

**Response to the consultation on statutory guidance for local authorities on providing youth services by Ailbhe McNabola, Head of Research and Policy**

29 November, 2019

**About us**

Power to Change is an independent charitable trust set up in January 2015 to grow and support community business across England. Over ten years, with a £150 million endowment from the Community Lottery Fund, Power to Change is supporting community businesses to create better places across England. We want to support people to take action to address local challenges, enabling them to control vital assets and services that might otherwise disappear, or start new businesses themselves in response to local needs. At the heart of our vision is the devolution of power to local communities. We believe that putting business in community hands makes places better.

In this response, we have focused on questions 1-11, 13, 16 and 17. We would be very happy to discuss further any of the points raised here.

**Contact details**

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Job title: Head of Research and Policy

Organisation: Power to Change

Type of organisation: Independent charitable organisation

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## Call for Evidence form

### Section 1: About yourself

Before you start answering the questions in this call for evidence, please note that:

- It would be helpful if you would first give some information about yourself as context to your other responses. This information is confidential and we will not publish any information that could identify you without your permission.
- You may also want to answer all or just some of the questions. Please add more lines for your written responses as you need them; however do note that responses of more than 250 words will not be read in full.

#### **1. Name**

First Name: Ailbhe

Last Name: McNabola

Please note: It is helpful to have your name if we want to contact you about your answers to the questions in this call for evidence. You do not have to give your name, and your views will be considered whether or not you give your name.

#### **2. What is your email address?**

Email address: Ailbhe.mcnabola@powertochange.org.uk

Please note: It is helpful to have your email address if we want to contact you about your answers to the questions in this call for evidence. You do not have to give your email address, and your views will be considered whether or not you give your email address.

#### **3. Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?**

(Required)

Yes

We may wish to speak to you directly about your responses to help our understanding of the issues. If we do, we will use the email address you have given above.

#### **4. Are you responding as an individual or as part of an organisation?**

(Required)

As part of an organisation

#### **5. If you are responding as an individual, how would you describe yourself?**

- A young person

- A family member or carer of a young person
- A local authority elected member
- An officer of a local authority
- Someone who works with young people (please specify)

.....

- Other (specify)

.....

**6. If you are responding for an organisation, what type of organisation is this?**

A charitable trust

**7. What is the name of your organisation?**

Power to Change

**8. What is your role in the organisation?**

Head of Policy and Research

**9. In which local authority are you located?**

Nationwide (offices in Bristol, London and Sheffield) – but we are England-only

We are interested in knowing what the situation is in different parts of the country. Knowing the local authority in which you or activity is situated will help us to understand the context of your responses. If you are a national provider, or if you are not based in any particular local authority (for example a national charity), then please state this.

[Section 2: The existing guidance](#)

**10. Prior to hearing about this call for evidence were you aware that local authorities had a statutory duty to secure services for young people with the purpose of improving young people’s well-being?**

Yes

**11. Prior to hearing about this call for evidence, were you aware that guidance existed for local authorities on how to carry out that duty?**

Yes

**12. The existing guidance is meant to advise local authorities on what to take into account when deciding what services and activities to secure for young people. How well do you think the existing guidance achieves that?**

- Very well
- Quite well
- Not well
- Very poorly

**13. Is there anything in the existing guidance which is particularly useful for local authorities when deciding what services and activities to secure for young people?**

Yes / No

**If yes, please give details:**

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[Section 3: Updating the guidance](#)

**13. We would like to know in what ways the guidance could be improved. Please tick any of the suggestions below and/or add you own.**

**I believe the guidance needs to address:**

- The leadership role of local authorities in convening key stakeholders, and securing sufficient services for young people in their local area.
- The role of qualified youth workers in leading positive activities for young people as part of a local youth offer.
- The role that other providers, such as the voluntary and civil society sector, can play in providing services for young people.
- The role of partnerships between local authorities and other key partners in providing a comprehensive offer to young people.

- Whether local authorities should have a clear statement of what they think a sufficient offer is for activities and services for young people in their area and how they plan to secure it.
- The quality of the services and activities available to young people as part of their local youth offer.
- The role of young people in deciding what a sufficient local offer is for these services.
- Up-to-date examples, contacts and resources that help local authorities and their communities decide what would work in their area.
- How often local authorities should review their youth offer.
- Expected outcomes for young people and how these could be measured and evaluated.

**Please list any missing key areas that you feel the guidance should address here and say why they are important:**

.....

.....

.....

