



Sustainable Development and Improved Outcomes for Young People

A review of the literature
March 2010

as long as it takes

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1. Executive Summary

Aim

- 1.1 This literature review explores the relationship between sustainable development approaches and improved outcomes for young people. It is based on an overview of the available research evidence from academia and organisations taking a sustainable development approach, drawing out key lessons for policy makers and service developers. A particular focus of this project is to review the evidence on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable young people.

Overarching findings

- 1.2 There is convincing evidence to demonstrate that sustainable development can improve outcomes for young people. There are many ways that policy-makers and those that commission, plan and deliver services can further incorporate sustainable development into their work. To date the focus has been on improving social and economic outcomes, but it is possible, and increasingly recognised as important to deliver synergistic outcomes, which do not neglect the role of wider environmental factors.
- 1.3 Progress towards improving outcomes for young people through sustainable development is already taking place at two levels. Firstly at the level of the individual in terms of their own health, development and employability, secondly to ensure the context in which they exist is most suitable to provide the structures to support these interventions, such as efforts to promote community and kick-start the regeneration needed to improve local environments.
- 1.4 Services for young people can demonstrate improved outcomes through interventions that build resilience and enhance wellbeing through giving young people a greater understanding of the wider environment of which they are a part. Planners can impact on outcomes for young people through their decisions to improve local transport provision, housing or available outdoor space.

Outcome specific findings

- 1.5 Employment and learning outcomes
 - The 'green economy' offers solutions to the "NEET" problem (those young people not currently in employment, education and training) with new opportunities available in the low carbon job sector
 - Sustainable development approaches enable young people to develop new skills and interests
 - Efforts must be made to ensure that there are alternative ways for young people to engage in education and training outside of formal qualification routes, while recognising the continued need for accreditation – sustainable development offers a fresh approach
- 1.6 Developmental outcomes
 - Sustainable development approaches improve young people's wellbeing through developing resilience and functioning abilities
 - Experience of the natural world enhances young people's development – there is a danger that this is decreasing, which needs to be turned around
 - Citizenship is enhanced through active community participation – the best outcomes are achieved when young people are engaged, understand what their involvement seeks to achieve and have a clear sense of agency

1.7 Social outcomes

- Young people gain confidence, motivation, empathy, respect, responsibility and other 'soft skills' such as working together as part of a team through sustainable development initiatives
- Incorporating young people's requirements into community development creates an effective mechanism for neighbourhood improvement
- Efforts to improve community cohesion are enhanced through sustainable development approaches

1.8 Health outcomes

- Exposure to nature and increased physical activities, particularly outdoors, leads to positive physical and mental health outcomes where young people are supported to make better choices
- Therapeutic programmes that reconnect young people with nature have a beneficial effect on young people's emotional wellbeing
- Community planning based upon sustainable development impacts positively upon young people's health outcomes and can reduce health inequalities

1.9 Environmental outcomes

- Approaches to safety and acceptable risk need to be balanced to ensure that efforts to protect young people do not prevent them from taking part in challenging activities that are beneficial
- Involving young people in the design of their local environment leads to better provision that more fully takes their needs into account
- Local planning decisions about facilities and the physical environment in urban and rural areas impact upon young people's levels of physical activity and health outcomes – sustainable development approaches reap benefits

Conclusions

1.10 There is strong evidence to demonstrate that taking a sustainable development approach in planning has a positive effect on the lives of young people – it is important to involve young people in this process.

1.11 It is harder to assess the impact of service-level attempts to work with young people from a sustainable development outlook. Many services for young people do now consider the impact of their activities on the environment but fewer use sustainable development as a guiding structure in which to frame their efforts to improve outcomes.

Looking ahead

1.12 The goal of this literature review has been to explore the wider influence on young people's outcomes, taking in the broader categories of health and personal development as well as the impact of the young person's local environment and community. It would be beneficial now to examine what difference it makes to a young person to be involved in a sustainable development project in terms of improvements to their wellbeing and positive outcomes across the life course.

- 1.13 Services that consider the impact of their activities on the environment have often not been evaluated on this basis and more research would be helpful in determining whether these services are more effective than other traditional youth provision in improving outcomes.

2. Introduction and methodology

Background and aims

- 2.1 This literature review has been commissioned by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), the Government's independent adviser on sustainable development, to examine the available research evidence that explores the relationship between sustainable development approaches and improved outcomes for young people. The aim is to develop a broad evidence base covering national and international studies, drawing evidence from organisations already using a sustainable development approach within their youth work. As such, this literature review seeks to draw out key lessons for policy makers and service developers.
- 2.2 Policy makers and service developers are already using the concepts of sustainable development in their planning and programme delivery. This report demonstrates how making the decision to do so is backed up by research evidence.
- 2.3 It is important to clarify that sustainable development approaches should be maintained throughout the life course. Not only should policy-makers ensure teenagers have the right environment and opportunities to benefit from sustainable development approaches, the research literature also demonstrates that young people are more likely to enjoy and benefit from their environment if they have been introduced to it from an early age.
- 2.4 A particular focus of this project is to review the evidence on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable young people. Much has already been achieved through universal approaches such as creating sustainable schools and introducing education for sustainable development, but there has been less focus on other services for young people to date. This literature review aims to provide commissioners and providers of services for young people with the supporting evidence they need to improve outcomes for young people through sustainable development approaches. Vulnerable young people in particular can have the most to gain if sustainable development approaches are adopted, and they also have the most to lose if steps are not taken to ensure that government departments make the best decisions to support these young people to achieve improved outcomes.
- 2.5 This project takes place at a time of economic uncertainty in which increasing pressures are placed on services to demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of outcomes achieved and value for money. The current economic climate means that only those approaches that can be demonstrated to make a difference will survive – it is in all our interests to determine which approaches are working best.
- 2.6 This document does not claim to be absolutely comprehensive as time limitations naturally make it unrealistic to cover the entire breadth of services and approaches, but what it does do for the first time is draw together the available evidence into one place.
- 2.7 The SDC's goal is to advocate sustainable development approaches across all sectors in the UK, particularly within Government (including the Devolved Administrations), review progress towards sustainable development, and build consensus on the actions needed to achieve further progress. It is hoped that this review will assist the SDC and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfE) to consider how best sustainable development can enhance policy and

delivery to meet the requirements of the *Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures*¹ and subsequent strategies focusing on policies for young people.

