

## **CASH TO PROVIDE POSITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

*(Extracts from a DCSF Press Release)*

A £420m fund for more places to go and things to do for young people has been allocated across the country by Children's Minister Beverley Hughes.

The money will pay for projects such as skate parks, basketball courts, and music workshops in disadvantaged areas where young people are at risk of getting into trouble. It forms part of a wider £679m package for young people's services, announced earlier this year as part of the Government's 10 year youth strategy.

Ahead of the Government's Children's Plan, to be launched shortly, the Minister set out plans which respond to youth workers' concerns that young people often get into trouble on Friday and Saturday nights, when youth services are most likely to be closed.

The Minister is calling on Local Authorities to consult with young people so they can provide activities that young people want, at times that suit them - but especially flashpoint times, when boredom can lead young people to flirt with dangerous behaviour.

Speaking at the 4Children/National Youth Agency conference in London, Beverley Hughes said: "We want to consign to history the depressing image of rickety youth centres that characterised too much of our provision for too long. We are going to bring youth facilities and opportunities into the 21st century - so they address 21st century challenges and concerns."

Anne Longfield OBE, Chief Executive of national children's charity 4Children said:

"In too many communities across the country there are young people who are feeling cut adrift from support - whether this is because of a lack of help from parents, a lack of opportunities to build their way out of poverty or because they don't feel engaged and entertained. These measures promise change because they will target new opportunities to get involved and to learn, alongside new access to support, for those at risk of getting involved in crime. We welcome these measures as a route to rescuing socially excluded young people and transforming communities for families."

Beverley Hughes stressed that one of the most effective ways of engaging those teenagers least likely to take part is to give them more direct control over how funds are spent in their area. The Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds, which will deliver some of the promised funding, allow young people to decide what activities receive funding.

Over the last two years over 500,000 teenagers have taken part in the schemes, which will receive an additional £25m on top of £173m over three years, prioritised on the 50 most deprived areas in England.

The Minister also announced an extra £6.5m in 2008-9 to be targeted at disadvantaged areas where a minority of young people may be more at risk of joining gangs and in danger from gun crime. A further £2m will accelerate the extended schools programme in 12 local authorities where there are high instances of gun, gang and knife crime.

Building on the experience of the Positive Activities for Young People, the funding will help provide intensive counselling and group sessions, as well as access to positive activities.

Local Authorities already providing similar projects have reported marked changes in young people's behaviour, with disaffected young people acting as positive role models in their community, renewing contact with family members and reduced levels of vandalism in the community.

The DCSF's Positive Activities for Young People programme (PAYP) provides activities and targeted support for the most at risk young people. Vulnerable young people significantly benefit from sustained participation in high quality, structured activities and that this has a high impact on outcomes and opportunities.

This investment is part of a wider £679m package aimed at increasing the availability of places to go and things to do for young people, which was announced in the Government's 10 year youth strategy in July 2007.