**14. We would like young people to be able to engage meaningfully in decisions regarding a local offer for services. Do you agree?**

Yes/No

**If yes, please answer the following questions:**

**a) At what stage of the decision-making process will engagement with young people have the greatest impact?**

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.....

.....

**b) How would you recommend young people are brought into the decision-making process?**

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.....  
.....

**15. We would like the guidance to provide more clarity on how the services and activities on offer to young people in their local areas contribute towards improving their well-being. Do you agree?**

Yes / No

**If yes, please answer the following questions:**

**a) What outcomes do you think are most important for young people?**

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.....  
.....

**b) What types of opportunities, activities or environments should these services provide to help achieve these outcomes?**

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[Section 4: Case studies](#)

**16. Do you have any examples you would like to share of any of the following:**

- Local authorities showing clear leadership in setting out what provision will be made for young people in their community and ensuring the delivery of this
- A partnership model working effectively to deliver youth services
- Local authorities meaningfully engaging with young people

**Please provide your examples below:**

**Minehead Eye and Somerset County Council**

[Minehead Eye](#) opened in 2010 and was one of the first state of the art youth centres funded by the [Myplace programme](#). From the start it was a bit different – set up as a Community

Interest Company, led by the community, and intended to be self-sustaining financially rather than relying on core funding. With a skate park, bouldering wall and recording studios too, the centre meets about 70% of its running costs through trade.

Minehead Eye's approach is to give young people ways to engage with real people in their community rather than have youth work done to them. While primarily a youth centre, it has always tried to be open to the whole community as a meeting space, party venue, café and more. Minehead Eye also offers training opportunities to local adults who can volunteer at the centre. It has so far trained eight volunteers to become paid youth workers in clubs.

Minehead Eye's organisational resilience was soon tested when the local authority, Somerset County Council, cut almost all of its funding for youth provision in 2013. Sensing an opportunity rather than seeing a setback, Minehead Eye negotiated to take over all the youth services for West Somerset, using the youth centre as a hub from which to coordinate a network of local youth clubs. It started a long process of negotiating contracts with parish and district councils to deliver their youth provision and supporting them to identify and apply for funding to pay for Minehead Eye to provide the service. Initially this was topped up by some funding from the local authority, but when this dried up, parish councils decided that the youth services were worth paying for from their own funds.

This process was empowering for the town and parish councils which got to make decisions about their youth provision at a local level based on their local knowledge. It was empowering for the local communities who were also able to have a say in what youth provision they wanted; their investment in the process was demonstrated by their willingness to pay for them.

By working closely with town and parish councils Minehead Eye developed strong and trusting relationships and so was able to negotiate 3-5 year contracts that gave the organisation more financial stability. This in turn gave it the confidence to develop new youth services in remote rural areas that had never had youth provision before.

The relationship between the hub in Minehead and the local youth groups across West Somerset is symbiotic – the financial stability of the hub helps boost the offering it can make to local groups because, for example, it can bid for funding that a local youth group would not have the capacity to. Recently, for example, working in partnership with [Watchet Coastal Communities Team](#), Minehead Eye secured funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's and National Lottery Community Fund's [Place Based Social Action Programme](#) for a dedicated outreach youth worker to work 25 hours a week in Watchet, developing empowering social action projects with young people. In turn the youth groups can provide Minehead Eye with trade and customers from across West Somerset.

There have been many bumps in the road. Minehead Eye was not initially able to apply to the government's [Youth Investment Fund](#) because its turnover was less than £300,000, a challenge in a small rural area like West Somerset where no local organisation was likely to fulfil this criterion. Initially locked out of an important funding stream, eventually Minehead Eye was able to persuade the Fund that the income threshold was an unintended barrier, further embedding the disadvantage in a rural area, and a bid for project funding was successful.

Minehead Eye's model of working ultimately means that there is greater empowerment and engagement from small town and parish councils. Young people benefit significantly from the councils working alongside Minehead Eye, which is able to provide a whole range of exciting and innovative additional projects and services which are tailored to local needs and would not otherwise be available.

## **Southmead Development Trust**

[Southmead Development Trust](#) (SDT) supports residents in a deprived area of north Bristol. It is based at The Greenway Centre, a former school that it took over through a community asset transfer from Bristol City Council and which it runs as a community business, renting out office, meeting and event space and running a café, gym and snooker hall. SDT is a charity, with 80 per cent of its board coming from the local community. It makes the majority of its income through trade at the Greenway Centre and also draws income from project grants and management fees for other contracts.