Remit and methodology

- 2.8 This literature review collates the research evidence that demonstrates the role that sustainable development approaches can play in working towards better outcomes for young people. The focus of this literature review is to explore the research available on young people aged 14 – 19, a time, which traditionally indicated an age at which a decreasing concern for environmental matters was expected.² This will have implications for how services are delivered for young people in this age group. However sustainable development is not limited to 'green issues' but rather incorporates the goals of social progress, recognising the needs of everyone, effective protection of the environment, prudent and efficient use of natural resources and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.³
- 2.9 The definition of sustainable development according to the Brundtland Commission of 1987 is "*development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". The SDC's work is guided by the five principles of sustainable development set out in *One Future, Different Paths – The UK's Shared Framework for Sustainable Development*.⁴ These five principles have been a useful framework to determine whether evidence should be included in this review:
1. Living within environmental limits;
 2. Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
 3. Achieving a sustainable economy;
 4. Promoting good governance; and
 5. Using sound science responsibly.
- 2.10 The criteria for including studies in the literature review dictated that the initiative in question be both in line with these guiding principles of sustainable development, and, that the focus of the study was on improving outcomes for young people. Therefore, only evidence that met both these basic criteria was included, meaning that programmes concerned with developing sustainable approaches but which did not provide evidence on outcomes for young people were necessarily excluded.
- 2.11 Included within the review is a range of evidence both from academic journals and from small organisations that have evaluated innovative practice, as well as a number of more formally evaluated studies. We believe that the inclusion of smaller studies adds greatly to the depth of the information provided, but where included, we have noted the limitations of the study design and the conclusions that can be drawn.

¹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *The Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures* available at <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=CM%207280>

² See, for example, survey results from System 3 from 2000 which showed that only 15% of young people aged 16-24 considered environmental issues very important, with 26% of the opinion that they were not very important available in Derek Halden consultancy (2003) 'Young people's views on sustainable transport', Scottish Executive Social Research <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47043/0026881.pdf>

³ Sustainable Development Education Panel, 1999 – from Derek Halden consultancy (2003) 'Young people's views on sustainable transport', Scottish Executive Social Research

⁴ *One Future, Different Paths – The UK's Shared Framework for Sustainable Development* available at <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=215>

2.12 In order to make this review as relevant as possible to policy-makers it is structured around “PSA Delivery Agreement 14: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success”. Public Service Agreements set out the government’s aims and objectives over a three-year period. In order to deliver improved outcomes the delivery agreement PSA 14 states that young people should have access to the right opportunities and support so that they:

- succeed in education and learning,
- develop resilience and wider social and emotional skills,
- make a real contribution to their communities and wider society,
- are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, and
- grow up in a safe and supportive environment.

2.13 This report will look at each of these outcomes in turn, setting out the available research evidence which shows that through sustainable development approaches it is possible to improve young people’s lives in these ways. With targets set in PSA 14, this piece of work hopes to contribute to the ongoing discussion around which approaches are best in order to meet these specific goals. The evidence demonstrates that performance in the above indicators can be improved through sustainable development approaches to youth work. As PSA 14 states the areas on which this delivery agreement focuses are closely related. Similarly many of the initiatives and policies that take a sustainable development approach can improve outcomes across the board and impact on other areas.

3. Improving outcomes for young people

Employment and learning outcomes: *'succeed in education and learning'*

- The 'green economy' offers solutions to the "NEET" problem (those young people not currently in employment, education and training) with new opportunities available in the low carbon job sector
- Sustainable development approaches enable young people to develop new skills and interests
- Efforts must be made to ensure that there are alternative ways for young people to engage in education and training outside of formal qualification routes, while recognising the continued need for accreditation – sustainable development offers a fresh approach

3.1 The Government has set out its ambitions to increase participation in education, training and employment at a time when youth unemployment is a key concern for policy-makers, practitioners, parents and young people alike.⁵ Much of the commitment has been through creating a schools system that can develop young people's talents and provide the broad skills required for the future, as articulated through the White Paper *'Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system'*.⁶ However, despite efforts to raise the participation rates, there is also recognition of the number of young people who are not within the mainstream education system. According to the 'Hidden Talents II' report, the number of disengaged young people is in fact now at a level 10 times greater than it was when the Social Exclusion Unit introduced the term "NEET" (Not in Employment, Education or Training) in 1999.⁷ Local government has recognised the problem of disengagement; 115 out of 150 local area agreements included support for disengaged young people aged 16 – 18 as a priority even before the recession hit.⁸

3.2 The recession has affected young people more than other age groups with one in six young people aged 16 – 24 reported as being not in education, employment or training in 2009.⁹ For the most vulnerable and excluded the impact of the recession will not just be felt now – but may persist across generations. The repercussions both for individuals and for our society in terms of wasted aspirations and lost opportunities appear likely to resonate for years to come. To avoid this the most vulnerable and disengaged young people will need extra support during this recession so that they are equipped to take advantage of future opportunities. The opportunities that they thought would be available to them at the time they entered the job market are now not there or competition is so fierce that many young people are competing for the same jobs. There is concern that as youth unemployment rises, any opportunities will be snapped up quickly and not reach those that need them the most.

