicant. However, some LA staff were concerned that those who were able to have an audience with a panel were at an advantage, as one operational manager explained:

Every time young people turn up to make a presentation the decision makers seem swayed by that. My concern is that those young people who do not make a presentation may be losing out.

5.2.4 Support from the LA

All of the LAs expected the ideas for projects to come from young people and the majority required young people to complete and submit the application. However, LA staff expected young people to have support with their application and to have a supporting organisation to receive the Funds on their behalf. In some cases, where adult support to write the application was necessary, an accompanying letter outlining the reasons for such support was required. In some LAs staff would assist by costing complex and capital projects.

Most LAs had provision for supporting young people in the application process. In one of the LAs, for example, 25 volunteer adult facilitators, trained in the Fund processes, were available to work with young people to enable them to develop their ideas and projects, and these included youth workers, wardens, health workers and community officers. Another LA had a network of youth workers who filled in forms on behalf of young people. Application guidance from another LA contained activities to use with young people to help them to develop their ideas and put them into action including activities to generate ideas, plan projects in detail and budgeting. The youth participation team were available to run these activities. In other LAs, informal advice and support from staff was available as required and applicants were sometimes provided with examples of YOF/YCF application forms to assist them.

5.3 Experience of applying for funding

For most of the young people interviewed during the case-study visits, the experience of applying for YOF/YCF funding was positive. As one successful applicant explained, *‘they just asked us what we were going to do and what ideas we had, and how it was going to benefit the community’*. Young people were able to think of ideas for projects and were sometimes supported through adult-led group brainstorming sessions to generate project ideas. One service

provider who worked at a youth club for young people with disabilities described a planning process where she said to the young people *'if we had some money...'* and then used scenarios to assist them in deciding what they would like to apply for. Young people often worked in teams to support each other to complete the applications; for example, one group reported that each member took on a different role such as application coordinator, secretary or treasurer.

5.3.1 Help from adults

The extent and nature of adult support provided to young people applying for funding varied across the case-study LAs. In most areas, adult support was fairly low level with young people writing the application forms with support. Service providers and youth workers usually viewed their role as enablers, as one explained:

My role was a sort of a guide. I couldn't get involved too much, more like just point them in the right direction if I felt they were getting off track.

Young people often discussed the more complex aspects of application, such as the project's contribution to the ECM outcomes, with youth workers. In some cases, adults provided guidance regarding what was possible within the constraints of the process, as one youth worker explained, *'sometimes they tend to think too big and they need someone to say what is actually possible'*.

There were instances in two case-study areas of a higher level of adult intervention in the application process, although this seemed to be necessary due to the needs of the young people. In one LA, for example, the idea for a residential trip for young people with learning difficulties came from staff, and adults led the completion of the application.

5.3.2 Challenges faced by young people

The requirement to provide a detailed costing of all the items to be purchased with the Funds (see Section 5.2.2) was viewed as the most challenging aspect of application completion. This required young people to research the costs of purchasing items for their projects through, for example, the internet or catalogues. Those submitting applications for overseas trips, including quotes for travel and accommodation, reported finding the costing process initially daunting, *'we thought we just had to write the application and say what we wanted, but then it started to get more difficult'*. However, in retrospect, the young people felt glad that youth workers had encouraged them to independently research the costs of the project: *'At the time we needed a bit of help, but looking back they [youth workers] knew what they were doing as they were trying to force us not to be lazy'*.

Other challenges reported by applicants included tight deadlines for completion of the application form and application forms being too lengthy and complex for young people. As one of the service providers who had helped young people with the completion of a paper-based application indicated, the application was *'not very child-friendly; it was an adult format...so that's why they [young people] came to me for help'*. Writing was also perceived as a barrier for access to the Funds for some young people. As a result, applicants liked the idea of online application forms which they could email back to the LA, while others would have preferred to talk, rather than write, about their project.

Other concerns relating to the application process included waiting too long for the YOF/YCF funding to arrive following notification of successful application. As one of the successful applicants explained, *'it took a long time so we were a bit disappointed. They said it would come within ten days but it took about three weeks and we were worried about it'*. This could affect young people's plans; for example, in one area, group activities had to be postponed because the Funds took longer than expected to arrive. Financial challenges, such as the speed at which funding was provided to successful projects, are explored in Chapter 8. These are important issues because they could deter young people currently involved in projects from making future applications for YOF/YCF.

5.4 Summary

In many LAs, young people were involved in the design of the application procedure and materials. The most common method for YOF/YCF application was the completion of a paper-based form which usually had to include the contact details of a lead young person, supporting adult or organisation, description of how the Funds would be used, and how the project would benefit young people and the community. Applicants also had to submit a detailed costing of all the items to be purchased with the Funds. Additionally, monitoring information such as the group's ethnic origin, was often included on the application form at the LA's request.

All of the LAs expected the ideas for projects to come from young people and required them (with adult support) to complete and submit the application. In most cases, adult intervention was supportive, involving discussions about project ideas and guidance with the more complex aspects of the application such as the costing. For most of the young people interviewed, the experience of applying for funding was positive. However, challenges for applicants included providing detailed costings, forms being too lengthy and complex, and having tight deadlines for application submission.

6. The decision-making group

Key findings

- LAs have adopted a range of approaches to the structure and membership of the decision-making panels, with some operating just one panel and others operating both devolved area panels, and a LA-wide panel. One LA was yet to set-up a decision-making panel. The case-study visits suggested that the structure of the panels may develop further in future, for example, through the addition of area panels or a greater focus on hard-to-reach groups.
- Panel members felt that their groups were largely representative of the local youth populations they served, and involved young people from a range of backgrounds. However, most LAs found it a challenge to encourage a wide and diverse group of young people to get involved in the panels.
- Many young people had become involved with the panels because they wanted to make young people's views heard. Young people most commonly chose to stay on the panel because they felt they were taking ownership of the activities and resources being developed for their local area.
- All of the young people said they had undergone training as part of being a member of a panel, through residential training programmes, one-day training courses, or through a programme of ongoing training.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the structure and membership of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels. It draws on interviews with LA staff and with young people involved in panels and examines:

- The models adopted by LAs for the decision-making panels for the Funds, and the reasons for adopting these approaches.
- The extent to which LAs have encouraged the involvement of young people who traditionally face barriers to participation in the decision-making panel.
- The reasons why young people became members of the decision-making panels and their experiences of participating in the panels.
- The training provided to young people who were panel members, and young people's perceptions of its usefulness.

6.2 Structure of the panel

LAs used a variety of terms to describe the body of young people with responsibility for awarding funding, including ‘panel’, ‘forum’, ‘board’, and ‘group’. For the purpose of clarity, this group of young people will subsequently be referred to in this report as the ‘panel’ or the ‘decision-making panel’.

LAs had adopted a range of approaches to the structure and membership of the panels. Six of the 12 LAs visited operated just one central decision-making panel, while five LAs operated both devolved area panels, as well as one LA-wide panel. One LA was yet to set up a decision-making panel at the time of the case-study visits. There was some indication that smaller authorities were more likely to have just one panel. However, this was not the case for all small authorities visited.

Where LAs had developed area or district panels, the perceived advantage of this approach was said to be that they allowed LAs to focus more on geographical or district needs. However, authorities operating area panels also recognised the importance of having central, county-wide panels, as one operational manager explained:

We realised that some projects would not fit neatly into district areas, particularly those dealing with young people with disabilities which often have a broader focus, so we needed a county-wide decision-making panel.

Of the five LAs who were operating area or district panels, the process of allocating funding varied – while three LAs reported that they used the area panels to decide whether to award funding to projects in their areas, regardless of the amount, two used the area panels to allocate funding only below a certain threshold (though the maximum amount varied widely). These LAs had imposed spending limits of £500 and £5000, on projects that could be commissioned by the area panels. Applications above these amounts were reviewed by the central decision-making panels. A member of staff in one of these LAs said the benefit of having a two-tier approach was that:

By having the area panels dealing with the smaller applications and the main panel dealing with the larger applications, it spreads the workload. It also reinforces the youth-led part of the process.

District level forums tended to have varying levels of participation and, as a result, some were judged to have been more successful than others. However, in those LAs where district level forums already existed and had been further developed to deliver YOF/YCF, there was some evidence that the Funds had reinforced and reinvigorated local youth participation and, in one LA,

improved attendance levels to the existing forums were attributed to the new interest generated by the Funds.

Staff in most LAs shared the belief that the model they had currently adopted best suited their authority's systems and practices and the needs of their local youth population. As the operational manager of a large rural authority explained: *'We needed a city panel in addition to the area panels because historically the needs of the rural areas have been quite different from those of the city'*. Even so, the case-study visits suggested that the structure of panels was not static and may develop further in the future. For example, in one LA, staff said they would have liked to have explored a devolved model approach, but had implemented a one-panel model instead. They explained that, because of the short set-up time available and the lack of staffing capacity required to run a number of panels, they adopted a one-panel model at the outset as they felt that it would be easier to operate. Three other LAs operating a one panel system said they were also considering implementing area panels in the future, in order to build capacity in decision making and reduce the burden on the central panel.

On the whole, the case-study LAs had not consulted with other LAs about their approach to implementing the Funds and developing decision-making panels. Five LAs said they had taken part in some, albeit limited, consultation with other LAs, through feedback from conferences and personal links with staff in other LAs. The reasons given for the lack of external consultation related to the short time in which LAs felt they had to set up the Funds, a lack of time and opportunity to explore alternative approaches, and a general belief that the approach adopted by LAs best suited their authority's systems and practices and the needs of their local youth population.

6.3 Models affecting decision-making panels

Although, as outlined in Chapter 3, no clear models of overall delivery of the Funds emerged, there did appear to be some models of the structure and operation of the decision making within the case-study LAs. The following describes the operation of three models, identified through the case-study visits. These models of decision making are not mutually exclusive, and in some authorities elements of more than one model were being used. These are:

A. Consultative youth-led model (including the YouthBank model)

Staff in six LAs placed significant importance on giving young people substantial control and ownership of the decision-making process. Talking about the Funds, an organisational manager said: *'It's not just about consultation but about young people being actively involved in political and decision-making structures and service delivery'*. Four of

the LAs actively consulted young people regarding how the decision-making process should operate and be structured. For example, in one LA, the results of a wide consultation exercise identified the types of activities and facilities that young people wanted, and the decision-making panel subsequently decided that applications should fit into these categories. In the same authority, panel members had been elected by their peers, which the LA said meant they had ‘*the voice of the young people*’. Two of the LAs reported having a previous history of encouraging young people to participate in local decision making, although the extent to which this had helped facilitate a consultative approach to the structure and organisation of the panels is unclear. Two further LAs had either built their panels around the YouthBank model or were in the process of applying for a YouthBank licence.

B. LA-led model

At least three of the authorities visited could be described as taking a service-led approach to the setting up and operation of the decision-making panels, whereby the main structures and approach were decided by the LA staff. The main reason given for not adopting a more youth-led approach, particularly during the early days of the Funds, was reportedly because of the short time available to get the Funds underway. LAs felt pressured to get a panel in place and consequently young people were not consulted about the approach at the outset. An operational manager explained: ‘*It was largely service led in the early days, although young people have subsequently had greater involvement*’.

C. Partnership model

Three of the LAs were operating the panels through partnerships with other organisations, including those in the voluntary and commercial sector and other local government agencies. The involvement of these organisations varied from having responsibility for running and managing the panels to supporting the LA in identifying and recruiting young people to the panel. While staff from other LAs commented on the challenges of working with other organisations, even other departments within the LA, those that had entered into partnerships had been able to draw on additional knowledge and expertise, particularly in involving young people from hard-to-reach groups.

Eleven LAs said the model for implementing the Funds was based, at least initially, on existing work to ensure young people’s participation. In many cases, the models were subsequently expanded or adapted to meet the goals of the Funds more effectively (for example, through the addition of area panels or a greater focus on hard-to-reach groups).

6.4 Membership of the panel

6.4.1 Recruitment of young people

At the time of the case-study visits (January-February 2007), LAs reported that they recruited young people to decision-making panels by using one of three approaches:

- by targeting particular groups of young people
- by recruiting young people who responded to the Funds marketing campaign (this ‘open to all’ policy was used by a minority of the LAs)
- by using a combination of these two approaches.

The majority of LAs initially chose to target specific groups of young people, particularly those already known to the LA, to be part of the panels. This was said by many to be necessary because of the short set-up time available to LAs to establish decision-making panels, and because it enabled LAs to ‘*re-use existing structures, not create new ones*’. Moreover, there was an acknowledgement amongst some authorities that panels could not be representative of their local youth populations without targeting. As one senior LA manager explained:

We could have just put up posters somewhere and those young people who are motivated and aware will want to get involved. We’ve not gone down that route, instead we have put in a massive amount of leg work and deliberately targeted groups of young people and taken the idea of the panel to them.

There was some indication, however, that, as the Funds progressed, LAs were starting to recruit wider groups of young people, through a more extensive range of marketing strategies.

Although not every panel member participated in the interviews, across the 12 LAs, the vast majority of young people interviewed during the case-study visits were already known to the LA prior to the introduction of the Funds, and had heard about the Funds through youth centre managers and through membership of other LA-run youth forums. In five LAs, for example, the decision-making panel was either drawn from an existing youth forum, or the forum made up the core of the panel, which was subsequently extended. In only two of the 12 LAs did interviewees say that they had responded to a marketing campaign, and had had no prior involvement with the LA or LA-run youth groups.

6.4.2 Functioning of the panel

The numbers of young people reported to attend the panel meetings varied between five and 25. Most authorities reported having a ‘core group’ of young

people, usually fewer than ten, who attended panel meetings and focused primarily on the Funds. In some LAs, this was their sole role, while in others, this was an additional role undertaken by an existing youth forum, who continued their other functions alongside their role as a YOF/YCF decision-making panel. The core group in some LAs were supported by a wider group of panel members who would attend on a rotating basis. This approach ensured that young people were always available to attend panel meetings, while the presence of a core group ensured consistency of approach. Few authorities appeared to have developed guidelines regarding the length of time panel members could serve, although consideration had been given to the need to balance the value of having a core group with the need to replenish and refresh the panels with new members.

LA staff were in agreement that the number of young people involved in the decision-making panels was ‘*very much the tip of the iceberg*’ in terms of the total size of their local youth populations, as one senior LA manager explained:

It’s fair to say that not every young person wants to get involved in youth forums in the same way that adult consumers don’t necessarily want that level of involvement. Most just want to enjoy themselves in the activities on offer.

Panel meetings took place in a variety of venues, but usually in properties owned by the council, such as town halls or youth centres. LAs appeared to have decided to use a fixed address for meetings, both so that young people knew where to go and to minimise the length and irregularity of the journeys made by young people. The frequency with which the panels met varied considerably across the case-study areas, from three times a week in one LA to three times a year in another; these meetings were usually on weekday evenings, but sometimes took place at weekends.

6.4.3 Representativeness of the panels

LAs said they wanted to encourage a wide and diverse group of young people to get involved in the decision-making panels. This often necessitated ‘*a lot of leg work*’, with LA staff working with a variety of youth groups and commercial and voluntary organisations to try and get as wide a range of young people as possible involved in the panels. Interviewees agreed that they did not want the panel to ‘*just be a bolt on to existing forums*’, and instead wanted it to be ‘*as reflective as it could be [of the local youth population]*’. Indeed, all 12 case-study LAs set out with the intention of making the panels as representative as possible of the local youth populations they served.