Southmead Youth Centre had played an important role in the local community since the Second World War, but when the council withdrew funding in 2015 it was faced with closure. There was a big outcry from local people and a community-led campaign to save it, which Southmead Development Trust resourced as part of their work supporting the local community. Bristol City Council were looking for ways to keep the centre open and so worked with Southmead Development Trust to facilitate a community asset transfer.

Initially the agreement was that SDT would manage the site and the council would provide the youth services, but as further cuts to the council's youth budget took place in 2016, SDT had to step in to provide some of the services as well. From 2017 SDT took over running most of the services at the Youth Centre, with [Creative Youth Network](#), the council's youth services subcontractor, funding one session. SDT runs one session itself, funded from the income it generates from its asset base, and uses several other partners to run open access youth work such as courses on cooking, art and sport.

As a result of the success of SDT taking on the youth centre and running youth services for the local community, they were well placed to arrange another community asset transfer when the council announced it would no longer fund the local adventure playground in 2018. SDT took ownership of Southmead adventure playground through community asset transfer in April 2019.

Although SDT have found Bristol City Council as helpful as possible through the community asset transfer process, the assets they have taken on have not always been in the best state of repair and come with many stipulations about how they should be run. For these reasons SDT feel that while taking over the youth centre and adventure playground have safeguarded vital assets for their local community, there is a limit to how many asset transfers they can finance.

## **Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation**

Dorset County Council announced in 2016 that it was looking for community organisations to take over youth centres that it could no longer afford to run. In Wareham, former council youth worker Kevin Vasey got together with members of the local community who wanted to save Wareham Youth and Community Centre to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Calling themselves [Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation](#) (PYCF), they drew up a business plan to take over management of Wareham Youth and Community Centre and approached Dorset County Council.

Once Dorset County Council had approved their business plan, PYCF began the process of negotiating a community asset transfer. Initially the council agreed that PYCF would manage the youth centre for 2-3 years, with the council leasing the building to them for a peppercorn rent. That the council was prepared to agree to lease the youth club but retain responsibility for the upkeep of the building as landlord mitigated the risks of asset ownership for PYCF, enabling them to take it over in a financially sustainable way.



The council stopped funding Wareham Youth and Community Centre on 31 August 2016 and on the very next day it reopened as the Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation, so there was no break in provision. In the first year the youth centre was used by 650 different young people. As a registered charity, PYCF was able to apply for different pots of funding. It quickly raised enough money to pay for Kevin to take on the role of Youth and Community Lead and the charity's business began to grow quickly.

The council then extended the building's lease to 25 years, which gave PYCF some stability and a more permanent hub from which to organise. It began to increase its youth work, which is delivered by paid, trained staff supported by volunteers. It negotiated service level agreements with two parish councils to run village youth clubs and now runs three sessions a week in two locations and is currently talking with [another charity](#) and a town council to deliver more youth provision.

PYCF is paid by parish councils to run youth clubs and it offers one to one support and mentoring sessions for children and young people struggling at school or needed extra support to manage issues. A number of provisions now outsource this work to PYCF on an ad hoc basis and this is funded by the county council and the relevant local schools, learning centres and SEN providers. This income is not enough to sustain PYCF alone, however, and has to be topped up by grant funding and many extra hours fundraising in the community and beyond. PYCF staff, although paid, also effectively subsidise the youth services the organisation provides by working large amounts of unpaid overtime. Their commitment is to be recognised and the importance of a genuine, supportive team has enabled the future of PYCF to look bright. The charity also has many volunteers and the trustees also do a lot of unpaid business management and fundraising work.

PYCF has a good relationship with Dorset Council (formerly Dorset County Council), the charity is financially sustainable and provides a professional, high quality youth service that would otherwise not exist and which the community has shown it really values. Nonetheless, Kevin Vasey feels strongly that youth work should be much better funded so that when community groups take over youth work from the council, their staff are able to have the same level of professional support, pay and career development that he enjoyed as a direct employee of Dorset County Council.

[Section 5: Using the future Guidance](#)

17. How should any future guidance be more widely publicised?

- On a government website**
- On other national youth body websites**
- On the website of every local authority covered by the duty**
- In spaces for young people e.g. youth centres, community hubs**
- Some other way, please specify:

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[Section 6: Summary](#)

18. Are there any other reflections or feedback you would like to give?

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Thank you for completing this form. Please return to:

- **By email:**  
[guidancereview@culture.gov.uk](mailto:guidancereview@culture.gov.uk)
- **By post:**  
Local Youth Services Team  
Office for Civil Society  
4th Floor, 100 Parliament Street  
London, SW1A 2BQ