⁵ "Investing in Potential: Our Strategy to increase the proportion of 16-24 year olds in education, employment or training" (2009) DCSF Publications, Nottingham

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/8537-DCSF-Investing%20in%20Potential-WEB.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2010)

⁶ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009), *'Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system'*

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=Cm+7588>

⁷ Bridging the gap: new opportunities for 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training, Social Exclusion Unit, 1999

⁸ Local Government Association and Centre for Social Justice (2009) *'Hidden talents II getting the best out of Britain's young people'*

⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/aug/18/neets-young-people-jobs-recession>

- 3.3 Parallel developments in the growth of low carbon economy jobs could provide an alternative employment route that young people could benefit from. In March 2009 Gordon Brown highlighted the potential within the low carbon economy to create 400, 000 jobs over the next 8 years. In Germany in comparison there were already 250, 000 people employed in renewable energy alone.¹⁰ A report from the Local Government Association states that there could be potentially 20,000 new jobs in home-efficiency and that we need to promote a 'green pathway out of recession'.¹¹ The report '*New challenges, new opportunities*' from the former Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 2008 included the target to achieve one million jobs in the British green economy by 2030.¹² The departments also proposed the idea of encouraging young people to take a career in manufacturing as a way to contribute to efforts to minimise climate change and water shortages.
- 3.4 So-called 'green jobs', which might be in sectors such as 'material reuse, bicycle transit and green building'¹³, may require different skills from those required in traditional industry, so policy-makers, further education institutions, youth service providers, and employees need to be mindful of their responsibility to support young people to gain these useable and useful skills. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) suggests there are opportunities to develop employment in areas designed to mitigate the effects of climate change and help people adapt to the inevitable changes that climate change is already causing.¹⁴ There are also opportunities in traditional environmental professions, referred to in the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) report as 'biodiversity, green spaces and waste management' as well as those looking at the wider issues of sustainable development.¹⁵ There is a need for improved training for young people in order to meet the skills gap in low carbon industries so as to enable local authorities and other service-providers to meet their targets in terms of reducing emissions for example. Researchers from the CLES also found that many local authorities are already moving towards becoming low carbon, particularly in light of pressure to improve efficiency and demonstrate better public procurement.
- 3.5 Some academics such as Raquel Pinderhughes believe that 'green collar jobs', in industries such as recycling, could provide a living wage for those who may have previously experienced barriers to employment. With low barriers to entry, outcomes can be improved through on the job training, with much potential for progression in this growing sector.¹⁶ The CLES recommends that skills development for a low carbon economy should focus on "*lower level skills such as installation, sales and marketing, and maintenance.*"¹⁷ O' Riordan suggests businesses should be skilling

¹⁰ new economics foundation (2008) A Green New Deal (nef, London)

¹¹ LGA (2009) Creating green jobs: Developing local low-carbon economies (LGA: London), cited in The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change', p.11

¹² BERR & DIUS (2008) 'Manufacturing: New Challenges, new opportunities', BERR, London, referenced in The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change', p.22

¹³ The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change'

¹⁴ The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change' <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/pdf/Green%20skills%20Final%20Report,%20Aug%2009.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2010)

¹⁵ The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change'

¹⁶ Pinderhughes, R. (2007) 'Green Collar Jobs – an analysis of the capacity of green businesses to provide high quality jobs for men and women with barriers to employment', cited in The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change'

¹⁷ Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change' , p.28

people up as part of their corporate social responsibility portfolio, for example by training local people in improving cavity wall insulation to benefit low income homes.¹⁸

- 3.6 Improving young people's outcomes need not be to the detriment of the environment - in fact synergistic outcomes are attainable. Sustainable development entails balancing the need for a thriving economy and a good quality of life without forfeiting our environment for the future. 'A *Green New Deal*' written by the new economics foundation (nef) highlights the potential for a 'carbon army' to be involved in an environmental reconstruction programme, but this would of course also require efforts to train, educate and improve outcomes for those who chose to participate to ensure they were fully equipped to take part.¹⁹
- 3.7 There are several examples of sustainable development approaches that have improved outcomes, and have proven helpful in developing young people's skills, as well as leading to more positive attitudes about future engagement with work. Skills and attitude change can lead to enhanced employability and future prospects. There is concern that not all courses will lead to formal accreditation. However short courses do appeal to a variety of young people and can serve as a route back into education for some. In their 'Behaviour Change' report BTCV, an international volunteering organisation supporting conservation initiatives in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, highlight that of the 8000 people who took part in their Employment programme over the course of one year, almost 2000 of these gained full-time work afterwards.²⁰
- 3.8 To help young people succeed in education and learning requires the provision of a range of different learning opportunities as well as the acceptance that some young people will need to be supported outside of a traditional classroom setting to succeed fully in education and learning.
- 3.9 It is also important to note that not all education is measurable through qualifications as one evaluation report from Warwickshire Children and Voluntary Youth Services found. The young people took part in a four-week course where they learned woodland survival skills, such as building shelters and making fires. Recruitment material was produced by Groundwork who then sent the information to Connexions who recruited participants through their 'one stop shop' and via telephone calls to individuals. The material contained pictures of previous courses and information relating to the course aims and objectives. According to the report the young people who took part already had some experience in "*either woodland survival skills, basic army training or at a minimum, an interest in the outdoors.*" They took part in a week-long residential to use their newly acquired skills. The youth worker explains in the report how the young people, "*learnt that it is possible to live away from friends and family, without forms of entertainment such as the television, radio or computers and in fact came up with alternatives to these such as making their own entertainment through music, games, and stories and so on.*"²¹
- 3.10 Furthermore, training and employment must keep up with the changes in the job market as it moves ever further from traditional industrial employment towards the service industry and the new green economy.

¹⁸ O'Riordan, T. (no date cited), 'Climate Change and Business Response' CSERGE Working Paper GEC 2000-24 (CSERGE, TXU Europe), cited in The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change'

¹⁹ new economics foundation (2008) A Green New Deal (nef, London), cited in The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2009) 'Developing New Skills to address the challenge of climate change'

²⁰ BTCV (2008) Inspiring people, improving places. The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV, accessed from <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/BehaviourChange.pdf>

²¹ Connexions NEET's Bushcraft Project in partnership with Groundwork – Evaluation Report <http://www.warkscvys.org.uk/sites/www.warkscvys.org.uk/files/Connexions%20bushcraft%20course%20FINAL%20edited%20report.pdf>