Panel members themselves felt that, on the whole, their LAs had been successful in attracting young people with a range of backgrounds to the panels, and were broadly representative of their local communities. While

some young people knew one another from other youth groups or from school, the majority had met for the first time during the first panel meeting, as one boy explained: *'We're definitely a mixed group. We wouldn't normally hang out together, but somehow it works'*. LA staff agreed that it had not been easy to attract a representative group of young people to the panels. It was said to be especially challenging where authorities were operating a panel that had been voted for, as a senior local authority manager explained:

There is a problem of 'hand-selecting' a group of young people from different groups to come together and make decisions, but with the democratic approach here there are questions of positive discrimination. How, for example, do we preserve the mandate [based on young people's vote] and have representativeness?

The need to balance universal provision with engaging hard-to-reach young people was, however, thought to be challenging, as there was a tension between ensuring that panels were representative of the local youth population, while at the same time, ensuring that young people from a range of hard-to-reach groups were involved.

All 12 LAs welcomed the involvement of **hard-to-reach young people** as members of the decision-making panel or panels. There was, however, some variation in the extent to which LAs proactively sought to encourage the involvement of such young people. Although not comprehensive or representative, the case-study visits provided examples of panel members with the following characteristics:

- young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (five LAs)
- disabled young people (four LAs)
- young people with special educational needs (two LAs)
- gay and lesbian young people (two LAs)
- young parents (one LA)
- young carers (one LA)
- young offenders (one LA)
- looked after young people (one LA)
- young people living in rurally isolated areas (one LA)
- young people living in areas of high deprivation (one LA)
- young asylum seekers or refugees (one LA).

Many young people from hard-to-reach groups were recruited through word of mouth, or through working with youth networks and youth organisations, including those in the voluntary sector. This was illustrated by the following comment from one LA operational manager, who explained:

We do a lot of work with looked after young people, and we have good representation on the [decision-making] group. We also have a close working relationship with local special schools, and because of this we also have two young people with physical and learning disabilities on the group.

There was some evidence that where these young people had been successfully recruited to local decision-making groups, LAs needed to provide additional adult support (particularly for those young people with physical and learning disabilities).

Staff from LAs with a longer history of youth participation suggested it was perhaps easier to involve hard-to-reach young people in the decision-making process because of their experience of working with these groups in the past. The extent to which LAs' success in engaging hard-to-reach young people in the panels was related to their previous history was not clear from the evidence. However, LA staff made the general point that whatever method or approach was being used to promote membership of the decision-making panels, ultimately young people had to volunteer to get involved, and this applied equally to hard-to-reach groups as it did to other groups of young people.

6.4.4 Roles and responsibilities of young people on the panel

Beyond universal adherence to the national guidance, there was evidence that the roles and responsibilities of young people involved in the panels varied both between and within LAs. Most panels were involved in establishing their own rules and responsibilities, usually in consultation with the LA, regarding the operation of the panel and the wider responsibilities associated with delivering the Funds. For example, panel members would often take responsibility for, or at least contribute to, the design of marketing materials, in addition to establishing operational procedures for the review and evaluation of funding applications. A minority of panel members had been elected into these roles while, in at least one LA, the panel had decided not to apportion particular roles to individuals, and instead shared the workload amongst the group.

In all cases, LA adult workers (usually youth workers) supervised or provided support to the panel members, for example, providing consultative advice on prospective capital projects. Generally speaking, however, the involvement of adults was said to decrease over time, as the panel members grew in confidence and systems and protocols were put in place. However, not all young people seemed to welcome the greater involvement and responsibility afforded by a youth-led approach. This emphasises the need for the careful management of young people's time and workload when moving away from a LA-led model to one that gives greater responsibility to young people.

6.5 Reasons for involvement

The young people involved in YOF/YCF decision-making panels reported that they had become involved for a variety of reasons. For the majority, it was because they ‘*wanted to make young people’s views heard*’, while for others it satisfied a personal ambition, such as developing new skills, or was thought to be something to write on a CV. One young person said he had initially got involved because of the offer of shopping vouchers, but had later realised the broader benefits of being involved, such as meeting new people, which he said was why he had continued to attend panel meetings. Young people also said they appreciated the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities, such as handling large amounts of money and working with peers and adult workers to develop marketing strategies. Some panel members said being on the panel equipped them with valuable employability skills, such as decision-making, time management and financial skills.

Some of the authorities offered financial or material incentives to young people to encourage participation in the panel, and young people themselves reported receiving a variety of incentives including:

- shopping vouchers (reported by panel members from two LAs)
- the opportunity to go on residential field trips (two LAs)
- the opportunity to use the experience of being on a panel as evidence towards a LA volunteering award (one LA).

Many young people shared the view that they were not motivated to participate simply by the incentives, as one young person explained: ‘*We got involved because we want to, not because there are incentives...this is just something we wanted to do*’. The majority of panel members said they benefited instead from free food and drink and the costs of transportation to the panel meetings.

Perhaps the main reason why young people said that they chose to stay on the panel was because they felt they were taking ownership of the activities and resources being developed for their area. They appreciated having the opportunity to succeed at something, and many also found it an enjoyable experience, as one young person explained:

As a young person you get to learn skills on how to manage money, how to distribute it, to learn skills in decision making, and interview skills for yourself when you grow up and get a job. It’s just fun to give back to the community and enjoy and achieve.

The vast majority of young people interviewed during the case-study visits had been part of other decision-making groups locally prior to becoming

involved with the Funds, including youth forums, school councils, youth parliaments and children's rights groups. As a result of an already wide membership of other decision-making panels, very few young people said they had become involved in new forums since the introduction of YOF/YCF. However, one boy said he had been invited to take part in some additional evaluation work for the council as a direct result of his experience on the panel, while a girl said that membership of the panel had helped her secure a senior position in her local youth parliament. Consequently there was some evidence that experience of being on a panel had currency with other youth groups, and was helping to increase young people's participation in local decision making.

A small number of young people said they had tried to encourage other young people locally to become involved in decision making. However, the prevailing view was that they had met with only limited success. It appears that, even for young people, convincing other young people to get involved who had not previously expressed an interest in participating in the decision-making panel was a challenging task. One boy, whose panel had been trying to recruit more young people from school councils explained: *'We've got posters up and around, but the problem is getting people to take notice of them'*. The evidence suggests that for many young people, awareness alone is not enough to encourage them to get involved with the Funds and with local decision making. LAs' recognition of this may be reflected in the finding, reported earlier, that only a minority used generic marketing strategies to recruit young people, while most used more targeted approaches.

6.6 Training provided for young people

All of the young people interviewed had participated in some form of training as part of being a member of a panel. Local authorities had used different approaches to delivering training, although the content of the training was similar across all LAs visited. While four LAs provided training which young people had to complete before they could participate in the panel, most LAs appeared to have adopted a rolling programme of training, using the panel sessions themselves to support and train young people. Four LAs had implemented accredited or certificated training programmes where young people were presented with certificates on successful completion. Accredited training was positively received by the young people, as expressed by one young person who said: *'It's brilliant because we're actually going to get a qualification out of this'*. Two LAs were providing YouthBank accredited training on grant-making, which included establishing criteria by which to award funding.

In addition to a rolling programme of training, four LAs reported that they had implemented a system of assigning one or two whole days over to training.

Three LAs had gone further and had run residential training programmes lasting two days or more, which young people had said served to bring them closer together as a group. LA staff delivered most of this training although, in at least one authority, panel members were trained by other young people.

Across all of these approaches to training, similar themes were being covered. These included:

- the context of the area and particular wards
- details of what projects could and could not be funded
- the criteria for assessing applications (which were often shaped to fit local needs and priorities)
- the need to be critical when evaluating submissions
- guidelines and operational procedures for conducting a meeting
- how to work as a team and the importance of listening to others
- how best to feed back panel decisions to young people (including, in some LAs, aspects of conflict resolution and mediation).

Young people on the panels were generally very happy with the training they had received, as the following comments illustrate: *‘We’ve learnt a lot as we’ve been going along’*; *‘The training made me more open-minded than when we first started out’*. However, a general comment from young people was that training had improved or had become more relevant over time, as it became more apparent to LA staff and panel members which skills would be most useful to them. In one LA where training had not been provided at the beginning of their decision-making role, the panel participants observed that they would have appreciated receiving some support sooner, in learning how to chair a meeting, for instance.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has explored the findings relating to the structure and membership of the YOF/YCF decision-making panels. It has revealed that LAs had adopted a range of approaches to the structure of panels, with some operating just one central panel, and others operating both devolved area panels, as well as one LA-wide panel. The models adopted by LAs were reported by staff to best suit the authority’s current systems and practices and the needs of the local youth population. However, some LA staff were considering adapting their models in the future, to devolve decision making to smaller area-wide panels, for example. Most LAs had a dedicated ‘core group’ of young people with responsibility for the Funds, although the extent to which this was their sole role varied among LAs. There appeared to be some variation among LAs in the extent to which young people were actively

involved in the decision-making process – while some LAs could be described as ‘youth led’, in terms of how the decision-making group should operate, other LAs had adopted a more ‘LA-led’ model at the outset, mainly they said as a result of the short time available to set up the Funds.

LA staff noted the challenges associated with encouraging young people from diverse backgrounds to participate in the decision-making panels, and consequently, the majority of LAs chose to target specific groups of young people, particularly those that were already known to the LA, to be part of the panels. However, in general, the panel members and LA staff interviewed felt that their groups were largely representative of the local youth populations they served, and also involved young people from a range of hard-to-reach groups.

The main reason for young people becoming involved in the YOF/YCF panels appeared to be because they wanted young people’s views to be heard and recognised, although many indicated that they continued to be involved because they enjoyed the experience, felt that they were developing new skills, and appreciated the ownership they had in developing provision in their local area.

7. Decision-making process and nature of projects funded

Key findings

- In awarding projects, panel members considered a range of factors, the most common of which included: the number of young people who would benefit from the proposed activity; the originality and relevance of the application; whether matched or complementary funding was available; and whether the applying/supporting organisation had already received funding. Panels within five LAs had developed a scoring system for reviewing applications.
- Young people were supported by LA staff who provided advice and technical guidance, but generally facilitated an autonomous decision by the young people.
- A wide range of facilities and activities had been funded, including outdoor activities, computer and electronic equipment, minibuses, music equipment, and projects with an arts and dance focus.
- At the time of the visits (January-February 2007), many applications had been received from young people who attended established youth groups or centres. However, some LA staff commented that the numbers of applications from young people in the voluntary sector was increasing as awareness of the Funds increased.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the process of decision making, the support and guidance received by those young people involved in this process, and the nature of the projects funded through the YOF/YCF. More specifically, it examines:

- the involvement of young people in the planning of the funding process
- what the process of reviewing applications involves, including the extent of adult involvement in the decision-making process
- the factors that are taken into consideration when awarding funding
- the type and range of projects that have received funding.

7.2 Process of reviewing applications

7.2.1 Applications received

At the time of the visits (January-February 2007), the 12 case-study LAs had each received between 32 and 300 **applications** for funding. This had increased from between none and 128 applications which staff from the same 12 LAs reported that they had received when interviewed by telephone in autumn 2006 (see Appendix A for details of the findings from these interviews). The number of projects that had been **awarded** funding within individual authorities ranged from six to 123 projects. This represented an increase from the numbers reported in the autumn telephone interviews, when the number of projects funded ranged from none to 75. Overall, therefore, it appears that the applications were increasing notably as the Funds became more established.

7.2.2 Receiving applications and initial assessment process

Panels adopted a variety of approaches for reviewing applications which, as noted in Chapter 5, were usually provided in a standard format. For many, the process involved a LA officer first sorting through the funding applications as a quality assurance procedure, to ensure that all of the required information had been completed. The completed application forms were then passed to the panel members. LA staff said the only reason that applications would be held back from the panel would be if they were incomplete or if they did not meet the local eligibility criteria. One LA officer said that, while young people should be involved in all stages of the programme, it was important that LA staff took on the administrative workload. He said there was a '*fine line*' between involving young people and '*getting them to do our jobs for us*', particularly administration and work that could be considered burdensome to the young people.

In two LAs, funding applications were accompanied by an 'officer recommendation', as a guide to help panel members decide whether to award funding or not. The recommendation typically included information on whether the applicant or applying organisation had already received funds through YOF/YCF and if they were from a particularly deprived area, for instance.

In the majority of LAs visited, young people first saw the completed funding applications when they arrived for the panel meeting, but one LA specifically mentioned that young people received copies of the applications a few days before the meeting. The purpose of distributing the applications to panel members ahead of the meeting was to make the process more efficient and to ensure that young people '*don't spend all night discussing projects*'.

7.2.3 Criteria for approving projects

In awarding projects, panel members reportedly considered a range of factors, the most common of which included:

- the number of young people who would benefit from the proposed activity (this usually reflected the cost – panel members would generally expect a more expensive project to involve more young people)
- the originality and relevance of the application
- whether matched or complementary funding was available (this was generally said to be viewed favourably although staff in one LA said that they emphasised to the young people the need to consider that some applicants might be more able to access complementary funding than others)
- whether the applicants/supporting organisation had already received funding (first-time applicants were often preferred).

In addition to the above, LA staff appeared to encourage panel members to give priority to applications from young people who traditionally faced barriers to participation, and particularly to applications that provided benefits to a wide cross-section of the youth population.

Three authorities had a mandate on the type of projects they should fund through the YOF/YCF, as a result of wider consultation of young people about the provision they wanted in their area (for example, through questionnaires to young people or ballot box voting systems in youth centres). In one of these LAs, for example, the activities and facilities that young people identified were grouped into eight categories (two of which were ‘a safe place to hang out’ and ‘more and better sports facilities’). The YOF/YCF panel was required to ensure that projects were funded in each of these categories, thereby ensuring that the interests of the wider community of young people, in addition to the applicant groups, were met.

Panels within five of the LAs visited had developed a scoring system for reviewing applications. These were based on predefined criteria, agreed between panel members and LA staff. Some panels also applied a weighting system, scoring particular parts of the application higher than others. For example, in one LA, more points were awarded to those applications that had indicated how they would evaluate the impact of their project, and the role young people had played in preparing the application. One panel member emphasised the importance of these criteria when reviewing applications:

The criteria are really important when we are making our decisions because that's something we keep on going back to. Because if you've got two applications that are really similar, it's the criteria that we use to make our decisions.

An example of the criteria for selection in one LA is presented below.

Criteria for selection used in one LA

The young people in one decision-making panel developed a set of ten criteria for applications. These are also outlined on the application form, so that applicants are clear about whether it is appropriate for them to apply and what is required of their application:

- 1) Applications can be accepted from all young people aged 13-19 and up to 25 years for young people with special needs.
- 2) Applications must come from young people and be for the benefit of young people.
- 3) Applications for projects that are already funded by local councils or voluntary organisations will not be accepted, unless it is for a new development.
- 4) Young people applying must reside within the LA and the project must also be based within the LA.
- 5) Applicants must be working towards getting a project bank account or, if appropriate, ask their supporting organisation/adult to act as banker.
- 6) Applicants must have a responsible adult (over 18 years) to support the project group.
- 7) Applications must take account of Health and Safety, Child Protection guidelines and Equality and Diversity (and provide evidence where possible).
- 8) Funding will not be allocated to groups to **promote** religious or political beliefs, but the panel will be happy to receive applications from groups of differing faiths.
- 9) Applicants must show how they will evaluate and monitor the project.
- 10) Successful applicants must be prepared to collect evidence and complete monitoring forms to show how the funding has been spent and what impact it has had on activities and/or facilities for young people.

The young people also developed a scoring system for reviewing applications, in which they scored applications according to the following questions:

- Is the project young person led?
- Is it good value for money?
- Is the idea of the project well thought through?
- Will it benefit young people?
- Will it benefit the community?

