

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

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### **Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy**

The introduction to the [Magenta Book](#) (HM Treasury, 2011) sets out that the Government is committed to improving central and local government efficiency and effectiveness. It wishes to ensure that public funds are spent on activities that provide the greatest possible economic and social return. This requires that all policy, including youth policy, is based on reliable and robust evidence. High quality evaluation is vital to this.

Evidence-based policy making is embodied in [The Civil Service code](#) (2015) which has a statutory basis in Part 1 of the [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010](#). All civil servants in the UK Civil Service (serving the UK Government and the Governments of Scotland and Wales) are expected to carry out their role with a commitment to the core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. Objectivity is defined as basing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence. Civil servants must:

- provide information and advice, including advice to ministers, on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts
- take decisions on the merits of the case; take due account of expert and professional advice.

Civil servants must not:

- ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice or making decisions
- frustrate the implementation of policies once decisions are taken by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from those decisions.

Improving policy making capability is an important strand of the [Civil Service Reform plan](#) (Cabinet Office and Civil Service Reform, 2014). Chapter 2 of the plan puts forward ‘open policy making’ as the default model to be adopted. Open policy making aims to make better policy by using a collaborative approach and being open to new ideas, new ways of working, new insights, new evidence and experts (see the [GOV Policy Lab blog](#) for further information).

In July 2020, Minister for the Cabinet Office Michael Gove [gave a speech](#) which outlined the direction for civil service reform in coming years. This included diversification of recruitment as well as geographically diversifying and increasing the civil service presence around the UK. He also stated:

“The second Rooseveltian challenge is to change how Government itself works, to reorganise its institutions to become better at reform. The need for reform in so many areas is obvious. And this Government is determined to deliver it in a way that is consistent with our moral values.”

This reform will likely affect the approach to youth policy in the UK.

To support the implementation of open policy-making, the Cabinet Office produced a range of resources for policy makers. They include the:

- [Civil service policy profession policy curriculum](#)
- [Open Policy Making Manual](#) (2016).

## Public Sector Equality Duty

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) came into force across Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) on 5 April 2011 under the [Equality Act 2010](#). It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It also requires that public bodies have due regard for the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#) came into force on 10 September 2011. They require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty, and to set equality objectives.

## Cooperation between policy-making and research

HM Treasury’s Green and Magenta Books together provide detailed guidelines, for policy makers and analysts, on how policies and projects should be assessed and reviewed. The two sets of guidance are complementary: the [Green Book](#)

(2011) emphasises the economic principles that should be applied to both appraisal and evaluation, and the [Magenta Book](#) (2011) provides in-depth guidance on how evaluation should be designed and undertaken. Neither are specific to the development of youth policy.

The [Green Book](#) models the policy making process as a cycle with the following stages (page 3):

- rationale
- objectives
- appraisal
- implementation (monitoring)
- feedback.

## **What Works Networks**

The Government set up a number of [What Works Networks](#) in 2013. The What Works initiative aims to improve the way that government and other organisations create, share and use high quality evidence for decision-making. It supports more effective and efficient services across the public sector at national and local levels. Policy areas covered by the What Works Centres are:

- health and social care
- educational achievement
- crime reduction
- early intervention
- local economic growth
- improved quality of life for older people
- well-being.

For example, in 2015 the Early Intervention Foundation published research on [Social and Emotional Learning](#).

## **Improvements to assessing Impact**

As part of its former responsibility for youth policy, the Cabinet Office worked to support the youth sector to measure and increase the impact of its services for young people. In 2014, it published a guide entitled [Outcomes Frameworks: a guide for providers and commissioners of youth services](#), to help providers and commissioners who are considering how to improve outcomes for young people as a result of their work. The guide aims to:

- simplify the landscape of available outcomes frameworks
- provide information on what a variety of frameworks look like when applied ‘on the ground’
- suggest where to go for further information and support
- begin to demonstrate how measuring impact can help those working with young people to learn from and improve the programmes they run.

The Cabinet Office also supported the [Centre for Youth Impact](#). This initiative is a centre for evidence, capacity building and practice development with the aim of increasing the capacity of those providing and commissioning services for young people to generate and use high quality evidence in the design, delivery and evaluation of their services. In [the Civil Society Strategy 2018](#) the government also outlined that it is supporting a £1m evaluation of 90 projects across the UK, engaging young people through the Youth Investment Fund. As a result by the end of 2020 it is expected that there will be a shared impact measurement framework for open access to youth provision that uses data to improve services, measure outcomes and predict impact. This will be

supplemented by a solid evidence base of what works in open-access youth services.

The Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions ([CAYT](#)) began as a research centre, funded by the Department for Education. CAYT produced new research on topics relating to youth transitions and created a repository of 'what works' in terms of policy designed to assist young people in their transition from education to work, as well as reducing engagement. Since April 2015, the repository has been managed by Mentor, as part of the Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Information Service ([ADEPIS](#)).

## National Statistics and available data sources

A number of youth specific indicators are tracked at national level, providing a general understanding of the youth population in the following specific areas:

- Statistics on the number of [young people not in education, employment or training](#) (NEETs) are compiled by the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) and published quarterly (February, May, August, and November). The figures discussed in the statistical bulletin are obtained from the Labour Force Survey (a survey of households) and are therefore estimates, rather than precise figures.
- As part of its monthly labour market statistical briefing, the ONS provides both [seasonally adjusted](#) and [not seasonally adjusted](#) statistics on the educational and labour market status of young people from 16-24 years of age are published.
- [Destination data](#) provides clear and comparable information on the success of schools and colleges in helping their young people continue in education, employment and training is published annually by the [Department for Education](#).
- The [characteristics of children in need](#) are collected via the children in need census and published annually by the Department of Education.
- The [Social Mobility Commission](#), an independent statutory body, publishes an annual report setting out its views on the progress made towards improving social mobility in the UK. Its most recent annual report, [State of Nation 2018-2019: Social Mobility in Great Britain](#) was published in April 2019. It also reports on public attitudes to social mobility in Great Britain. You can read the 2019-2020 results [here](#).
- The [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales](#) collects [data](#) on young people in the youth justice system. Annual statistics cover the flow of young people through the youth justice system, while general statistics cover offences resulting in a disposal, court remands, disposals, intensive supervision and surveillance programmes, and custody.

There are also a number of surveys which provide information about the health and well-being of young people. They include:

- The [Health Survey for England](#), undertaken since 1991 and covering children young people aged 2 to 15, measures health and health related behaviours living in private households in England. It is commissioned by [NHS Digital](#) (formerly the Health and Social Care Information Centre).
- The [National Study of Health and Wellbeing: Children and Young People](#), again commissioned by [NHS Digital](#), aims to find out about the health, development and well-being of children and young people aged between 2 and 19 years of age in England and Scotland.
- [Survey of the Mental Health of Children and Young People in England](#) is the first survey of children and young people to focus on their mental health since 2004. The survey provides data on the prevalence of mental illness among children and young people in England and Scotland and collects robust data on a

range of topics relating to the mental health of these groups.

- Note: Data on levels of participation in representative democracy are covered in the article on '[Youth participation in representative democracy](#)' in the chapter on 'Participation'.

### **Participation in youth services**

There is no statistical collection of the levels of participation in youth services. Organisations working in this area accept that there is a gap in the data available due to the changing nature of the way youth services are being delivered. Prior to 2008, the National Youth Agency collected data on the number of young people participating in youth services; however, this ended when its funding was withdrawn.

### **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

No information on budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field is available.