- 3.11 One report from the International Labour Organization estimated, *“In 2015 an estimated 660 million young people will be either working or looking for work - an increase of 7.5 per cent over the number of young people in the labour force in 2003 (614 million). The youth labour force is expected to continue to decrease in industrialized countries (an overall fall of 7.2 million youth between 2003 and 2015) and to increase in less developed regions.”*²²
- 3.12 Despite recent trends towards youth unemployment there is also a growing recognition that youth employment can help achieve sustainable development and boost the economy. As with many of the categories examined here the benefits work in both directions. As the ILO report notes, *“Investing in young people and their employment entails significant benefits for both society and the young people themselves, in relation to issues such as health, commitment to democracy, security and political stability, which can transcend state boundaries and spill over into other countries and regions.”*²³
- 3.13 A growing proportion of young people are particularly interested in working for socially responsible companies and for many pursuing a career in climate change is an appealing prospect. Surveys suggest that young people do consider sustainable development when making decisions about future employment. In one such survey on behalf of the volunteering charity v, which was carried out to ascertain young people’s views on the environment and the likelihood of them getting involved through volunteering, over two thirds (68%) of respondents stated it was fairly or very important for them to work for a socially responsible organisation and over a third (36%) claimed they would be very or fairly interested in a career around climate change issues – older young people were particularly keen on this possibility.²⁴
- 3.14 There is some evidence to suggest that if young people can be supported to find high-quality, long-lasting work with transferable skills their health outcomes will also improve. Kieselbach reports that young unemployed people are more prone to health-related problems, both physical and mental.²⁵ Youth employment was a challenge for policy makers even before the economic turbulence of recent years. The situation has worsened due to the fact that young people are often the hardest hit during times of recession – *“prospects of securing full, productive and freely chosen employment have not improved.”* A sustainable development approach is required and is increasingly recognised as the solution to the problem. Chawla writes, *“Work – when it is not exploitative – can also be a means through which children learn about their environment and feel a valued part of their societies.”*²⁶ The ILO report states, *“achieving decent and productive work for young people entails long-term action on a range of economic and social policies.”*
- 3.15 Efforts to create a sustainable economy will improve the availability, location and level of pay available for young people. Community development and regeneration is likely to make a tremendous difference in areas that have suffered from declining industries. Better local opportunities may help to decrease poverty and enable those young people trapped in the cycle of deprivation to escape low family incomes and potentially avoid future reliance on benefits by developing functional skills. Efforts to have regard to the welfare of young people must also

²² Rosas, G.; Rossignotti, G. (2005) “Starting the New Millennium Right: Decent Employment for Young People”, International Labour Review, Vol. 144: 2, pp. 139 -60

²³ Rosas, G.; Rossignotti, G. (2005) “Starting the New Millennium Right: Decent Employment for Young People”, International Labour Review, Vol. 144: 2, pp. 139 -60

²⁴ Ellison, G, Satara T (2009) Climate Squad: Young people’s views on climate change (on behalf of v)

²⁵ Kieselbach, T. (2000) “Long-term unemployment among young people in Europe: A qualitative comparative study for psychology of work, unemployment and health” (IPG). Paper presented to ihc EU Cluster Workshop on “Unemployment. Work and Welfare”. European Commission, Brussels. 9-11 Nov. 2000.

²⁶ Chawla (2002) “Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment”: integrating children and youth into human settlement development” Environment & Urbanization Vol 14 No 2 October 2002
<http://www.unesco.org/most/guic/euchawla.pdf>

consider the use of resources and ways in which products are produced for young people's consumption.

- 3.16 Some courses based on the principles of sustainable development can meet the needs of young people and a low-carbon economy but the surprising lack of accreditation involved in some environmental conservation practice for young people has been noted in the literature. According to Leyshon the internal accreditation available on programmes helps young people build self-esteem but may not immediately provide the necessary qualifications for labour market participation.²⁷ There is evidence that participants do gain from involvement in schemes which act as a stepping-stone to further courses. Young people who may not have had experience of work can gain a valuable introduction as well as other qualifications such as health and safety, or first aid.
- 3.17 For example, the Groundwork programme 'Dig IT' engages young people who are not in employment, education or training for one day a week over six weeks, teaching them landscaping skills such as the use of power tools and fencing.²⁸ The evaluation reports greater confidence, timekeeping, leadership qualities, perseverance, motivation and tolerance. Not only did the young people gain OCN Level 1 in 'Woodland Survival Skills' their familiarity with the Connexions 'One Stop Shop' increased so that they can now access the centre more easily. Another innovative scheme is the Young Pioneers project, which was set up by young people and provides disengaged young people with an opportunity to undertake short courses and other training. As well as taking part in 'stay safe' and 'be healthy' programmes, young people can also train to be 'carbon detectives' and carry out audits on local businesses. This is an example of how training and empowerment can improve outcomes.²⁹
- 3.18 Getting involved in sustainable community projects can help young people learn new skills. For example one Action for Children project Renfrewshire Moving On has recently undertaken 'challenge projects'. The challenges are community based projects that involve the young people getting involved in a project that directly contributes to improving their own community environment. A recent evaluation report by Families Outside explains that the young people who sign up to work with Moving On range in age from 17 – 21: *"Just under half of the clients (10 people, or 43%) had served a prison sentence before, while just over a third (9 people or 39%) were serving prison sentences for the first time. The remaining fifth of the clients were on remand."*³⁰ The report states: *"For those who had previously been in custody, about a third (30%) had served sentences of less than six months, though the remainder had already served sentences of over a year, with three people (30%) previously serving sentences of over two years. Seven of these 10 clients (70%) had stayed out of prison for two months or less between their current and previous periods of custody, with none remaining out of custody for more than eight months. Arguably this group could be described as 'revolving door' offenders - usually the most problematic population to work with due to their chaotic lifestyles."*
- 3.19 The report explains how *"Project staff initially ensure that the basic needs of the young men are met, such as housing, benefits, and health requirements, through working with local partners including Renfrewshire Council and other voluntary organisations. They then work to address issues known to be relevant to offending such as low self-esteem, poor communication skills, and*

²⁷ ESRC (RES-182-25-0007): 'Environmental Skills and Knowledges for sustainable rural communities: problems and prospects for the inclusion of young people'.