In one LA, young people, in consultation with a supporting third-party organisation and LA staff, had decided to fund short-term projects (less than three months) and longer-term projects separately. Projects deemed to have a longer-term impact were granted more funding. Panel members in four LAs had set upper limits for the amount of money that could be awarded for any

one project and, in one of these LAs, it was explained that this approach enabled the panel to adopt a more sustainable and equitable approach to the award of funding.

When deciding what to fund, most panels said they looked at each project on a ‘*case-by-case basis*’, rather than across a number of projects. However, most LAs had mapped the distribution of projects as they had been awarded and rejected, in an effort to balance, geographically, the distribution of projects overall.

Young people on the panels generally considered the decision-making process to be slightly different for the capital fund compared with the revenue fund. Applications for YCF funding typically involved a more complex decision-making process, with greater input from LA staff, as these applications often required panels to consider issues such as planning regulations and health and safety. While some LA staff and panels were wary of committing large sums of YCF funding to a single project, others thought it was better to consolidate the capital funding. One operational manager explained: ‘*It’s better to invest in big capital projects because at least you are going to have sustained evidence of the impact...they will still be functional in years to come*’.

None of the LAs reported that they had specified a minimum number of young people required in order for a decision on a Funds application to be made, although, of those panels visited, none comprised fewer than five young people. Where panel members were split on a decision as to whether to fund a project, compromises were made in order for a decision to be reached. For example, panel members would agree to fund a project to less than the requested amount or to only fund certain aspects of it.

7.2.4 Support and guidance

There was a consensus among LA staff that young people should take ownership of the decision-making process. With the exception of providing advice and technical guidance where it was requested by panel members, the role of LA staff was largely to check, retrospectively, how projects had spent the money, rather than to influence young people’s decision making. A senior LA manager’s comments were typical of others’ points of view when he said that while young people’s views ‘*should be influenced by things that we’ve agreed with them are priorities...the decision* [about whether to fund a particular project] *is theirs, because they have the right to make their own decision without us*’. Similarly, LA staff generally respected the fact that the Funds were designed to be spent by young people for young people, as one LA officer explained:

The young people make the decisions about how the money is spent and that's it. It has been the case that what I think would be a good project to fund, young people haven't, but as long as they're following the guidance it's up to them.

With regard to the decision-making process, panel members generally agreed that LA staff '*left them to get on with it*', and would usually just '*sit in the corner and listen*'. Panel members said that LA staff were available to give advice and would, for example, draw individuals' attention to applications they suspected had not been completed by young people. Adult workers would sometimes also minute the meetings, and provide specialised support to young people with learning and physical disabilities.

Generally, young people felt that their LA officers (usually youth workers) provided the right balance of support and challenge, as evidenced in the following quotations:

All of us have a good relationship with her...and she knows when to help and when to stand back and let us make our own decisions.

Throughout the whole process [the LA worker] has given us guidance, but at the end of the day it's been us who have had the final say.

Only one LA reported having a system whereby all judgements made by the panel had to be approved by the LA, and specifically by elected members. This was reported to have caused some tensions between councillors, panel members, and the Youth Service, although it is not known how many decisions, if any, were overturned in this way. This was highlighted as a key learning experience for the panel by LA staff, who noted that care was required to ensure that young people's decisions can be easily evidenced.

7.3 Applications not approved for funding

7.3.1 Reasons for not approving applications

Amongst the projects that panels had decided not to fund were those that stood to benefit only one person or very small numbers of young people, such as tickets to see sporting events. Similarly, applications from some schools were '*knocked back*' because their projects stood to benefit only school-based young people and not a wider youth audience. In one LA, applications from schools were also questioned because the LA believed that extended school activities should be funded from schools' budgets and not from YOF/YCF.

Interviewees in all of the panels agreed that one disqualifying factor was when applications appeared to have been written by adults. There were some legitimate reasons for adults to write applications including, for example,

when they were written on behalf of disabled young people or young people with learning difficulties. However, if a panel suspected that an adult had submitted an application or instigated the ideas within a proposed project, whilst claiming to be a young person, they either rejected it, or asked the applicants to meet with them. This had revealed that, in some cases, young people had not been involved in the application process. In these cases, panel members had asked the young people to resubmit an application that was based on their own ideas. While most panels could recount instances of where this had happened, it was not thought to be a widespread problem, and panels appeared adept at identifying applications written largely or exclusively by adults.

While many panels had funded youth trips and residentials, one panel had decided not to fund excursions outside of the LA. As one girl explained:

We are not happy funding trips because we want it to be based in [the LA], that's one of our criteria, so as well as benefiting the people involved, it benefits the community...but if they just go on a trip and have a bit of a jolly, this isn't benefiting anyone here.

7.3.2 Feedback process

The success of an application was generally communicated to the project leader by a LA staff member, either by letter or telephone, although young people who had attended a panel meeting to present their proposal were usually informed of the decision at the time. Whilst one LA specifically reported that they had a formal appeals process in place, this was yet to be used at the time of the interview. More often, feedback was provided to unsuccessful applicants informally by a LA staff member.

As unsuccessful applicants were not interviewed for the research, at this stage it is not possible to comment in detail on the feedback process. However, staff in two LAs highlighted the potential 'damage' to young people whose applications were unsuccessful. The importance of providing constructive feedback in an accessible way to unsuccessful applicants is reflected in the experience of one youth centre manager who had worked with young people to develop applications for Funds which had not been successful. The young people had reportedly found presenting their project to the panel intimidating and were said to have been demoralised by not being successful. Although the panel held a feedback session for unsuccessful applicants, the young people were said to have felt too intimidated to attend.

7.4 Applications awarded funding

7.4.1 Nature of funded projects

As might be expected, given the variety of contexts and interests of young people in the 12 LAs, a range of projects and activities were reported to have been successfully funded through YOF/YCF. The **main types of projects** funded included outdoor activities, computer and electronic equipment, minibuses, music equipment, and projects with an arts and dance focus. Applications with an educational theme, such as healthy eating projects, were also said to ‘do well’. Sports clubs and facilities had proved to be particularly popular, as had applications to refurbish and re-equip local youth centres. Funds had also been awarded for excursions both within the UK and abroad. Panel members said the Funds allowed them to provide facilities and services that young people really wanted, such as discos, healthy eating and sports activities, which were different from the needs of the generation before them:

When the people on the council were younger, they wanted a lot of different facilities to what teenagers nowadays expect. What they used to do, skating, biking, is a lot different to what we want now. Things like healthy eating and sport have become big issues for teenagers nowadays, and discos.

There were also some examples of schools receiving funding to run projects out of school hours. For example, in one project, money was being used to fund an adventure playgroup after school for six months. In another project, funding was given to a Church-run youth centre which operated in the evenings from a school site. Another school was running DJ courses for young people during half-term. However, one LA operational manager felt that still more could be done ‘to encourage participation through schools’, and that to do this they needed to better ‘educate school staff as to the purpose of the Funds’.

Much of the Youth Capital Fund appeared to have been spent on the refurbishment of youth centres and the improvement of existing Youth Service facilities, although there were examples of new large builds being commissioned. The extent to which projects contained both capital and revenue elements varied between authorities, although it appeared that most LAs had spent more of the revenue funding. Further details of the funding process are discussed in Chapter 8.

Whilst most projects or activities were related to a specific geographical area, there were instances of projects that could be described as ‘authority-wide’ projects as they aimed to be accessible to the wider community of young people across the authority. For example, one LA was developing an area of the central library to provide a central ‘drop-in’ centre for young people. The young people were involved in designing and devising the specification for the

centre. In a second area, the decision-making panel was exploring funding a 'multi-media bus' that could travel to rural areas and meet the needs of several disparate groups of young people.

The service providers and young people who were visited and interviewed for the case studies had been successful in applying for funding, or had played a role in delivering a project. They reported that they had been engaged in a variety of activities as a result of receiving money through the YOF/YCF which included:

- a trip to Africa as part of a sexual health awareness project
- a residential activity week for young people with physical and learning disabilities
- a healthy eating project where young people learnt how to cook healthy food
- the refurbishment of a voluntary sector youth centre, including new kitchen, arts/crafts area, and a 'chill out' room
- sports equipment for a local youth windsurfing club
- the installation of a professional cinema system in a youth club
- a DVD highlighting the challenges faced by young deaf people
- a certificated one-day music course in London
- an educational film about sexual health and young people
- a film-making and animation workshop for 15-16 year olds
- a web design course to develop a new community website for young people.

Overall, the projects that had been funded could be characterised into four broad groups. These groups, which are not entirely exclusive or comprehensive, can be summarised as follows:

- **Project type 1** – a project or activity where a finite group of young people (usually the applicants) participated. This would usually be for a finite period of time which was often fairly short term. An example of this type of project would be a week-long residential for a group of young people with learning difficulties.
- **Project type 2** – provision of equipment or facilities that can be accessed by an unspecified number of young people (including, but not exclusively, the applicants). This would usually be for an extended or open-ended period of time. The example below provides an illustration of project type 2.

Project type 2 – developing a youth centre’s facilities

Young people from a youth centre located approximately ten miles from a major city and serving an area of some socio-economic disadvantage had been successful in two applications for YOF/YCF.

The first application had been to refurbish an ‘*old and dreary*’ looking room in the youth centre with new gym/weights equipment. Spurred on by their success, young people from the centre then put in a second application to set up a study room consisting of four new computers with internet access, along with digital cameras and a video camera. One boy explained: ‘*People can come and use the room after school if they want to help with homework, or they can come in weekends. We’re going to have a rota system so that people can book in a time to use the computers*’.

The local youth worker, and manager of the youth centre, explained that these two projects had helped not only to ‘*breathe new life into an old building*’, but had also encouraged the young people to work together and to develop their research, financial management, and communication skills, as well as take pride in what was before a little-used community youth centre.

- **Project type 3** – provision of a service that can be accessed by an unspecified number of young people (including, but not exclusively the applicants). As this type of project is a service and requires staff, it would usually be for a finite period of time, for example, a course over half-term working with DJs, or a 12-week sports activity with professional coaches.
- **Project type 4** – a project or activity for a finite group of young people (usually the applicants) which involves an element of skill development that may then be used to benefit other young people over time, although the skill development would be for a finite period of time. The example below provides an illustration of project type 4.

Project type 4 – developing young people’s understanding to share with other young people

One group of young people had applied successfully for funding for a trip to Athens to learn more about the Olympic Games and, in particular, about the hidden after-effects of the Games on the local community. This was a seven-day trip for 12 young people, in which they planned to interview a range of people, such as local businesses, young people, ethnic minorities, employees of the Olympic Games, to explore their experiences and views of the Games.

The young people intended to film a documentary of their trip, which could then be shown in local schools and youth clubs and forums, to inform other young people in the local community about the possible outcomes of the Olympic Games. They also had the idea of sending the film to the Mayor of London, and to the BBC, for wider publicity of their project.

At the time of the case-study visits, many of the projects appeared to be of project type 1, such as excursions, and project type 2, such as video projectors and sports equipment.

7.4.2 Numbers of young people involved

Most application forms seen by the research team during the case-study visits requested that applicants should indicate the numbers of young people who would benefit from their proposed projects. There are two categories of young people who are involved with, and could potentially benefit from the Funds. There are those who are involved in the application process for the Funds, and those who can access a facility, project or activity that has been funded through the YOF/YCF. Five of the 12 LAs provided details of the numbers of young people benefiting from projects in their reports to their Government Offices. Details are provided in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Numbers of young people applying for and benefiting from, YOF/YCF in five LAs

LA*	Total YOF/YCF allocation (approximate)	Number of applications received	Number of young people that applied for funding**	Number of projects funded***	Number of young people benefiting from projects
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
LA1	£200,000	17	41 (22 YOF/ 19 YCF)	16	1,044
LA 2	£500,000	22	530 (474 YOF/ 56 YCF)	17	6,218
LA 3	£400,000	2	Not available	2	296
LA 4	£800,000	76	80 (49 YOF/ 31 YCF)	31	Not available
LA 5	£700,000	88	Not available	66	Not available

*The information presented is based on data provided by LAs in October 2006, and may not reflect the situation at the time of the case-study visits, or their current situation

**The aggregated information provided in the table is based on data provided by LAs on individual funded projects

***Note that the difference between columns E and C may not reflect the actual number of projects that were unsuccessful in receiving funding, as some applications had not yet been reviewed or had been deferred for further information.

Source: LAs' Mid-Year Reports to Government Offices, October 2006

The details in the table suggest that the number of young people benefiting from the projects is considerably larger than the number of young people

involved in the application process.⁵ This may indicate that projects of types 2, 3 and 4 above have been funded in these LAs and it is likely, therefore, that the figures for the potential beneficiaries are an estimate. Establishing a reliable assessment of the numbers of young people who benefit from the Funds, presents a particular challenge due to the nature of the different project types. Projects of type 1, where the relationship between the beneficiaries and the Funds is quite direct, can provide a reliable indication. However, the other three types of projects may have some direct beneficiaries and then a further ‘ripple effect’ to other young people. In some cases, such as attendance at a course or event, this ripple effect may be possible to assess, while in others, such as the provision of a youth shelter, the actual number of beneficiaries may not be reliably assessed. This issue will be explored further in the forthcoming follow-up visits to case-study areas, reviews of LAs’ Government Office (GO) reports and through the survey of LAs.

7.4.3 Characteristics of applicants

Two LAs provided details in the GO reports of the numbers of young people from hard-to-reach groups who had benefited from the YOF/YCF projects. In one area, 663 of the total of 1,044 young people were said to be from these groups while in the second, 44 of the 296 young people were described as hard-to-reach.⁶ However, as outlined above, a reliable assessment of the characteristics of young people who participate in projects of type 2, 3 and 4 may be difficult to ascertain.

At the time of the case-study visits, many of the applications were said to have been from established youth centres and community youth groups, although some of the applications had come from small groups of young people with adult support. LA staff in two areas felt that they had not yet received applications from a wide range of organisations. For example, in one area, the panel had not initially received many applications from the voluntary sector. While this was beginning to increase, the LA was including information about the Funds in a general roadshow to voluntary sector groups with the aim of increasing these numbers. While there were exceptions, there were indications that the applicants to the Funds were largely young people who were already participating in an existing youth project, centre or activity. Moreover, these groups were often located within Youth Service provision. It is worth noting that this may reflect an initial impact of promotion through the Youth Service and other youth organisations (as mentioned in Chapter 4). It may also reflect an issue mentioned by some LA staff and service providers that young people

⁵ This was consistent with the monitoring information provided by LAs to Government Offices in October 2006. Across approximately half of LAs, in five Government Office regions, 26,478 young people were reported to have been involved in applying for YOF/YCF funding, while 57,339 young people were reported to have been beneficiaries of activities or facilities (DfES unpublished report, 2006).

⁶ The monitoring information provided to Government Offices by LAs revealed that eight per cent of applicants were ‘disadvantaged’, although it is worth noting that more than half of LAs were not able to provide this information, and the definition of ‘disadvantaged’ varied across LAs.

who are hard-to-reach may take longer to apply for the Funds as they may lack confidence and require more support to go through the process.

LA staff reported that the applications had generally not come from a group of young people with any particular set of characteristics, but had instead come from young people representing diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. This reflected the findings from the telephone survey of staff in all LAs, as reported in Appendix A. However, staff from five of the case-study LAs reported that many of the projects they had commissioned came from more hard-to-reach young people. These included:

- young people with disabilities (three LAs)
- young carers (two LAs)
- young people from minority ethnic groups (two LAs)
- young people who are looked after (two LAs)
- refugees (one LA)
- disengaged boys (one LA)
- young offenders (one LA)
- young parents (one LA).