²⁸ More information available <http://www.groundworknw.org.uk/project.asp?action=view&id=290>.

²⁹ For more information see <http://www.youngpioneers.org/>

³⁰ Nugent, B; Loucks, N (2009) 'Moving On' Renfrewshire – Young Offender Resettlement Project: The first six months, Families outside (on behalf of the Robertson Trust), p2

*anger management.*³¹ This is where the sustainable development approach can be a useful method - an example of which is the 'challenge projects' young people are supported to take part in. A recent challenge involved young people landscaping the grounds of a residential community home for the elderly. Young people were required to budget, undertake price comparisons, develop trade skills and undertake health and safety training before commencing with the challenge. The young people built a portfolio of evidence as they went along and this is used to demonstrate experience and competency which can be shown to prospective employers.³²

- 3.20 There are many programmes where sustainable development projects provide an opportunity for young people to work together as young advisors or young leaders, meeting others and gaining valuable interpersonal and practical skills and training.
- 3.21 Ranasinghe argues that vocational training in sustainable development has an important part to play.³³ It is argued that training and employment opportunities resulting from sustainable development initiatives can be beneficial to young people who are outside the social and economic mainstream in both the developing and industrialised world. "*The study of their own local environment and lives can motivate young people to enjoy practising skills of writing, reading, drawing, measuring, calculating, designing and public speaking through approaches that make learning relevant and applied.*"³⁴

³¹ Nugent, B; Loucks, N (2009) 'Moving On' Renfrewshire – Young Offender Resettlement Project: The first six months, Families outside (on behalf of the Robertson Trust), p1

³² Hewitt-Craft, L. (2009) 'Evaluation of young people's services', Action for Children

³³ Ranasinghe T. (2005) "Youth in the face of vocational agricultural training for sustainable development: whether to push forward or pull back" International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology, Vol. 12: 4, pp. 399 – 406.

³⁴ Chawla (2002) "Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment": integrating children and youth into human settlement development" Environment & Urbanization Vol 14 No 2 October 2002
<http://www.unesco.org/most/guic/euchawla.pdf>

Developmental outcomes: ‘develop resilience and wider social and emotional skills’

- Sustainable development approaches improve young people's wellbeing through developing resilience and functioning abilities
 - Experience of the natural world enhances young people's development – there is a danger that this is decreasing which needs to be turned around
 - Citizenship is enhanced through active community participation – the best outcomes are achieved when young people are engaged, understand what their involvement seeks to achieve and have a clear sense of agency
- 3.22 One important measurement of young people's wellbeing is their ability to attain the capabilities required to function well in life, so that they are ready to be confident and competent individuals with the psychological characteristics required to play their part - in a team at school or work for example. Young people's mental health and psychological wellbeing plays a key role in their personal and social development, as the Government acknowledges in the child health strategy, ‘*Healthy lives, Brighter futures*’.³⁵ It is seen as the foundation upon which other choices depend.
- 3.23 In 1998, the Health Education Authority defined ‘mental health’ as: “... *the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others’ worth.*”³⁶
- 3.24 Resilience concerns the ability to ‘bounce back’. According to Rutter (1985) and Stein (2005) resilience involves doing well against the odds, coping, and recovering. Masten et al (1990) define resilience as “*the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances*”.³⁷ Building resilience is considered a crucial building block for young people. Action for Children has identified key necessities required in order to develop resilience: “*multifaceted programmes that consider factors across child, family and community arenas; programmes that address risks, assets and resilience processes; and targets that include the development of secure relationships and wider supportive relationships, self-esteem and mastery, and provision of positive nursery and school or community experiences.*”³⁸
- 3.25 Research shows how positive self-esteem is vital for young people's emotional well-being. This is most likely to be promoted through a relationship with a lasting and trusted person, whether a professional or not. Frequently the development of improved self-esteem is related to a sense of achievement that an excluded or vulnerable child might get from an activity, often practical and tangible in nature. The interdependence of emotional well-being with other areas of health and wellbeing must be recognised. Sustainable development approaches can certainly make a valuable contribution to this wider task.
- 3.26 To determine the impact sustainable development approaches have on young people's outcomes, it is important to consider how experiences of the natural world and enhancing citizenship through active participation affect their development. This could be in terms of change in behaviour or aspiration, the development of psychological character traits including confidence and self-esteem, as well as leadership and thinking-skills such as decision-making, reasoning, questioning and problem solving. This development might have an impact on other outcomes,

³⁵ Department of Health (2009) ‘Healthy lives, brighter futures – The strategy for children and young people's health’

³⁶ Health Education Authority (1997) *Mental Health Promotion: A Quality Framework*. London: HEA

³⁷ Action for Children (2007) *Literature Review: Resilience in Children and Young People* accessed from <http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/uploads/media/36/1582.pdf>

³⁸ NCH (2007) *Literature Review: Resilience in Children and Young People*

such as social and educational outcomes, and could lead to re-engagement with education for example. How young people best develop resilience and social skills is debatable. The value of different initiatives (covering a huge range, from outdoor activities, wilderness therapy to 'boot camps') is given different weight in different sources.

- 3.27 There is some concern among academics that young people have less experience of nature than previous generations, described by Pyle as the '*extinction of experience*'.³⁹ This is despite the fact that numerous academics have pointed to the benefits of natural environments on developmental outcomes. In their recent report '*Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*' Pretty et al. refer to various studies that have demonstrated that exercise in the presence of nature can influence behavioural choice.⁴⁰ There are many advocates of wild play and adventure activity as being the best way to improve developmental outcomes. The same report also cites a study from Hein that found that free play in natural environments can increase social interactions and promote learning aptitude.⁴¹
- 3.28 Studies suggest that the incorporation of green school grounds can improve cognitive development and provide a space to problem solve and think critically and creatively. It has also been suggested that outdoor education can lead to improved behaviour. Sibley and Etnier conducted a meta-analysis to examine the results of studies on physical activity and cognition in children. The statistical review of the literature found a significant positive relationship between cognitive functioning in children and physical activity.⁴² Other research has demonstrated that outdoor learning and fieldwork can elicit improvement in other areas, cited by Pretty et al. to include "*attitudes, beliefs, self-perceptions, interpersonal social skills, and memory creation and retention.*"⁴³ Sustainable development projects can help pupils become more confident in their own decisions. Pretty et al. also report positive outcomes from the establishment of forest schools arguing: "*Participation in the forest school improves children's confidence, well-being and self-esteem, motivates them to learn and encourages pride in, and ownership of, their local environment.*"⁴⁴
- 3.29 There is also evidence that sustainable development approaches can improve outcomes in other educational settings. One Ofsted report cautions us not to make a strong link between education for sustainable development and improved attainment without more detailed research, but it does reference many teachers who noted improvements in their schools as a result of work on sustainable development including: "*higher levels of commitment and engagement and improved*