In addition, staff in two LAs said that the characteristics of young people applying for the Funds was '*starting to diversify*'. The extent to which this continues as YOF/YCF becomes more embedded will be explored through the follow-up visits.

7.5 Summary

The decision-making panels took into consideration a variety of factors when assessing applications for the YOF/YCF. In some areas, the panels had developed criteria for selection and, on occasion, a scoring system for assessing applications against these criteria. Panel members tended not to approve applications that did not appear to benefit more than a few young people, nor did they approve those that appeared to have been submitted by adults. In their guidance role, staff in some LAs encouraged the panel members to approve applications from young people who were hard-to-reach. Overall, guidance provided by LA staff appeared to be proportionate to the needs of the young people and, in general, was provided at their request. Young people's decisions about which projects to fund were generally respected by the adults involved.

A wide range of projects had been funded in the 12 case-study areas, and these could be characterised into four types: those which were for a finite group of

young people for a finite period of time; those that were for equipment or facilities that could be accessed by an unspecified number of people over a unspecified period of time; those that were for a service that could be accessed by an unspecified number of people for a finite period of time; and those which entailed the development of skills or knowledge among a finite group of young people that could be used in future for the benefit of other young people. At the time of the case-study visits, many of the applications received had been from young people who were involved in youth centres and youth groups. Although these included some young people from hard-to-reach groups, it was felt that applications from a wider range of young people were beginning to increase and that this was an area for further development in the second year of the Funds.

8. Funding and monitoring processes

Key findings

- Funds were most commonly distributed to successful applicants as a one-off payment, in advance of any spending. However, a small number of LAs provided payment in arrears, or in instalments. In general, successful projects were satisfied with the funding process, however, a small number had experienced some challenges with delays to receiving funding.
- While, at the time of the case-study visits, some LAs had allocated all their funding to projects, this was not the case among all the LAs, and some had concerns that they would not be able to spend all their allocated funding by the end of the financial year. This was particularly the case in LAs that paid funding to projects in arrears.
- There was some similarity across the case-study LAs in the way they had spent the five per cent of Funds (or £15,000) that LAs were able to use centrally, with most authorities using this funding for training, and covering the expenses of, panel members, as well as covering staff costs, and producing publicity and application materials.
- Most of the case-study LAs were in the early stages of monitoring and evaluating the Funds, although a range of approaches were planned for the future. Approaches included monitoring the expenditure of the Funds at a LA and project level, undertaking monitoring visits to successful projects, and reviewing the distribution of Funds at a LA level.

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the mechanisms for providing YOF/YCF funding to projects when their application has been successful, and LAs' approaches for monitoring and evaluating projects. More specifically, it presents findings relating to the following:

- the mechanisms through which successful applicants received their allocated YOF/YCF funding, and any issues associated with this
- the way in which LAs had spent the five per cent of YOF/YCF that was allocated for LA use
- the approaches to monitoring and evaluating the Funds and funded projects that LAs had developed or had planned.

8.2 Mechanisms for providing funding

Staff in seven of the LAs reported that YOF/YCF funding was only paid to established organisations, rather than to individual young people. Young people applying for funding were, therefore, encouraged to link with a supporting organisation when submitting their application. The operational managers in four authorities stated that, where necessary, they assisted young people in finding an appropriate supporting organisation or adult but, where this was not possible, the LA could hold their YOF/YCF funding for them. The senior manager in one LA, for example, commented, although funding had to go through a formal organisation, for financial probity reasons, *‘as a last resort, one of the youth participation officers here would act as a mentor and the council would hold the money for them, and when they [young people] wanted to buy things we’d buy it’*.

Seven of the LAs reported that they had adopted just one approach for providing YOF/YCF funding to successful applicants, while in the remaining LAs, the mechanism appeared to vary, depending on the type of organisation involved, and the nature of the application. Further details of these two approaches are provided below.

In the LAs that were operating **one funding mechanism**, the most common method of distributing YOF/YCF funding to successful applicants (noted in five LAs) was as a one-off payment, in advance of any spending, either through bank transfer or cheque. The operational managers in two of these LAs, for example, reported that funding was paid into applicants’ bank accounts as soon as they had returned a signed financial declaration form to the LA, while another two LAs indicated that applicants received a cheque shortly after being informed that their application has been successful. Only one LA stated that the sole mechanism they used for providing funding to successful projects was as a payment in arrears, with projects submitting invoices to the LA for their spending.

In LAs where the **funding process varied**, this generally differed according to the type of organisation that had applied for funding. Two LAs, for example, indicated that where Youth Service-funded projects successfully applied for YOF/YCF funding, their allocated funding was given an internal LA cost code, and was held and tracked within the LA budget. Three LAs used a combination of approaches, which involved providing some projects with Funds in advance, and others in arrears, depending on the nature of the activity and the financial situation of the organisation. One of these LAs explained that voluntary organisations were mostly paid in a one-off payment, but that if organisations were booking trips or purchasing equipment, they were required to send the invoice to the LA for payment.

Although, as reported above, LAs most commonly distributed funding to successful projects as a one-off payment, three LAs indicated that funding was given to projects in two instalments. One LA, for example, reported that all projects were initially given 25 per cent of their allocated funding, with the balance being paid on submission of receipts. Another LA used this mechanism for distributing YCF funding to projects (although they paid YOF funding to projects as a one-off payment) – successful YCF projects were initially given 60 per cent of their funding, and the remaining 40 per cent was paid once they had been successfully evaluated by the YOF/YCF decision-making panel.

Although, in general, representatives of successful projects who were interviewed were satisfied with the funding process, a small number of projects appeared to have experienced some challenges. One young person who had successfully applied for funding reported that her group had received only part of their funding in advance and that this had put some strain on the organisation's finances. Representatives from a minority of projects also reported that they had experienced delays in receiving the funding from the LA, which had hindered the progress of their projects. For example, the members of a youth centre who had been successful in applying for funding for an overseas trip complained that delays in receiving the money had meant that flight prices had subsequently increased, and the funding they had received was no longer sufficient to cover the cost of the trip. One young person explained: *'We saw the problem coming as soon as things started to get delayed so we have held fund-raising events to try and raise the additional money'*.

Staff and young people from two projects that were part of Youth Service-funded provision also highlighted difficulties they had faced in accessing their allocated funding. Both projects felt that, as the YOF/YCF funding was routed through the general Youth Service budget, rather than being given directly to the project, this approach prevented young people from having full control of the project finances, and subsequently slowed progress on their project. This was summed up by the youth worker in one project:

The idea of YOF is great, with the young people writing the application, but then I found that the money goes back to our original finance manager...it doesn't make sense that the young people write the application, but then they have to go to members of staff that they don't know to get the money...it's their money and they have to be deciding how it's spent...the Youth Opportunity Fund is supposed to be a fresh new idea, but when it comes to spending the money, it is back to the old-fashioned way.

This view was echoed by the young people who had applied for YOF/YCF funding in this youth group, as the following comments from applicants illustrate: *'I don't see any way of us accessing that money efficiently...as soon*

as we need the money we should be able to get it, otherwise we are just not going to be able to carry out our ideas'; 'The whole idea was for the youth to use the money wisely...that's not exactly giving the youths the opportunity to do what they were supposed to do'.

8.2.1 Use of complementary funding

None of the case-study LAs reported that applicants were required to provide complementary funding for their projects, although LA staff noted that some applicants had done so. Some projects, for example, had undertaken fund-raising prior to their YOF/YCF application to help raise money for their project, while staff in three projects indicated that they planned to raise additional funds by charging young people a small amount of money to participate in activities. For instance, the youth worker in one youth group which had applied for funding to provide activities for young people at a community centre planned to charge young people a small membership fee, as he felt that this would encourage young people's commitment to the project.

Although, as noted above, complementary funding was not a requirement in YOF/YCF applications, LA staff in four authorities indicated that an application would be considered more favourably if young people had already raised funds themselves. A member of staff in one of these authorities, for example, indicated that applicants were encouraged to provide evidence of prior fund-raising for their project, as it was felt that this showed a commitment to the project: *'It demonstrates how involved they are with the project if they can say, "here's how much we have already raised from an event at our club"'*.

8.3 Use of central fund of £15,000 or five per cent

A small part of the overall YOF/YCF funding allocated to each LA – five per cent or £15,000, whichever is the larger – may be used centrally by LAs. This section explores how LAs had chosen to spend this funding. DCSF's YOF/YCF guidance document⁷ suggested that LAs could use the five per cent of funds to engage young people from hard-to-reach groups, although this guidance was not prescriptive, and LAs had used this funding in a range of different ways.

In nine of the case-study authorities, the five per cent was spent on the **young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels**, for example, on training the young people in grant-giving (including residential weekends), providing incentives or rewards for the young people, and covering young people's expenses. LAs reported that it was often necessary to provide

⁷ Department for Education and Skills (2006). Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes, Nottingham: DfES

refreshments for the young people during their meetings and to cover their transport costs in order to enable them to participate in the panel. The senior manager in one authority, for example, commented that, *'if the young people are giving up their evenings, it seems only right that we provide them with something to eat and drink'*. Four LAs reported that they paid young people's travel expenses, and this was reported to be particularly important in rural authorities, as the following comment illustrates: *'Because we are a rural authority, transport is a real issue. We have had to use some of the funding on transport, for example, taxi costs. This has really made a difference to young people's ability to get involved'*. This echoed the views of young people regarding the importance of transport costs, reported in Chapter 6.

Seven of the LAs reported that they had used the five per cent of Funds to cover, either wholly or partly, the **cost of staff** involved in implementing the Funds. For example, two LAs that were working in partnership with youth organisations to implement the Funds had used some of the five per cent to employ staff from these organisations. A further three authorities had used this funding to employ a youth worker, on a part-time basis, to support young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panel and to facilitate their meetings. Another LA had recruited 'youth advocates' to promote the Funds, help with the development of application materials and to support young people applying for funding.

It is worth noting that interviewees in two LAs stated that they had chosen not to use the five per cent for staffing, and the senior manager in one of these LAs explained that this was because they felt that implementing the Funds *'is our job...it [the Funds] assists our work, rather than funding our work'*.

Five of the LAs had spent at least part of the five per cent on **producing publicity and application materials**. This included the printing of guidance and application forms, leaflets and posters, and other promotional materials such as YOF/YCF stationery, pens and t-shirts for the decision-making panel. One of the LAs reported using the five per cent to employ young people as 'youth advocates' and one of their tasks was promotion of YOF/YCF, while another had used part of this funding to run a feedback session for unsuccessful applicants to help them with future applications.

One of the case-study authorities indicated that they had used the funding specifically for engaging hard-to-reach young people (although the staffing and publicity costs mentioned above may also have contributed to helping engage hard-to-reach young people in other LAs). This LA reported that they had used some of the five per cent to promote YOF/YCF to young people from hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups, and on raising the profile of the Funds among youth workers who could subsequently promote the Funds to young people in deprived areas and support the application process.

Interviewees in four of the LAs specifically commented that the five per cent of Funds had not been sufficient to cover the administrative costs of implementing YOF/YCF, and that the LA had been required to subsidise the work, as illustrated by the following comment from the operational manager in one authority: *‘There is not enough money to fund a full-time post...the LA has to subsidise the programme’*.

8.4 Allocation of Funds

The extent to which LAs would have spent all their allocated YOF/YCF funding by the end of the 2006/7 financial year varied across the case-study areas, and depended, to some extent, on the approach that LAs had adopted for providing funding to successful projects.

At the time of the case-study visits (in January-February 2007), four LAs reported that they had allocated all their funding to projects, and another felt that they would have done so by the end of the financial year. However, two of these LAs had concerns that, although they had allocated all the Funds, the successful projects would not be able to spend all their funding by the end of the financial year. In both these LAs, YOF/YCF funding was paid to projects in arrears, with the LA paying invoices submitted by projects, and this appeared to be the main reason why projects might not be able to spend their funding by the deadline. The finance manager in one of these LA explained that there had been some *‘legitimate delays’* in the ordering of some products, and that this was compounded with a six-week time lag between a project ordering an item and the payment being taken out the YOF/YCF budget. The operational manager reported that they were currently *‘chasing’* projects to ensure that they spent all their YOF/YCF money before the end of the financial year, but he was concerned that they would not be able to spend all the Funds, particularly the YCF funding.

There was general consensus among LA staff that it had been difficult to spend all their allocated YOF/YCF funding by the end of the financial year. The senior manager in one LA, for example, attributed this to the late notification of the introduction of the Funds, and another highlighted the short timescale they had been given to spend large amounts of funding. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 10.

The DCSF YOF/YCF guidance document⁸ states that LAs are able to roll over any under-spend from the first year into the second year, but only for YCF funding (a maximum of 40 per cent of the total capital allocation for the first year). Four LAs reported that they were planning to carry over some of their YCF funding, although staff in two of these authorities reported that they

⁸ Department for Education and Skills (2006) Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Guidance Notes, Nottingham: DfES

might not be able to spend 60 per cent of their YCF allocation by the end of the financial year, and were concerned that this money would have to be returned to DCSF. The senior manager in one of these LAs explained that they were finding it difficult to spend the YCF funding because the YCF applications they had received tended to be complex and involve more planning than YOF projects.

Although the DCSF guidance stated that only YCF funding could be rolled over to the next financial year, staff in two of the LAs that were not on target to spend their YOF/YCF funding reported that, as they were a 'four star' LA⁹, they were permitted to carry over some of their YOF funding. The senior manager in one of these LAs emphasised the benefits of this for their authority: *'If we weren't a four star authority, able to carry money over, we would be in trouble now and potentially having to hand money back rather than it going to young people'*.

Although LAs were finding ways in which they could spend or roll over their YOF/YCF funding by the end of the financial year, representatives of some of the funded projects also noted some frustrations and difficulties in spending their allocated funding. Staff and young people in two Youth Service-funded youth groups reported that there had been delays in the procurement of Funds and in organising their project, and consequently they were unsure whether they would be able to spend their funding by the deadline. One girl in another project felt that it was *'frustrating that we have to spend all the money by the end of March'*, as she felt that they could make better use of the funding if they had more time to plan how to spend it.

8.5 Monitoring approaches

At the time of the case-study visits (January-February 2007), most LAs were in the early stages of developing their approaches for monitoring and evaluating YOF/YCF. This was summed up by the senior manager in one LA, who explained that due to limited funding, and a lack of time, their monitoring and evaluation would be *'light touch'* in the first year of the Funds. Another senior manager highlighted the difficulty of evaluating the Funds and the projects that have been funded: *'We are still developing our evaluation procedures, but how do you evaluate the impact of providing new cricket bats to a cricket club?'* In discussing monitoring approaches, some interviewees outlined the ways in which they were monitoring and evaluating funded projects, while others described the administrative processes of monitoring expenditure of the Funds.

⁹ According to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment undertaken by the Audit Commission in all LAs. This assesses how councils are run and the quality of council services.

Where interviewees commented, the monitoring and evaluation approaches adopted by LAs, or planned for the future, could be grouped into five main categories, as detailed below:

- **Monitoring of the expenditure of the Funds at a LA level** – Four LAs specifically mentioned that they monitored the expenditure of the Funds on a regular basis, to ensure that all of the Funds were allocated to projects by the end of the financial year, and to check that expenditure complied with YOF/YCF and LA regulations.
- **Monitoring of how funding is spent at a project level** – Staff in six LAs indicated that funded projects were required to provide evidence that they were spending their YOF/YCF funding as they outlined in their application form. This included receipts or invoices for payments, as well as photographic or video evidence of project activities. One LA also reported that receipts and invoices submitted by projects are logged onto a central electronic system, so that expenditure in each individual funded project can be closely monitored.
- **Monitoring and evaluation visits to successful projects** – One LA reported that young people involved in the decision-making panel had visited projects that had received YOF/YCF funding, and a further four authorities indicated that they planned to undertake such visits in the future. The purpose of these visits was to monitor how projects had spent their funding, and to talk to young people involved about the success of the project and the outcomes for them. LA staff noted that it would not be possible to visit all funded projects, due to the large numbers, but that a sample of projects would be visited.
- **Forms / reports to monitor and evaluate the success and outcomes of projects** – LA staff in five authorities indicated that funded projects were required to complete monitoring and evaluation forms or reports. These were required to detail, for example, the numbers and characteristics of young people that have benefited from the project, and the outcomes of the project for the young people involved. A further six LAs reported that they planned to send monitoring and evaluation forms to projects in the near future. While young people on the decision-making panels did not appear to be currently using these monitoring forms to inform their future funding decisions, LA staff felt that this would occur in the future. One senior manager, for example, reported that, *‘by seeing what works, and what doesn’t, they will be able to make better judgements about what to fund in the future’*.
- **Review of projects funded and distribution of funding** – At the time of the case-study visits, one LA mentioned that they had analysed and reviewed the applications received and projects that had received YOF/YCF funding, to ensure that Funds had been equally distributed across the authority. This analysis revealed that no applications had been submitted from young people in certain districts in the LA, and LA staff planned to contact key organisations within these areas to explore the reasons for this. Another LA reported that they planned to undertake a similar review in the future.

Some of the successful projects also reported that they were undertaking their own evaluation of the activities that had been funded through YOF/YCF, through, for example, questionnaires to the young people involved, recording minutes of meetings, and producing video or photographic evidence. The young people involved in one project, for instance, described how they were planning to keep a record of the activities they had taken part in: *'We're going to make a scrap book and take photos of everything we do and like a memory box to keep stuff in'*.

8.6 Summary

This chapter revealed that most of the case-study LAs had adopted just one approach for distributing YOF/YCF funding to successful applicants, most commonly, as a one-off payment, in advance of any spending. In contrast, in a few LAs, the mechanism appeared to vary depending on the type of organisation involved and the nature of the application, and payments were also distributed to projects in arrears, and in instalments. Although, in general, successful projects were satisfied with the funding process, a small number of projects, particularly statutory youth groups where the Funds were routed through the general Youth Service budget, appeared to have experienced some challenges.

There was some similarity across the case-study LAs in the way they had spent the five per cent of Funds (or £15,000) that LAs were able to use centrally, with most authorities using this funding for training young people involved in the decision-making panel, and covering their expenses, as well as covering staff costs, and producing publicity and application materials. While some LAs had allocated all their funding to projects, this was not the case among all the case-study LAs, and there were concerns that it would not be possible to spend all their allocated funding by the end of the financial year.

At the time of the case-study visits, most LAs were in the early stages of developing their approaches for monitoring and evaluating the Funds, due to a lack of time and limited funding, although a range of approaches were planned for the future. These included monitoring visits to successful projects, and reviews of the distribution of Funds at a LA level.

9. Early outcomes

Key findings

- Panel members were key beneficiaries at this stage of the implementation of the Funds. Young people and LA staff reported that panel members had gained a sense of empowerment that resulted from having finance alongside a decision-making role and from being respected, listened to and valued by adults.
- The positive attitude and altruistic approach of young people who participated in the panel, and those who applied for the Funds, had impressed adults. This was helping to address negative perceptions of young people and to engender a culture whereby adults were more willing to consider involving young people in decision making.
- The Funds had contributed to enriching and enhancing provision for young people and had reportedly provided those who had applied with an opportunity that they would not otherwise have been able to access. A sense of ownership, due to developing an idea and applying for funding, contributed to young people's engagement in these activities.
- The Funds supported the further development of LAs' work in involving young people by strengthening, refreshing or broadening existing systems for consulting young people. Involvement in the Funds had enabled LAs to gain further insights into what young people need, to identify gaps in provision, to engage with new groups of young people and to develop their confidence in combining empowering young people with finance.

9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the early indications of the outcomes from the Funds after around ten months of their operation. As noted in Chapter 3, the 12 LA areas visited were at different stages of progress in implementing the Funds and this is reflected in the extent of any outcomes at this stage. Moreover, in the first year of a programme, it is likely that the outcomes observed will relate largely to processes, and the effect on those directly involved in the Funds process, and that any wider outcomes for young people and the wider community will not yet be as evident.

Three sub-groups of young people were identified as having experienced outcomes from the YOF and YCF and this chapter focuses on the outcomes to date for:

- members of a decision-making panel,
- young people who had applied for the Funds

- the wider community of young people.

In addition, the outcomes for LAs are presented.

9.2 Panel members' views on outcomes for young people

The young people who were members of a YOF/YCF decision-making panel identified a range of benefits and outcomes for them as individual young people and benefits for other young people and the wider community. These are summarised below.

9.2.1 Panel members' views of the benefits for them

- **Enjoyment** – some young people said that participating in the panel was 'fun' and that, even when they were tired and busy, they enjoyed attending the meetings and that *'it doesn't feel like a chore'*. They valued the opportunity that they had to *'make a difference'* and to *'do something worthwhile'*.
- **Learning and developing new skills** – panel members mentioned that they had improved their decision-making skills and discussion skills through their participation in the panel. Some said that they had *'learnt more about the opportunities around...I didn't know there was half the stuff [activities available] until we had applications from people'*.
- **Social benefits** – as noted in Chapter 6, the decision-making panels often comprised young people who had not met previously and some panel members said that they had valued meeting new people and the social aspects of being a panel member. In addition, they indicated that their social and team-working skills were improving, for example, one panel member said *'some people are quieter than others, so we know how to help people speak out'*.
- **Having responsibility and being listened to** – young people mentioned that they appreciated being given responsibility for the Funds. In their experience, they were generally treated *'like adults'*, were *'taken seriously'* and were *'listened to'*. This is summed up in the comment of one panel member who said:

We get to take on young people's ideas and see what they come up with. It's about adults listening to young people instead of always telling us what to do. Young people are responsible and can make decisions. We can do what adults can do and we should be taken seriously.

- **Personal development** – some young people felt that they had learned more about themselves as a result of reflecting on their participation in the panel, such as finding out how cooperative they were.
- **Accreditation** – panel members in two LA areas said that they benefited from gaining evidence from their work as a panel member that contributed

to their Duke of Edinburgh's Award or Youth Achievement Award. In addition, one commented that their experience would be helpful to include in application forms for education or employment in the future.

9.2.2 Panel members' views on the wider benefits

- **Improving the area for young people** – young people who participated in the panels considered that one benefit of the Funds would be improvements in provision for young people in the area. As one explained *'the Funds give young people somewhere to go, something they want, and young people can go to these projects instead of being on the streets'*. Another said that *'it enhances the things that are already available'*. In addition, at this stage, panel members hoped that the Funds would positively affect wider provision in the future, which they hoped would *'change to fit what young people want'*. One young person perceived future benefits when they observed that the Funds *'will increase the quality of life for young people in [LA]'*.
- **Positive publicity for young people** – young people who felt that a negative image of young people was commonly portrayed or emphasised in their area, valued the opportunity that the Funds provided to have a positive influence on public perceptions. They felt that this was achieved through promotion of the success of their roles as decision makers and the development of more activities for young people.

9.3 LA staff's views on outcomes for young people

9.3.1 LA staff's views on the benefits for panel members

Staff in two of the LAs made the observation that the experience of participating in the panel had been a *'learning curve'* for the young people and the LA staff. As they progressed through this learning curve, the outcomes reported by LA staff reflected the observations of panel members and are outlined below.

- **Empowerment and ownership** – in six LA areas, staff highlighted the impact of the Funds on empowering young people and developing a sense of ownership. Central to this impact was accompanying a decision-making role with finance. As one interviewee explained, the Funds provided *'not only the principles of empowerment and ownership, they have been given something to have ownership of'*. In a second LA, an interviewee commented that this was *'a different sort of consultation. It's not just about consulting about "what do you think about...?" They have the power to decide'*. This had an impact on the attitudes of young people who, as one LA staff member said, *'are beginning to realise that they can have an influence over the facilities in their area. They feel that they can achieve so much'*. In another area, this had led to some young people reportedly expressing an interest in being more involved in their local community. As noted by the panel members above, LA staff reported that

young people appreciated being respected and valued. This may have resulted from a change in attitude among adults, as suggested by the comment of one LA interviewee who said *‘the young people have the status, as they have the resources...it has changed the power dynamics’*.

- **Raised the profile of young people and challenged perceptions** – the panel members’ view that they had helped to challenge perceptions was reflected in the comments of staff in five LAs who observed that adults within the LA, and among the elected members, had been *‘really impressed’* by the role of the young people in making decisions. The effort put in by the young people, their altruism in allocating funds and their ability to make decisions, had helped to convince adults that the young people were capable of making decisions and contributed to developing trust between adults and young people. In one case, it was reported that initial concerns among adults had subsequently been allayed as the young people impressed adults with their capability.
- **Raised awareness and understanding among young people** – reflecting the views of some panel members reported earlier, young people were said by staff in four LAs to have benefited from an increased understanding and awareness of their local community, the needs of others and, in one case, of government policy. Taking an interest in their wider community was said by one interviewee to *‘be rewarding for them’* although it was *‘not easy’*.
- **Personal development** – staff in nine LAs highlighted the personal development resulting from young people’s participation in the YOF/YCF decision-making panel, reflecting the comments of the young people. Improved confidence was most frequently mentioned. For example, one interviewee noted that the young people had become more adept at meeting applicants who presented their projects, and asking questions of them, whereas *‘there was a lot of anxiety about that at the beginning’*. Other personal attributes that were said to have been enhanced included taking responsibility, being a good listener, and self-awareness. As one interviewee explained: *‘That group have grown and benefited from the practical experience of having real responsibility’*. In addition, young people were said to have benefited from having to make difficult decisions and that *‘they have learnt how difficult it is to be seen to be fair’*. The way in which a group of young people from different backgrounds had been able to get on well together was cited as an indication of their social development. In one case, a Young Offender had improved behaviour notably, following being a member of the panel, with the result that his behaviour order was reduced.
- **Development of skills** – in four LA areas, staff reported that the young people had developed skills as a result of their participation in the panel. Such skills included team working, communication, problem solving, skills at examining an application critically and providing constructive feedback to applicants and applying democratic processes. In one LA, the young people were said to have further developed a range of skills in order to *‘analyse, assess, reflect, work really well as a team and to focus’*.

- **Accreditation** – staff in three LAs mentioned that some young people could use their experience of participating in the panel as evidence to contribute towards a qualification or as evidence for college applications. In one LA, the training that young people had participated in had led to an Open College Network certificate.

9.3.2 LA staff's views on the benefits for the wider community of young people

In some LAs, staff had observed wider benefits of the Funds. These included the following:

- **Increased provision** – staff in four LAs said that the provision locally for young people had been enhanced by the Funds. Their comments suggested that the Funds had contributed to '*enriching existing provision*' and improving what was available, as in the view of one interviewee who said: '*The main outcome was to increase the number of activities on offer to young people...they have shifted from some quite awful run down places to somewhere quite exciting for the kids to go*'. In addition, the YOF/YCF had led to new provision and this included, in the view of one interviewee, '*risky*' projects which might not usually be funded, such as a graffiti-based activity.
- **Tangible outcomes** – one interviewee considered that it was valuable that the Funds provided an opportunity for young people to be able to relate applications and decisions to action which they could observe in their local community.
- **Project outcomes** – while some successful projects may benefit the young people who were directly involved, one interviewee highlighted the case of a project which had wider access as it was an '*online TV channel*' that was established by a group of young people with disabilities.

9.4 Outcomes for young people who applied for the Funds

9.4.1 Outcomes for young people who applied for the Funds – views of service providers and applicants

At the time of the interviews, some of the projects and activities that had been successful in applying for money through the YOF/YCF had yet to take place, or were only partially completed. Therefore, some interviewees were unable to comment on the overall outcomes from the funded project or activity. Nevertheless, their reflections on the process of applying for Funds and the outcomes of being successful in their application, provide an insight into the early impact of the Funds in these areas. The outcomes noted by young people who had applied for Funds, their supporting adults, and representatives of organisations who had provided a service to young people funded through YOF/YCF, revealed that there were:

- outcomes that related to the process of applying for, and managing, a project and
- direct outcomes from the project.

Further details are provided below.

Outcomes relating to the process of applying for, and managing, a project

The process of applying for Funds and managing a successful project was said to have contributed to the **development of skills** among the young people. Examples cited by young people included development of team-working skills, through working together on an application, and budget management skills. In addition, the process had contributed to the young people's personal development that could assist them in the future, such as increasingly taking responsibility. One young person explained that *'it has given us experience of what it will be like in the future...rather than being treated like a kid and then the world hitting you, it has kind of eased us in, in stepping stones, to being able to handle responsibility'*.

Applying for the Funds was said by some of the supporting adults who were interviewed, to have contributed to young people's sense of **ownership** through providing an opportunity for the young people to develop *'something that young people have control of'*. Moreover, young people's experience of researching and applying for Funds had helped to raise their awareness and understanding of the work involved in organising an activity or event, which one youth worker said had enhanced their respect for the youth workers who would usually undertake this role.

Direct outcomes from a project

Where projects funded by the YOF/YCF were underway, or had been completed, the supporting adults, service providers and young people commented that they had been a success and had **achieved their aims**. For example, young people were said to have developed in their confidence, leadership skills, team-working skills, discipline and coordination as a result of projects and activities that aimed to support such development. These included residentials involving orienteering and arts and drama activities, and ongoing sports programmes. The young people had also benefited in some cases, from equipment such as music and clothing for an arts-based activity.

There were indications that the Funds had led to an **increase in the numbers** of young people participating in an activity in three LAs. For example, the numbers of young people participating in a sports project in a youth centre had increased over the weeks from an initial 12 young people to around 20. In a second area, a centre manager considered that there was increased interest in the youth centre following the activities funded through the YOF/YCF. In

addition, one young person commented that she attended the centre more often having been involved in applying for the Funds.

In many cases, the main outcome identified by young people, supporting adults and service providers was that the Funds had enabled them to do something that they **would not otherwise have been able to do**. Examples included extending an activity to a younger age group and providing an additional opportunity to participate in a residential experience with a different focus. The possibilities presented by the Funds provided a mechanism to enable young people to follow through their ideas which the youth centre might not otherwise be able to support. This is reflected in the view of one youth centre manager who said:

The young people have lots of ideas but, as a staff, we can't make promises that we can't deliver...but the Youth Opportunity Fund has allowed us to say "this might be possible"...it gives them hope and the impetus is then on them to get down and do the research and get involved in the application.

In many areas, young people who applied for Funds had to provide an indication of how their project or activity would contribute to the five **Every Child Matters outcomes**, as discussed in Chapter 5. As a result, interviewees generally observed that the projects had contributed to one or more of the outcomes. Indeed, one interviewee observed that good youth work would always contribute to all of the outcomes and another said that '*all the outcomes can be related to what we do*'. Nevertheless, projects could be more closely aligned with one particular outcome and, where this was the case, the most commonly reported was enjoying and achieving, which was mentioned in relation to four projects. Each of the remaining four outcomes were mentioned in relation to two projects each.