³⁹ Pyle R M (2003) Nature matrix: reconnecting people and nature. *Oryx* 37:206–214

⁴⁰ Kuo F E, Sullivan W C, Coley R L and Brunson L. 1998. Fertile Ground for Community: Inner-City Neighbourhood Common Spaces. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 26(6), 823-51; Maas J, Verheij RA, Groenewegen PP, De Vries S and Spreeuwenberg P. 2006. Green space, urbanity, and health: how strong is the relation? *Journal Epidemiology Community Health* 60, 587-92; Mitchell R and Popham F. 2008. Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study. *The Lancet* 372, 1655-1660, in Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK

⁴¹ Hein G. 1991. Constructivist learning theory. Institute for Inquiry <http://www.exploratorium.edu/ifi/resources/constructivistlearning.html>, in Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK

⁴² Sibley, Etnier (2003). Physical activity and cognition – meta-analysis. *Pediatric. Exercise Science* 15, pp. 243-56

⁴³ Berman M C, Jonides J and Kaplan S. 2008. The cognitive benefits of interacting with nature. *Psychological Science* 19, 1207-1212; Rickinson M, Dillon J, Teamey K, Morris M, Choi M, Sanders D and Benefield P. 2004. *A review of research on outdoor learning*. Field Studies Council, Shrewsbury

⁴⁴ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK, p18

performance on the part of their pupils, perhaps due to their developing more critical thinking skills, or the realisation by some pupils that 'their efforts could lead to change'."⁴⁵ Some teachers also noted that pupils' attitudes and willingness to accept responsibility changed, occasionally linking this to improved behaviour and attendance. For some pupils it was the opportunity to excel at activities that were outside of the normal course of the curriculum, such as working in a biodiversity garden, that provided the opportunity to flourish.

- 3.30 Pretty et al. detail the growing 'green care' movement of therapeutic interventions for vulnerable young people based in nature which includes ecotherapy, care farming, wilderness therapy, 'Social and Therapeutic Horticulture' and 'Animal-Assisted Interventions'.⁴⁶ Wilderness therapy has existed in the US for many years and is a systematic treatment intervention, often for young people with behavioural problems, that takes place in a remote outdoor setting. Although the impact of wilderness therapy is contested by some,⁴⁷ other researchers have reported that outdoor activities in a controlled environment can improve the lives of young people with drug addiction and challenging behaviour, reducing the rates of depression, attempted suicide and homelessness.⁴⁸
- 3.31 Pretty et al. describe a typical wilderness therapy programme consisting of healthy activities in a safe outdoor environment, therapy sessions, skill training, group-living, time for reflection and 'back-to-basics' living which separates disaffected young people from negative influences they may have.⁴⁹ Critically they state that, "*spending time in a natural setting enables participants to access those aspects of their self that may elude them in more conventional personal development or therapeutic settings.*" This can then lead to more optimistic self-perceptions and foster more personal and social responsibility.
- 3.32 Outcome indicators were positive for 'The TurnAround 2007 Project' which included elements of wilderness therapy, such as 'wilderness trails' and helped vulnerable young people at risk in social care in Essex. Improvements were observed in self-esteem and 'connectedness-to-nature' scores. Positive changes were also observed in terms of behaviour management and expressing emotions constructively. It is reported that, "*as the programme progressed the frequency of negative events reduced, criminal activity declined, substance abuse improved and participants displayed less anti-social behaviour.*"⁵⁰
- 3.33 In their review of research on the role and value of outdoor adventure in young people's personal and social development Barrett and Greenaway write, "*Small group participation in enjoyable outdoor adventure appears to improve individual socialisation which in turn may assist conflict resolution. Shared participation in challenging adventure activities can result in improved*

⁴⁵ Ofsted (2009) Education for sustainable development: improving schools – improving lives, p20

⁴⁶ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK

⁴⁷ The Effectiveness of Wilderness Adventure Therapy Programs for Young People Involved in the Juvenile Justice System Christopher D. Jones, LMSW

⁴⁸ Allen-Craig, S presented at The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's International Adventure Therapy Conference, as reported in Children and Young People Now <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/bulletins/Youth-Work-Weekly/news/936945/?DCMP=EMC-YouthWorkWeekly>

⁴⁹ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/ces/occasionalpapers/Nature%20Childhood%20and%20Health%20iCES%20Occ%20Paper%202009-2%20FINAL.pdf>

⁵⁰ Peacock J, Hine R and Pretty J. (2008) *The TurnAround 2007 Project*. University of Essex, Report for the Wilderness Foundation

understanding, trust and communication between young participants and between young people and adult staff.” They warn however that there are anecdotal suggestions of instances where outdoor adventure programmes have been counterproductive and suggest, “further research to determine the programme settings, styles and activities, and the characteristics, qualities and levels of involvement of staff that help to achieve desired outcomes.”⁵¹