9.4.2 Outcomes for young people who applied for the Funds – views of LA staff

While some LA staff felt that it was too early to comment on outcomes for young people who had been successful in applying for Funds, others were able to reflect on these outcomes. Their comments were broadly consistent with the views of service providers and applicants (outlined in the previous sections) and revealed the following.

- **Providing an opportunity young people would not have had otherwise** – was mentioned by staff in five LAs. As one expressed it, '*it is like a fairy godmother has come along in the shape of the Youth Opportunity Fund and said "your wish will be granted"*'. While one commented that other sources of funding may have been available to young people, they thought it was unlikely that they would have known where to find these. The Funds were said to have enabled the young people to meet their own needs, as distinct from another party deciding for them. Indeed, one LA

Youth Service representative acknowledged *‘if we’d been given the money, we wouldn’t have done the same things’*.

- **Project outcomes** – staff in three LAs said that funded projects achieving their aims was a key outcome of the Funds. For example, young people participating in projects through which they learned new skills would retain these skills and may even have a wider benefit for their peers, for example where they acted as mentors. In addition, equipment bought through the Funds would remain available for young people more widely.
- **Ownership** – staff in two LAs felt that activities, projects and equipment were more likely to be used, and young people more receptive, where young people had themselves applied for the funding to purchase them, in contrast to a youth worker introducing it.
- **Personal development** – one interviewee considered that there was a positive impact on young people’s sense of *‘self-worth’* where they were successful in their application for the Funds.

9.5 Outcomes for the LAs

Early indications of the outcomes for the LA as a whole, following their participation in the Funds, were identified by some LA staff, and are detailed below.

In three of the LAs, involvement with the YOF/YCF was said to have helped to **support the LAs’ overall strategic aims and priorities**. For example, it contributed to a longer-term vision to improve facilities for young people or to empower young people. Related to this, one LA said that the Funds had helped to raise the status of young people and the Youth Service within the LA.

A related outcome for LAs, which was mentioned by staff in seven of the authorities, was that the Funds had contributed to **ongoing work to involve young people** more in the LA. In some instances, it was said to have helped to strengthen, refresh or broaden existing systems for consulting with young people, such as in the case of one LA where the Funds was described as *‘an additional link between young people and the LA’*. In others, it was reported to be different from previous work to involve young people because, with the Funds, *‘it is young people delivering services for themselves’*, as distinct from informing development of services. In one LA, the YOF/YCF approach had led to adaptations to an application form for other grant-giving mechanisms to include the following question: *‘What have you done to involve young people in developing this application?’*. The Funds were said to have helped to establish a sense that empowering young people’s decision-making capacity was a viable and important approach, as reflected in the comments of staff in two LAs who said:

It has given confidence to the organisation that listening to young people does not cause chaos in the world.

It's changed some perceptions; they have seen it in action and so feel more comfortable with it. It is not that scary.

Interviewees in three LAs indicated that the information and insights gathered through the application process for the Funds had assisted them in identifying **gaps in provision or new areas** that young people wanted that could inform their wider planning. Examples included a more enterprise-oriented approach in one LA and re-establishing a summer school in a second. In addition, in two LAs, the Funds had led to the engagement of **new young people's groups or organisations**. As one interviewee explained: *'We are starting to attract applications from groups we wouldn't normally work with, such as sports clubs and a group for disabled young people'*.

While the Funds appeared to be having an impact on the planning and approach of some LAs, few mentioned that this would affect the allocation of their **core funding**. Staff in three LAs specifically noted that core funding would not be affected as it was said to either have been allocated or that the remit and priorities of core funding were different from the YOF/YCF. However, staff in two LAs suggested that their understanding of young people's requirements, gathered through the Funds might enable them to tailor their core funding to more closely meet what young people want. Furthermore, a third observed that the core funding would need to be *'repositioned'* in light of their Funds experience, once the Funds ceased.

9.6 Summary

In summary, at this stage of development of the YOF/YCF implementation, the main areas where outcomes were observed related to the young people who had participated in the decision-making panel and, to a slightly lesser extent, those who had applied for the YOF/YCF. Young people who had participated in the panels appeared to have enjoyed the experience and valued being listened to and given responsibility, which they perceived as contributing to improving their local area for young people and providing positive publicity for young people. LA staff's views reflected those of the panel in so far as the young people were said to have benefited from a sense of empowerment and ownership and from raising the profile of young people and challenging negative perceptions. In addition, outcomes for these young people were said to include personal and skills development and increased awareness and understanding of their local area.

Young people who had applied for the YOF/YCF were said to have benefited from being able to participate in an activity or event that they would not

otherwise have been able to do. In addition, these young people had benefited from the direct outcome resulting from the aims of the project or activity and from the sense of ownership arising from applying for funding to realise their own ideas. The main outcomes for the LAs from the Funds were the facility to support their overall strategic aims and priorities and to involve young people more in the LA. In some cases, it had led to the development of relationships with new organisations and groups and the identification of gaps in provision for young people.

10. Challenges and future developments

Key findings

- The main challenge identified by the LAs related to the timescale for implementing the YOF/YCF. This included the short timescale to set up the structures for the Funds, the time-consuming nature of the process of involving young people in decision-making, and the challenge of spending the allocated Funds that could not be carried over into the following year within the first year of operation.
- LA staff also identified the challenge of engendering a culture of participation by young people more broadly within the LA and finding appropriate approaches to support young people in decision making whilst not directing them.
- As the YOF/YCF implementation continued to develop, LAs were seeking to review and further embed the Funds and the associated process and were anticipating an increase in the number and diversity of applications. Many LA staff were prioritising increasing the type of decision-making panel members in order to involve young people with a variety of characteristics, to widen participation to those who do not participate in other similar groups, and to introduce area panels.
- The future legacy of the Funds was anticipated in the culture of active involvement of young people in decision-making and commissioning services in LAs. Whilst LAs often could not offer a fund for young people to administer, some were exploring how to consult young people over core-funded services in future.

10.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the LA staff's reflections on implementing the Funds in terms of:

- the key challenges and lessons learned from implementing the Funds
- the future development of the Funds in the short term and after the YOF/YCF ceases.

10.2 Challenges and lessons learned

As indicated in Chapter 8, one of the main challenges noted by interviewees in all 12 LAs regarding the implementation of the YOF/YCF in the first year, related to the **timescale and time required**. Their comments related to the timescale to set up the Funds, the time required in the process of the Funds and the timeframe for spending the YOF/YCF in the first year. Each is discussed below.

Before the launch of the Funds in April 2006, advance guidance was provided to LAs by DCSF. However, staff in 11 of the 12 case-study areas observed that, although they were aware that *'something was coming'*, the lead time to **set up the Funds** (between receiving the full YOF/YCF guidance and the launch of the Funds in April 2006) was short. As one interviewee stated: *'How do you whip up a grants panel in a month and a half and have applications coming in?'*. In addition, in some cases, the implementation of the Funds had coincided with other initiatives and, in some areas, with restructuring, as in one LA where staff were implementing the Funds at the same time as a *'huge change agenda and integration agenda'* in their LA.

Some interviewees emphasised the time implications of involving young people in the design and delivery of the Funds. One explained that *'I don't think [DCSF] have recognised enough the time it takes to set up a process that is truly meaningful'* and went on to say that the LA staff could have quickly developed an application form and criteria, but that it took more time if they involved young people. Indeed, in a second LA, staff had decided to take the lead on marketing and publicity in order to meet the timescale. The existing structures that were in place to consult with young people were said by staff in two LAs to have helped to meet the challenging timescale, as one commented: *'If we hadn't already got the young people in place to do this, it could have been a nightmare'*. In addition, an interviewee in a second LA that worked in partnership to deliver the Funds, cited this as contributing to their ability to meet the timescale, as the partner organisation had existing expertise and could provide training to the young people. However, an interviewee in another LA that worked with a partner organisation indicated that time was required to establish an effective partnership. One **lesson learned** in relation to the setting-up phase, highlighted by one LA interviewee, was to undertake preparation work as early as possible. A second lesson learned was to involve other staff more in determining the structure for implementing the Funds.

A second time-related challenge for staff in five LAs related to the time-consuming nature of the **process** of the Funds. Supporting young people to become decision makers was said to take time and one interviewee cautioned against underestimating *'the amount of time it takes to genuinely involve young people'* and to *'genuinely make a decision'*. This was said to be demanding of LA staff's time and young people's time as one interviewee

observed: ‘*It’s also young people’s time – you can’t ask them to meet up too frequently*’. In one LA, an interviewee also commented on the additional time required for some young people who are hard-to-reach to participate in the process, such as completing application forms. In terms of the LA staff’s time, managing contracts and queries were both cited as time-consuming processes.

As discussed in Chapter 8, some LAs felt that they would be unable to spend all of their YOF/YCF allocation in the first year. Staff in seven LAs highlighted the difficulty of **spending the Funds in the timescale** as a challenge. Particular issues they mentioned included that it was unusual to have to spend such a large amount of money within a short timeframe and that the time required to establish the processes, as noted above, impacted on the amount of time remaining to spend the Funds. One interviewee suggested that a model of staged expenditure, whereby one third of the total could be spent in the first year and two-thirds in the second, would have helped to address this and explained that:

I’m concerned that the pressure to spend the first year’s money will undo much of the good work the decision-making panel have done in their rigorous approach to allocating funding...there is a need for [DCSF] to understand that there was a slow start in the beginning of the first year.

Lessons learned by staff in two LAs in relation to spending the YOF/YCF in the timescale included to start allocating Funds sooner, and to explore systems to assist organisations to access their Funds more easily, for example establishing a fast-track system for some projects.

One of the emerging outcomes from the Funds, discussed in the previous chapter, was the **empowerment** of young people and the **development of a culture or ethos of involving young people in decision making**. Engendering such a culture of participation by young people was also mentioned as one of the challenges experienced in the first year by staff in seven LAs. In one LA, the staff had experienced a ‘*misunderstanding*’ of the aims of the Funds among LA staff and elected members which took time to resolve. In a second LA, elected members’ understanding of the Funds was said to have been helpfully informed by a group of young people who made a presentation to the council cabinet. While, on the whole, senior LA staff and elected members were said to be supportive of the young decision makers, in two LAs, one of the challenges experienced had been the role of senior staff or elected members approving applications and, on occasion, questioning the decision-making panel’s decision. One interviewee felt that this undermined the young people.

A further challenge in creating a culture of empowerment, experienced by staff in three LAs, was guiding and supporting young people to make a

decision, while not directing them, and encouraging young people to take the responsibility when, in some cases, *‘young people are used to being directed’*. For example, one interviewee expressed the ongoing challenge as follows: *‘How do you inform and support a decision-making process once you have decided to hand it over?’* and highlighted the importance of ensuring that the young people were well supported by LA staff and received training. A **lesson learned** in relation to this, identified by one LA staff member, was to provide clearer guidance for young people on the role of the decision-making panel.

Issues relating to **staffing and workload** were identified as a challenge by staff in eight LAs. In some cases, the role of implementing the Funds, and supporting the young people (which, as noted earlier, required time) was additional to the existing roles of LA staff. It was described as a *‘massive piece of work’* by one LA manager and had become his principal role. Interviewees indicated that managing the Funds within an LA required a full-time member of staff, in one case, or two or three full-time staff in a second. In recognition of this, one manager was intending to add three half-time staff to the role, while a second, who had not appointed one key coordinator, acknowledged that this was needed in order to have *‘someone driving the agenda’*. The size of the LA may be associated with the staffing required, as three of the LAs who mentioned the need to increase staff were large authorities, two of which were counties.

Some challenges relating to internal LA **bureaucracy** were noted in four LAs. These included charges for administration, implementing the Funds within the LA’s procurement structure, arranging contracts with successful applicants and delays in information filtering through to the relevant individuals. A **lesson learned** in one LA was to establish an accounting process early which enables LA staff to easily identify each project and how they are spending the Funds and a second said they should have set up better systems for monitoring the Funds from the outset. The **sustainability** of the Funds was raised as a challenge by staff in four LAs who were concerned about the future once the Funds ceased. This will be discussed further in the next section.

10.3 Future developments

Staff in the 12 case-study LAs reflected on the future development of the Funds and their observations related to the ongoing embedding and development of the Funds, and their views on the future after the YOF/YCF ceased.

Having established processes and procedures to support the implementation of the Funds, staff in six of the LAs indicated that the next phase of development would be further **embedding the YOF/YCF**, which was said to be *‘still in its infancy’*. They were planning to work with young people to review the

existing processes and documents such as the application forms, and undertake some '*fine tuning*'. As one interviewee explained, time was now needed to '*let kids get used to it*', as decision makers and applicants. Indeed, staff in two LAs felt that the number and variety of applications would increase as young people were now aware of the Funds and, as one said, '*there will be a snowball effect as young people see what projects have been funded*'.

Staff in seven LAs also indicated that they planned to **develop their structure and processes** further. In particular, LA staff aimed to increase the **number and nature** of young people participating in the decision-making panel. LAs who had drawn young people from existing groups, such as a youth parliament, were exploring recruitment of young people who had no previous involvement in local decision making. In one LA, the staff intended for the existing panel members to 'mentor' the new recruits for a while before the original members left the panel. In another LA, staff were conscious of the challenge of gaining broad representation when panel members were chosen democratically through a vote. In order to include a more diverse range of young people, they intended to develop groups for young people with specific characteristics, such as disabled young people, and district panels, which could then inform the central panel. Development of area panels was an aim in another LA where the manager explained that '*we want the panel of decision makers to be closer to the communities they are from, so we want applications from area 1 and 2 to be seen by young people from areas 1 and 2*'. In addition to further developing the panels, one LA was exploring increasing promotional events to raise awareness of the Funds and another planned to incorporate some responsibility for the Funds into a young person's role that was being developed in the LA.

In considering the future of the Funds, staff in many LAs were conscious that the YOF/YCF was a two-year programme and that funding would cease in 2008. Consequently, staff in all 12 LAs reflected on the **potential legacy** of the Funds within the LA. In seven LAs, interviewees said that the culture of actively consulting with, and providing decision-making power to, young people would remain within the ethos of the LA. The philosophy of enabling young people to be '*in the driving seat*' would be further developed in one LA through exploring with young people how they could influence adult decision makers. Interviewees in another LA said that their experience of the Funds had assisted in establishing a structure through which young people could be consulted. In a third LA, staff said that they would be seeking mechanisms for involving young people in commissioning services in future. Two LAs were considering establishing a similar fund which young people could have control of in future, albeit with a more limited budget, using finance provided by the LA or local charities. However, in other areas, the LA staff noted that, although the approach of involving young people had been positive, providing a fund for them to administer would be difficult, as the following comment illustrates:

It would be really good if we can continue with the programme after two years...giving young people the opportunity to get involved in local decision making has been invaluable...although we couldn't afford to continue the panel using a similar amount of money once the funding has been withdrawn.

Other aspects of the Funds that would leave a legacy included having trained adult facilitators and having established partnerships with voluntary sector organisations.

In discussing the future sustainability of the YOF/YCF, some interviewees said that the types of projects that had been funded were 'one-offs' and would not be sustained. Moreover, one interviewee said that, as the Funds had to be spent before the end of the year, the projects had to cease after this point. However, one interviewee observed that any equipment bought through the YOF/YCF would remain, and a second said that skills that had been developed by young people would continue. In a third LA, the young people were said to have decided to spend some of the YCF on a facility that would be permanent so that young people would associate it with the Funds. The senior manager in another LA reported that they had targeted YCF funding on developing facilities, rather than purchasing equipment, with the anticipated benefit that *'you are going to have sustained evidence of the impact...they will still be functional in years to come'*.

10.4 Summary

In summary, the main challenges experienced by LAs in implementing the Funds related to time – to the timescale required to establish the Funds processes, to undertake the decision-making process involving young people and to spend the YOF/YCF within the budget year. Given that these challenges relate to the initial start-up phase, it may be that they will not be present in the future, once the Funds have become more embedded. In addition, engendering a culture of involving young people among staff in the wider LA, and providing appropriate support and guidance, whilst not directing the young people, was a further challenge.

It appears that LA staff were reviewing their processes while the Funds became more embedded and were seeking approaches to broaden the representation of young people in the decision-making panels as the Funds had become more established. Staff were positive about the notion of enabling young people to make decisions about local provision and in some cases, were considering how to continue this approach within the LA after the YOF/YCF ceased.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This report of the first phase of the research into the YOF/YCF reflects the experience of the 12 case-study LAs in the implementation of the YOF/YCF in its first year. Therefore it reflects their progress up to February 2007, their experience during the start-up phase and the early indications of outcomes from the Funds. It was evident from the interviews that, not only was the implementation of the Funds evolving and developing at the time of the visits, but that LAs were looking forward and planning for further developments as the YOF/YCF entered the second year of implementation, and this phase of the research reflects the experience up to one point in time. This chapter concludes the report by exploring what progress LAs and young people have made towards implementing the Funds and achieving the aims of the YOF/YCF during the first year (to February 2007). Finally, it outlines some recommendations for DCSF, Government Offices, LAs and young people to have emerged from the research.

11.2 Have the structures for the Funds been established?

The 12 LAs had generally established appropriate structures for implementing and delivering the Funds that reflected their local contexts, priorities and strategic aims as an LA, and the time and resources available. These included the establishment of central and/or area decision-making panels of young people, the development of marketing and promotional materials and approaches, the development of application forms and processes, including clear criteria for approving applications, and the establishment of appropriate processes for distributing the Funds to young people with associated monitoring and auditing procedures.

While these procedures had been established in the start-up phase, there was evidence that LAs were reviewing their approaches, together with young people, and were making adaptations. These included extending or augmenting the decision-making panels in order to incorporate a wider range of young people, amending promotional materials and application forms in light of young people's comments and targeting promotion of the Funds at specific groups of young people or organisations.

11.3 How far have LAs involved young people in designing the Funds structures?

On the whole, the LAs had involved young people in the design and development of the Funds processes and procedures to a great extent. In most LAs, the young people who were members of the decision-making panel were the principal contributors to the design of the Funds approach. They had, for example, designed promotional materials or devised and agreed the application process and criteria. The young people interviewed who had been involved in this process reported that their views were generally respected and that the outcomes reflected their preferred approach. In a small number of LAs, the wider community of young people had also been involved in designing the overall approach to the Funds and had been consulted through surveys and through discussion groups and voting on different options.

11.4 How far have LAs involved a range of young people, including those from target groups, in the Funds structures?

In addition to the wider consultation process outlined above, which would have provided a wide range of young people with an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Funds structures, LAs had aimed to involve young people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a variety of characteristics in the decision-making panels. To some extent they had achieved this through active promotion with particular target groups, and the panels included representatives from more disadvantaged areas and young people with particular target characteristics, such as those with disabilities, young carers and looked after young people. However, extending the representation on the decision-making panels to a more diverse range of young people was an area of development that LAs said they were beginning to address. They aimed to achieve this by proactive recruitment and use of existing panel members as advocates, and the establishment of more area or district-level panels which could comprise successful applicants from specific target groups and ensure representation from young people in more disadvantaged areas.

In order to ensure that the decision-making panels included representation from a diverse range of young people, including the target groups of young people identified in the YOF/YCF, it appears that LAs may need to address the challenge of reaching beyond young people who already participate in decision making locally, to those who are yet to be involved. In addition, they may need to balance including a range of young people with ensuring that those represented on the panel are committed to the Funds and, in some cases, with the democratic outcome of a group elected by other young people. Moreover, although all young people should have an opportunity to participate in the panel, it is a voluntary role and, while some young people will wish to

have an active involvement such as membership of the panel, others may prefer to be applicants or to make use of funded activities or facilities.

11.5 Have appropriate projects been funded by the YOF/YCF?

The early indications from the LAs show that a wide range and variety of projects and activities have been funded through the YOF/YCF. Indeed, the variety in the nature of the projects funded reflects the responsiveness of the YOF/YCF to the priorities and wishes of the young people who applied for the Funds. The evidence from the visits indicated that, on the whole, the applications were devised by young people themselves, with some guiding support from adults. The young people who were members of the panels were rigorous in ensuring that applications were based on the ideas and desires of young people, rejecting those applications that appeared to be directed by adults. The decision-making process was often underpinned by criteria for approval, devised by young people, which aimed to ensure that the activities and projects that received Funds were appropriate and met the specific needs of young people in their local areas.

11.6 How far was the decision-making process led by young people?

The prevailing view among LA staff, supported by the views of the young people who participated in the panels, was that the young people made the decisions about applications and that these choices were generally respected by the LA staff and councillors. While there was one instance of LA staff overturning decisions made by young people, overall the ability of the YOF/YCF process to provide a voice for young people was reflected in the experience in the LAs visited. Training, support and guidance were provided to the panel members by LA staff to assist them in making their decisions and the young people valued this and, in some cases, would have appreciated training at an earlier stage. There were some indications that the need for this support was decreasing as the young people became more confident.

11.7 Have the LAs reached a range of young people applying for funding including target groups?

There were examples of projects that had received YOF/YCF funding from groups of young people in disadvantaged areas and those from target groups identified in the YOF/YCF guidance. In addition, there was evidence that the number of applications was increasing, as the Funds became more established and widely known, and LA staff reported that the range of applicants was increasing.

Nevertheless, at the time of the visits, many of the applications were said to have come from established groups that were most commonly related to the Youth Service and, although these groups included disadvantaged young people and members of the target groups, LA staff were seeking to further increase the range and nature of applications from voluntary and community sector organisations and from ‘harder-to-reach’ groups of young people. They acknowledged that some target groups of young people might need more time or support to develop an application. In some cases, outreach work to support particular groups of young people, and protected sub-funds which were approved by LA staff, were established to provide a supported opportunity for some target groups of young people to apply.

11.8 What has been the impact to date on empowering young people and engendering a culture of participation?

It was evident from the experience of panel members that they felt that they were taking ownership of the provision of activities for young people in their local areas that more closely met their needs and wishes. The Funds were felt to be distinctive in that they provided a combination of decision-making power for young people together with resources. This, along with young people’s responsible and altruistic approach to distributing the Funds, was contributing to engendering a culture of empowerment and an ethos whereby young people’s views were sought and valued. The extent to which this becomes embedded will be a focus of the next phase of the research.

11.9 Has giving young people control and decision-making power about resources in their area increased levels of participation in positive activities?

At this stage in the research, and in the development of the YOF/YCF, it is too early to say conclusively whether the decision-making power provided through the Funds for applicants and panel members had led to an increase in participation in positive activities by young people. Nevertheless, there were some early positive indications. Firstly, in each LA, between six and 123 projects and activities had received funds through the YOF/YCF and the number of applications was increasing. It was generally reported that these projects were providing young people with an opportunity that they would not otherwise have had, either because the LA or other agencies would not have thought of the ideas in the applications, or because of lack of resources. There were no indications that other activities were ceasing as a result of YOF/YCF funded projects and, therefore, at this stage, the YOF/YCF could be said to have led to an increase in opportunities for young people to access positive activities. Secondly, there were emerging indications that the numbers of young people participating in a project which had received YOF/YCF funding

were increasing and this was attributed in part by LA staff to the ownership which young people felt. The extent to which these early findings are continued will be a focus of the next phase of the research.

11.10 Has giving young people a voice (through funding and consultation) led to an increase in the provision of quality positive activities?

The quality of the activities that have been funded through the YCF/YOF to date cannot be assessed at this stage in the research. However, the view of some young people who were members of the decision-making panels indicated that they considered that the activities were appropriate to the needs of young people locally. As noted above, the opportunity for young people to identify an activity or facility that met their needs, and to apply for the YOF/YCF had led to the funding of a diverse range of activities which provided places to go and things to do for young people in the case-study areas. Young people's views of the quality of provision, and the extent to which there were greater opportunities, will be sought in the next phase of the research.

11.11 What are the implications for the next phase of research?

The findings from the case-study visits have highlighted a range of issues which could be further explored in the next phase of the evaluation. These are detailed below.

- On the whole, responsibility for implementing the YOF/YCF programme was with the Youth Service, but to what extent has the YOF/YCF reached beyond the Youth Service – has it been accessed by other parts of Children's Services? The follow-up visits could also explore the extent to which staff delivering the Funds were working across the LA, and outside it, to encourage 'joined-up thinking' in terms of youth participation between different statutory and voluntary organisations at a local level.
- While most LAs reported that they had funded projects from hard-to-reach young people, there were some indications that these applications came from young people who were already known to the Youth Service or other agencies. This issue could be explored in further detail through the follow-up visits, to examine whether the Funds involved young people who traditionally did not participate in positive activities or in decision making. The definition of 'hard-to-reach' that LAs had adopted at a local level could also be explored.
- The importance of providing constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants was highlighted through the case-study visits, and indeed, staff

in a minority of LAs highlighted the potential ‘damage’ to young people whose applications were unsuccessful. The follow-up visits to LAs could explore the nature of panels’ feedback process, and the impact on unsuccessful applicants, in further detail.

- There was some indication from LA staff that the nature of projects, and the characteristics of young people applying for the Funds was starting to diversify. The extent to which this continues as the YOF/YCF becomes more embedded, could be explored through the next phase of the research.
- In order to assess the impact of the YOF/YCF programme on levels of participation in positive activities, and the extent to which it is engaging young people from hard-to-reach groups, it is important that the next phase of the research gathers information from LAs on the number and nature of young people involved in decision-making panels and in applying for Funds, and on the number of young people benefiting from YOF/YCF-funded activities. This will, however, be dependent on LAs being able to provide this data to the research team.

11.12 Recommendations

A number of recommendations for DCSF, Government Offices, LAs and young people involved in YOF/YCF decision-making panels emerged from the findings of the initial case-study visits. These are presented below.

Recommendations for DCSF

- One of the key challenges identified by LA staff related to the time available to implement the programme. This included the short timeframe to set up the necessary procedures and processes, and the time available to allocate and spend a considerable amount of money. Consequently, it is recommended that the DCSF allows for a longer lead-in time in future to help alleviate this challenge.
- Allocating similar funding that entails active involvement of young people so that one-third is to be spent in the first financial year, and two-thirds in the second financial year, would allow for the initial set-up time to be accommodated, and would give LAs the opportunity to focus on engaging young people, particularly those from hard-to-reach groups. Alternatively, LAs could be allowed to carry over funding into the second year.

Recommendations for Government Offices

- Given that Government Offices are responsible for collecting monitoring information about the Funds from LAs, they have a good oversight of the different practices and progress of authorities in their area. Government Offices may wish to consider, therefore, ways in which they can facilitate sharing of practice between LAs.
- Most LAs were in the early stages of developing their approaches for monitoring and evaluating YOF/YCF. Consequently, there may be value

in Government Offices considering ways in which they could support LAs in monitoring and evaluation, particularly in developing ways in which the outcomes of such monitoring and evaluation could be used to inform future decision making in relation to the Funds.

Recommendations for LAs

- Staff in LAs had not, on the whole, consulted widely with others in developing their approach to implementing the Funds. This was said to be partially related to their view that they were all at the same stage of development. However, after nearly one year of implementation, it is suggested that there may be scope for **sharing of practice** between LAs. This would be particularly beneficial for exploring the different ways in which LAs had promoted the Funds, and had engaged young people from hard-to-reach groups.
- The time required of young people to participate in the decision-making process, as a panel, and to also contribute to the design of the delivery and to the monitoring and evaluation of projects was said to be considerable in some cases. It is recommended that LAs explore mechanisms for **minimising the burdens on individual young people** through streamlining processes or involving a wider range of young people who would each have less involvement.
- Given that many LAs were in the process of recruiting new young people to their decision-making panels, LAs may wish to ensure that they have a **rolling programme of appropriate training** for new panel members, so that young people are adequately prepared for their role in the decision-making process.
- Although some LAs had developed publicity information and application materials in different formats which were appropriate for young people with different needs, this was not the case in all LAs, and this may act as a barrier to some young people. In order to encourage all young people, regardless of their background or needs, to consider applying for funding, LAs may wish to give careful consideration to **alternative ways of a) promoting the Funds** (for example, through outreach work), **and b) applying for funding** (for example, in video format).
- In order to ensure that the Funds are being promoted as effectively as possible, it is recommended that LAs **explore which of their marketing strategies are most effective** in producing applications from young people, particularly those from hard-to-reach groups. This could be achieved, for example, by requesting that applicants give details on their application of how they heard about YOF/YCF.
- In order to explore the hypothesis that giving young people decision-making power about resources in their area will increase levels of participation in positive activities, it is crucial that LAs **collect information on the number of young people benefiting** from YOF/YCF-funded projects. While this is a challenging task, due to the ‘ripple effect’ of some projects, it is recommended that LAs need to give careful consideration to the ways in which they can collect information on

beneficiaries from individual projects, while keeping the burden on projects to a minimum, and to give appropriate guidance to successful projects on collecting this data.

Recommendations for panel members

- Given the range of models relating to the structure and delivery of decision-making panels, young people may wish to consider sharing ideas and practice with other panels around the country.
- ‘Word of mouth’ was highlighted as an effective method for promoting the Funds. Young people involved in YOF/YCF panels may wish, therefore, to explore ways in which they can promote the Funds to their friends and peers, through, for example, presentations at schools, colleges and youth groups.
- Given that LAs appeared to be considering, or in the process of, recruiting new young people to their YOF/YCF decision-making panels, existing panel members may wish to consider ways in which they could support these new members. These strategies could include developing guidelines for new panel members, or having existing panel members acting as ‘mentors’ for new young people for a short period of time.
- The importance of providing constructive and accessible feedback to unsuccessful applicants was highlighted through the case-study visits. It is recommended, therefore, that panel members give careful consideration to how they feed back panel decisions to young people, to ensure that applicants are not discouraged from making future applications.
- It is recommended that potential applicants would benefit from seeing other projects which have been funded, to stimulate the development of their ideas. Consequently, panel members may wish to consider ways in which they could ‘showcase’ successful projects, for example, through a celebration event, leaflets or website.

Appendix A Implementation of the Funds across 150 Local Authorities

Key findings

- Nearly all of the LAs reported that they had existing structures in place, prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF, for involving young people in local democracy, although these varied in maturity.
- LAs had used a range of different strategies to publicise YOF/YCF, most commonly through organisations such as statutory and voluntary youth organisations, via flyers or posters, on youth-targeted or council websites, or through local newspapers or magazines. In all but nine of the LAs, staff reported that young people had been involved in the design or planning of marketing strategies, most commonly with the support of adults.
- In nearly all the LAs there was a specific group of young people within the authority with responsibility for the Funds, although the structure of this decision-making group varied according to the local context and size of authority. Nearly all LAs had provided support or training for young people involved in reviewing applications and, in just over half of these authorities, this training was accredited.
- LAs were at different stages of development in allocating YOF/YCF funding to projects – while most had received applications for funding, and allocated at least some funding, the number of applications received and projects funded varied considerably across authorities.