- 3.34 It is important to understand the role community participation plays in developing citizenship. Much has been written about young people’s development as active and responsible citizens – a process which is learned and practised.⁵² There are many examples of participative and empowering global youth work that enable young people to engage at a rate and direction they determine themselves. There are also case studies of eco schools that involve young people in the development of sustainable communities.⁵³
- 3.35 With all participatory activity, beneficial outcomes are attained only if young people have a sense of agency, a clear understanding of the project’s aims and limits and their views are taken seriously. There may be variation in outcomes for those young people participating voluntarily and those mandated to take part in a programme. The literature emphasises the importance of ensuring engagement is based on young people’s personal and social development. Meaningful participation can effectively improve outcomes, transform power relations and improve communities. As Limb and Taylor explain, “*Participatory structures, such as youth councils, provide a way of engaging young people within their communities, but only if they are taken seriously by adults.*”⁵⁴
- 3.36 Leyshon notes the active thinking and knowledge acquisition that takes place during most conservation activity. He also draws a distinction between voluntary and mandated involvement in programmes alerting us to the possibility that there may be varying outcomes for different young people. Leyshon warns that sometimes the reason for conservation activities are not always fully explained to participants, which can be particularly damaging if the activity is seen as routine physical activity such as digging holes or building footpaths for example. The study concludes with a powerful recommendation: “*...to build capacity in the environmental volunteering sector and produce life-long environmental aspirants, requires a shift in emphasis from the delivery of pedagogic or disciplinary (coercion) modes of engagement for ready-made communities of young people to one based on young people’s personal and social development.*”⁵⁵
- 3.37 As the foreword of a manual for participation states, “*Apart from involving young people in making improvements to the places where they live, one of the most effective strategies for creating better cities is through the actual process of participation: helping young people to listen to one another, to respect differences of opinion, and to find common ground; developing their capacities for critical thinking, evaluation and reflection; supporting their processes of discovery, awareness building, and collective problem-solving; and helping them develop the knowledge*

⁵¹ Barrett, J; Greenaway, R (1995) the role and value of outdoor adventure in young people’s personal and social development - A Review of Research, commissioned by the Foundation for Outdoor Adventure
<http://reviewing.co.uk/wad.htm>

⁵² See for example Hart, R. (1997), *Children’s Participation*, Earthscan/UNICEF, London

⁵³ Eco-schools: The Caledonian Environment Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University – *The Role of Young People in Developing Sustainable Communities*

⁵⁴ Limb, Matthews, Taylor (2000) ‘Exploring the *Fourth Environment*: Young People’s Use of Place and Views on Their Environment’ (Briefing paper)

<http://www.hull.ac.uk/children5to16programme/details/matthews.htm> (accessed 1 February 2010)

⁵⁵ Leyshon, Michael (2008). *Environmental Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Rural Communities: Problems and Prospects for the Inclusion of Young People: Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report, RES-182-25-0007*. Swindon: ESRC

*and skills for making a difference in their world.”*⁵⁶

- 3.38 Chawla believes sustainable settlement planning provides young people with the ‘lifelong habits of environmental interest’ and ‘formal skills of democratic citizenship’, drawing attention to the fact that local initiatives impact strongly on young people’s lives: “...*young people have insight, creativity and thoughts to contribute to the shaping of their cities and towns. At the same time, they learn the habits and practices of democratic government and environmental care.*”⁵⁷
- 3.39 A case study exploring the participation of 9 -15 year olds in local government in Barra Mansa, a municipality in Rio de Janeiro, found that not only did their contribution improve neighbourhood quality, but the involvement provided the young people with an apprenticeship in active citizenship.⁵⁸
- 3.40 Researchers looking at the association of family, school, and community risk found that “*healthy adolescent development has roots in multiple contexts. Youth who were involved in contexts that provided positive resources from important others (ie, parents, schools, and communities) not only were less likely to exhibit negative outcomes, but also were more likely to show evidence of positive development. These findings provide important implications for intervention and prevention efforts and, more generally, for the promotion of positive, competent, and healthy youth development.*”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Driskell, D. in collaboration with members of the Growing Up in Cities Project (2002), “Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth. A manual for participation, Earthscan Publications, London.

⁵⁷ Chawla (2002) “Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment”: integrating children and youth into human settlement development” Environment & Urbanization Vol 14 No 2 October 2002
<http://www.unesco.org/most/guic/euchawla.pdf>

⁵⁸ Guerra, E. (2002), “Citizenship knows no age; children’s participation in the governance and municipal budget of Barra Mansa, Brazil”, Environment & Urbanization Vol. 14: 2, pp 71–84

⁵⁹ Youngblade et al. (2007) “Risk and promotive factors in families, schools, and communities: A contextual model of positive youth development in adolescence” Pediatrics, Vol. 119, pp. S46 – S53

Social outcomes: *'Can make a real contribution to their communities and wider society'*

- Young people gain confidence, motivation, empathy, respect, responsibility and other 'soft skills' such as working together as part of a team through sustainable development initiatives
- Incorporating young people's requirements into community development creates an effective mechanism for neighbourhood improvement
- Efforts to improve community cohesion are enhanced through sustainable development approaches

- 3.41 In 2007 the Government launched *'Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities'*, designed to transform the available facilities for young people, providing access to structured positive activities. Young people can become interested and engaged in projects looking at sustainable development issues. Furthermore sustainable development approaches can lead to behaviour change, for example an increase in awareness of how individual actions have an accumulative effect. There is evidence of positive outcomes from some programmes including young people valuing team work more. There is also evidence to suggest that residential opportunities have a great impact on young people, with volunteering considered to have a particularly positive effect on young people. Researchers emphasise the impact human relations have on young people's health and wellbeing and explore how community building work can lead to *'reduced high risk behaviours and increased thriving behaviours'*.⁶⁰
- 3.42 The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) in their report *'Shaping engaged, cohesive and happy communities: The role of Groundwork – final report'* draws our attention to the results of the 2008 Place Survey, which looks at identified challenges that communities in the UK face in terms of community cohesion, civic and democratic engagement and active citizenship. However the report finds a variety of projects taking a sustainable development approach that improve outcomes for young people by taking what they outline as four key approaches: improving cohesion between communities, generations and cultures; promoting community engagement, fostering neighbourhood improvement and promoting democratic involvement and active citizenship. To explain how community cohesion approaches can improve outcomes, they state, *"simply being involved in a community activity and working alongside people from different cultural or generational backgrounds is likely to promote greater understanding between different groups."*⁶¹ They also explain that community engagement can influence the extent to which people feel influential in shaping their local area, which can alter their perceptions of where they live: *"By making areas more attractive and safer, individuals are likely to feel a stronger attachment to, and greater satisfaction with, their community."*⁶² Furthermore the research identified that involvement in local democratic decision-making could enhance the attachment individuals felt to the place where they live.
- 3.43 The researchers find examples of each of the four approaches improving outcomes on their own, but recommend using all four approaches together as being particularly effective. They stress the value of community consultation and involving local residents in planning to ensure sustainable development. They also note that targeted approaches often make the objectives of a