Introduction

In order to develop an overview of the different strategies that were in operation across local authorities for the implementation of the Funds, brief structured telephone interviews were undertaken, in autumn 2006, with a representative from each of the 150 local authorities (LAs) in England who had responsibility for YOF/YCF. This chapter presents the findings from these interviews, and explores the following:

- the extent to which LAs had existing youth participation structures in place, prior to YOF/YCF
- the approaches that LAs had used to publicise the Funds to young people, and the extent to which young people were involved in the design and planning of these approaches
- the process of submitting applications for funding, and the nature of the support that was provided to young people who wished to apply for funding
- the involvement of young people in decision making, including in reviewing applications and funding projects, the support provided to young

people undertaking this process, and the number and characteristics of young people involved

- the stage at which LAs were in implementing the Funds, including the number of applications they had received, and the number of projects they had funded.

Existing youth participation structures

On the whole, LAs appeared to have existing structures in place for involving young people in local democracy. A total of 147 of the LAs interviewed reported that they had a youth forum or similar structure in place in their authority prior to YOF/YCF. Of the three LAs who reported that they did not have a youth forum, two indicated that they had other structures in place for involving young people in local decision making. In all but one of the LAs with a youth forum, this had existed prior to the introduction of the Funds, although the amount of time that they had been in place ranged across the authorities from one month before the Funds to ten years prior.

As Table A1 illustrates, the number of young people attending youth forum meetings differed across the LAs, and sometimes within authorities (19 interviewees reported that the number of young people attending meetings varied). However, in the majority of LAs (109 interviewees), the youth forum meetings involved up to 30 young people. Only 19 interviewees indicated that more than 30 young people attended forum meetings.

Table A1 Number of young people that attend youth forum meetings

Number of young people attending	Number of Local Authorities
1-10	29
11-20	55
21-30	25
31-40	10
41+	9
Varies	19
N=	147

A single response item

All those LA staff who indicated that they had an existing youth forum

Source: Telephone interviews with LA staff, 2006

On the whole, existing youth forum meetings were reported to be well attended – 79 interviewees indicated that meetings were generally very well attended, while 56 said that meetings were quite well attended. Only four interviewees stated that youth forum meetings were not well attended.

In addition to youth forums, LAs reported a range of other structures that they had developed for involving young people in local decision making, prior to the introduction of YOF/YCF. These included:

- area and neighbourhood youth groups
- member committees within youth centres/clubs
- youth councils in schools
- youth participation units
- forums/action groups for particular groups of young people (e.g. young disabled people's forum, black and minority ethnic young people's forum)
- membership of the UK Youth Parliament
- attendance at council meetings
- participation in interview panels for LA appointments within the Children and Young People's Service
- Young Mayor Programme
- specific events such as a 'Young People's Question Time', or 'Local Democracy Week'.

The majority of LAs (119 interviewees) also commented that at least half of their local secondary schools had school councils and, in most cases, the authority was reported to have links with these school councils as part of their work to engage young people in local democracy.

Most commonly, the LA staff interviewed reported that the general age group of the young people involved in local decision making was between 13 and 19 years (63 interviewees). A further 43 LAs indicated a narrower age group of participating young people, somewhere between 13-19 years. For example, six LAs stated that young people were generally aged 13 to 16 years, while five indicated that young people involved in local decision making were aged between 14 and 19 years. A notable minority of LAs appeared to be involving younger children in local democracy, as 41 interviewees reported that children under the age of 13 participated in existing decision-making structures. A total of 15 LAs reported that young people over 19 years of age were involved in local decision making, and in a few cases, LAs stated that they included young people with learning difficulties up to the age of 25 years.

The majority of LAs (134 of the 150 LAs in England) had utilised specific tools to encourage effective participation of young people, including 'Hear by

Right', the YouthBank toolkit and 'Investing in Children' and, in nearly all cases, use of these tools had existed prior to the introduction of the Funds. The most common tool used appeared to be 'Hear by Right'¹⁰, although LAs had reportedly reached different stages in its standards framework – 70 LAs described themselves as being at the 'emerging' level, while 46 stated that they were 'established' and 11 reported that they were at the 'advanced' level. The following sections discuss LAs' implementation of YOF/YCF, including the marketing and promotion strategies they had used, the process of submitting applications, and the involvement of young people in decision making.

Marketing and promotion of the Funds

The responses of LA staff revealed that a range of different strategies had been used to publicise YOF/YCF, both to young people who wished to be involved in decision making and to young people who wished to submit applications for funding. As Table A2 shows, the most common ways in which LAs had promoted the Funds to young people had been via:

- **Publicity through organisations** such as statutory and voluntary youth organisations, youth clubs, libraries and community centres.
- **Flyers, leaflets or posters** (as can be seen in Table A2, this was a more common approach for promoting the Funds to young people who might wish to apply for funding) – LA staff reported that they placed these publicity materials at venues where they thought young people would see them, including on public transport, in shop windows, schools, libraries, leisure centres and youth centres.
- **Websites** – in most LAs, the Funds were promoted through a youth-targeted website, or through a youth portal on the main Council website. Two LAs, however, reported that they had developed dedicated YOF/YCF websites.
- **Local newspapers or magazines** – for example, through adverts or placed articles in youth-targeted magazines, council newsletters that are distributed to all households, and local newspapers.
- **Other methods** – these included publicity through local radio, public meetings, open evenings or launch events, school newsletters and via 'word of mouth'.

¹⁰ 'Hear by Right' is a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. It relies on self-assessment, divided into three levels of 'emerging', 'established' and 'advanced', with each level building on the last.

TableA2 Marketing and promotion strategies used to publicise Funds

Marketing approach	To young who wished to be involved in decision making (number of LAs)	To young people who wished to submit applications for funding (number of LAs)
Publicity through other organisations	124	122
Flyers/leaflets/posters	106	120
Other	105	92
Websites	94	93
Local newspapers/magazines	90	94
Visits to schools	43	33
Email	22	23
Telephone	8	7
N= 150		

More than one answer could be given

Source: Telephone interviews with LA staff, 2006

All but 12 of the LA staff interviewed reported that young people had been involved in the design or planning of marketing strategies for the Funds, most commonly with the support of adults (129 interviewees), such as youth workers, or LA staff with expertise in marketing, graphic design or web design and technology. However, a minority of LAs (nine interviewees) indicated that YOF/YCF marketing strategies had been designed and planned exclusively by young people.

The approaches to marketing and promotion used in the case-study areas, and the extent to which young people were involved in the planning of these approaches, were discussed in Chapter 4.

Process of submitting applications

The most common method through which young people could apply for YOF/YCF funding was through the completion of an application form – 145 interviewees reported this approach, and in 120 of these LAs, this was the only method of application for the Funds adopted. Ten LAs indicated that young people were asked to support their application form with a supplementary written statement while, in one LA, young people were asked to provide a written statement only, and were not required to complete an application form. In 25 LAs, young people applying for YOF/YCF funding were also asked to attend an interview with the Funds decision-making panel.

The majority of LAs (145 interviewees) stated that information and guidance were provided in written format to young people wishing to apply for funding and, in most of these LAs (127 interviewees), young people had been involved in the design of this information. The information developed included guidance on how to apply for funding, information on the criteria that would be used to review applications and contact information should young people require further support with their YOF/YCF application. In most cases, this information was included, in hard copy, with the application form, although a small number of interviewees also reported that the information was available online.

A minority of LAs (24 interviewees) reported that guidance information and application materials were currently available in different formats (for example, in different languages, in larger font for visually impaired young people, or on audio cassette for hearing impaired young people). A total of 88 interviewees said that information was not available in different formats, although some of these indicated that this could be produced if requested by a young person. A further 33 LAs reported that they had not yet developed information in different formats, but that they planned to do so in the future.

Nearly all the LA staff interviewed reported that young people had been involved in the planning of the YOF/YCF funding process and the design of application materials – while nine interviewees said that these were designed exclusively by young people, in 133 LAs, both young people and adults had reportedly been involved in the planning and design process. Only eight LAs indicated that the funding process and application materials had been developed solely by adults.

While support and training for young people involved in assessing applications was common across nearly all LAs, the occurrence of support and training for young people applying for funding was less widely reported. A total of 67 interviewees identified such support and training, and this tended to have been provided by LA workers (49 interviewees) and other organisations or individuals (49 interviewees), including young people from the Fund decision-making panel, youth or social workers, youth advocates and adults from local youth organisations such as youth centres.¹¹ For example, a few LAs reported organising events involving open workshops for young people to receive guidance and support with applying for the Funds, while another reported that they had trained 50 facilitators across the borough to support young people in the application process. Other LA interviewees indicated that less formal support was available for young people applying for funding, through responsible adults within the community, or that support was available if requested by young people.

¹¹ Respondents could identify more than one type of individual or organisation.

LAs' application procedures and young people's experience of applying for funding were explored in further detail through the visits to the 12 case-study areas, and the findings related to this were presented in Chapter 5.

Involvement of young people in decision making

At the time of the survey, a total of 146 of the 150 LA interviewees reported that they had recruited a specific group of young people within the authority with responsibility for the Funds and, on the whole, these panels built on the existing youth participation structures that LAs had in place. A further three LAs stated that they did not currently have a group of young people in place, but that they planned to set one up in the future (the remaining one LA did not answer this question).

Of the 147 LAs who reported that they had an existing youth forum prior to the introduction of the Funds, a small number (eight LAs) had recruited young people for their YOF/YCF panel solely from this existing youth forum. The majority of LA staff interviewed (126 interviewees) had a mixture of both young people that participated in an existing youth forum, as well as a new group of young people involved in YOF/YCF. In 13 LAs, interviewees reported that they had recruited an entirely new group of young people to be involved in the Funds decision-making panel.

The structure of the YOF/YCF decision-making panel varied among LAs and depended on the local context and the size of the authority. For example, in some LAs, there was one central group of young people with responsibility for the Funds, while in others, there were several groups or panels – a county panel, and a number of local panels, representing district council areas. The structure of the decision-making groups for YOF/YCF was explored in further detail through the case-study visits, and was discussed in Chapter 6.

As Table A3 shows, the majority of YOF/YCF decision-making panels across the LAs consisted of up to 20 young people (122 LAs). A minority of interviewees indicated that their decision-making panel involved a greater number of young people. For example, in 13 LAs, between 21 and 30 young people were involved in the Funds panel, in two LAs 31-40 young people participated, and in a further two LAs, more than 40 young people were engaged in the YOF/YCF decision-making panel.

Table A3 Number of young people that attend YOF/YCF decision-making meetings

Number of young people attending	Number of Local Authorities
1-10	52
11-20	70
21-30	13
31-40	2
41+	2
Varies	7
N=	146

A single response item

All those LA staff who indicated that they had a YOF/YCF decision-making panel

Source: Telephone interviews with LA staff, 2006

As was the case with the existing youth forum meetings, the YOF/YCF decision-making panel meetings were reported to be well attended – 101 interviewees indicated that meetings were generally very well attended, while 33 said that meetings were quite well attended. Only one interviewee stated that the YOF/YCF panel meetings were not well attended, suggesting that, on the whole, the young people were committed to their role in implementing the Funds.

The general age group of the young people involved in the YOF/YCF decision-making panels was reported by LA staff to be between 13 and 19 years (62 interviewees). A further 66 LAs indicated a narrower age group of participating young people, somewhere between 13-19 years. For example, eight interviewees indicated that the young people involved in the decision-making panel were aged 14 to 19 years, while six interviewees reported that the young people were aged between 13 and 17 years. In nine LAs, young people below 13 years of age appeared to be part of the decision-making panel, and in most cases, these LAs had included younger children as they were already part of existing youth forums. Seven LAs were including older young people, up to the age of 25 for those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

In addition to setting up a specific panel of young people with responsibility for the Funds, a small number of LAs reported other mechanisms for involving young people in decision making about the Funds. Two LAs, for example, stated that they had set up specific task groups of young people who had responsibility for certain aspects of the Funds, such as marketing and promotion or monitoring successful projects. Other LAs indicated that they had developed strategies for wider consultation of young people in the local area. These strategies included asking young people their views on how decision making about the Funds should be undertaken, and how the Funds

should be spent locally, through, for example, questionnaires, focus groups of young people, ballot boxes in youth centres and other local youth groups, and an online consultation mechanism.

Process of funding projects

In all but three of the 146 LAs with a YOF/YCF decision-making panel of young people (143 LAs), staff reported that young people who were part of this panel were involved in reviewing applications. A further seven LAs reported that they planned to set up such a panel in the future. In some LAs, young people volunteered to be members of the decision-making panel, while in others, they had applied, and been selected to be representative of young people in the area, or had been recruited from existing youth participation structures, such as youth council or youth parliament. The majority of LA staff interviewed (136 interviewees) reported that adults, most commonly youth workers, youth participation workers or Connexions Personal Advisers, were also involved in supporting young people on the review panel, or in facilitating the panel meetings.

Nearly all of the LA staff interviewed (145 out of the 150 interviewed) reported that support or training had been provided for young people involved in reviewing applications for YOF/YCF funding. In many cases, interviewees indicated that this involved a residential experience, involving several days of training. Only five interviewees stated that no support or training had been available, although two of these said that training was planned in the near future. A total of 89 of those interviewees who reported training stated that this had been provided by local authority workers, while a similar number indicated that training and support had been provided by other organisations or individuals. These included organisations such as YouthBank UK, Connexions, local Education Business Partnerships, Change Makers and Young People First, as well as youth workers and youth participation workers. Only a small number of LAs (nine interviewees) said that external agencies, such as grant-giving agencies, were involved in providing support or training for young people assessing applications, while one interviewee reported that local council members provided support.

In 79 of the 145 LAs that had provided support and training to young people involved in assessing applications, young people were reported to achieve some form of accreditation as a result of this training. This included local awards and certificates, Open College Network qualifications, YouthBank UK accreditation and part accreditation towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The training provided for young people was explored in more detail through the case-study visits and was discussed in Section 6.6.

Stage of development of the Funds

At the time of the interviews with LA staff (October-November 2006), 120 interviewees stated that they had **received applications** for YOF/YCF funding. The number of applications received in individual LAs ranged from one to 570 applications, with a mean of approximately 52 applications per LA. A total of 101 LAs reported that they had **awarded** at least some **YOF/YCF funding** to projects. The number of projects that had been awarded Funds within individual authorities ranged from one project to 159 projects, with a mean of approximately 25 funded projects per LA. Consequently, the amount of YOF/YCF funding that LAs had spent at the time of the interviews also varied – while some had not yet allocated any of their Funds, or only small amounts, others had allocated all their funding to projects.

The LAs that indicated that they had not yet funded projects were at different stages of development in implementing the Funds – six interviewees said that they were creating an application system, 24 LAs were waiting for applications to be submitted, and 19 LAs were reviewing applications at the time of the interviews.

On the whole, interviewees reported that applications for YOF/YCF funding had been submitted by young people with a range of characteristics, and only 16 LAs stated that applications tended to have been submitted by young people with particular characteristics. In these cases, these included young people from one particular area within the authority (eight interviewees), those from a particular ethnic background (seven interviewees), young people with special educational needs (five interviewees), and looked after young people (four interviewees).

Nearly all the LA staff interviewed (143 interviewees) reported that they had either developed, or were considering developing, a process of reviewing projects to help them decide which projects to fund in the future. This most commonly involved successful projects completing regular monitoring and evaluation reports, panel members visiting funded projects and projects giving presentations to the decision-making panel on the outcomes of the funding they received.

Summary

This chapter has presented findings from the telephone interviews on the implementation of the Funds across all 150 LAs in England. Overall, it appears that, while most LAs had existing youth participation structures in place prior to the introduction of the Funds, the extent to which LAs had made use of these structures varied. Nearly all LAs had recruited a panel of young people to be involved in decision making about the Funds, and had developed application procedures for young people to apply for funding. However, LAs were at very different stages of development in allocating Funds to projects.

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