⁶⁰ Mannes M., Roehlkepartain E., Benson P. (2005) 'Unleashing the power of community to strengthen the well-being of children, youth and families: an asset-building approach', *Child Welfare*, pp 233 - 250

⁶¹ The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2009) 'Shaping engaged, cohesive and happy communities: the role of Groundwork – final report', p. 13

⁶² The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2009) 'Shaping engaged, cohesive and happy communities: the role of Groundwork – final report', p. 19

sustainable development project more clear and focused. They provide the example of a 'Bumps and Babies Garden Project' to improve young parents' immediate environment as an example of when this approach proved itself to be very successful. The creation of a garden on underused land in a housing scheme improved the residents' communal space, which led to increased socialising, a healthier lifestyle and less isolation as new residents were better integrated and could socialize with other young parents.⁶³

- 3.44 Studies are emerging on young people's propensity for altruism and pro-social behaviour⁶⁴ and it may be useful to take some of the tools for measuring the concerns of young people personally, locally and globally to evaluate the contribution of sustainable development approaches to these goals. There are many programmes through which young people can gain empathy, respect and responsibility through sustainable development projects. Global Youth Work, for example, could be used to encourage a critical understanding of the links between the personal, local and global environment and meet a range of positive outcomes.⁶⁵ A study by John Diamond in Manchester explored how youth workers can facilitate the involvement of all young people in their local neighbourhood, however unlikely they may initially appear to be as participants.⁶⁶ An Ofsted report into the sustainable development approaches in schools found the most successful work for young people was that which was linked to action.⁶⁷ This sometimes involved developing links with local councillors, other organisations or collaborating with other schools, occasionally abroad.
- 3.45 Sustainable development often provides opportunities for communities to work together on a joint goal or 'link-up and link-in'⁶⁸ with local residents – public-spiritedness is seen to increase, while local police report a reduction in the levels of juvenile crime. The Eastfeast initiative 'links up' young people, growers, food producers and allotment holders – they work together on an allotment over the seasons and culminate the process in a community feast.⁶⁹ Improvements in the young people's confidence to make decisions about learning have been attributed to the 'shared learning ethos' that develops inside and outside the formal school boundaries. Care farming is also given as an example of a sustainable development approach that can transform lives through its partnership between participants, farmers and providers of health, social or educational services.⁷⁰

⁶³ For more examples of successful Neighbourhood improvement programmes please see The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) (2009) 'Shaping engaged, cohesive and happy communities: the role of Groundwork – final report', Table 7, p.20

⁶⁴ Allen, K, Hollingworth, S., Minty S. (journal articles forthcoming) 'Young People's Propensity to Behave Pro-socially and Altruistically towards Others' – more details on the study available at <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/ipse/research-projects/completed-projects/p89.cfm>

⁶⁵ Cotton, N., (2009) 'Global Youth Work in the UK: Research Report' Here and There Consultancy on behalf of DEA <http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/dea/documents/GYW%20Research%20Report%20May09.pdf>

⁶⁶ Diamond, J. 'Working with young people in regeneration: lessons from Manchester', *Local Governance* 28(4), pp 299 - 309

⁶⁷ Ofsted (2009) 'Education for sustainable development. Improving schools – improving lives', p13, p17 <https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Education-for-sustainable-development-improving-schools-improving-lives>

⁶⁸ 'Link-up and link-in' is the name given to one of the six key service pathways leading to children's psychological and social wellbeing identified by the new economics foundation. For more information see Aked, J. (2009) 'Backing the Future – why investing in children is good for us all', Action for Children and the new economics foundation

⁶⁹ Pretty et al. (2009) 'Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways', interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p19 <http://www.essex.ac.uk/ces/occasionalpapers/Nature%20Childhood%20and%20Health%20iCES%20Occ%20Paper%202009-2%20FINAL.pdf>

⁷⁰ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK, p20

- 3.46 Interesting research is also underway at the University of Exeter to explore the extent to which the social inclusion of young people in rural communities can be improved through a community development approach. The researchers will be looking for ways in which young people can be included in employment, housing and transport facilities in rural villages. This demonstrates again the need for the outcomes of young people to be considered throughout the planning process, to ensure that the structures of a locality are best designed to incorporate young people's requirements. Unless this is so it is unlikely that young people will be supported to reach their potential.⁷¹ Dr. Leyshon is also carrying out research which aims to connect the development of environmental skills with countryside regeneration, asking how community engagement is being developed to ensure that young people can develop a sense of responsibility for their locales and have the opportunity to live and work there.⁷²
- 3.47 There is also some evidence to suggest that environmental opportunities impact positively on young people's behaviour, attitudes, knowledge and skills. This was the finding from an evaluation of one-day and residential opportunities for young people aged 14-25 run by the "Green Team".⁷³ The key findings were that young people gained knowledge about maintaining green spaces as a by-product of attitudinal shifts about how individual actions have an accumulative effect, as well as an increased emphasis in the value of team work. BTCV who also organise environmental volunteering projects have identified positive outcomes through their programmes. Nine out of ten young people who took part in their volunteering programme reported having learnt something new, with 98% reporting that they would like to repeat the experience. The report outlines how environmental volunteering is a particularly effective way to integrate socially disadvantaged groups, including young people at risk. The advantages of volunteering with regards to behaviour change are considered to result from the voluntary nature of the activity, the use of practical action, a sustained activity and empowerment – enabling volunteers to develop confidence, motivation, knowledge and skills. According to the report, the young people who took part in BTCV's 'Tasty' programme worked outside planting trees, dry stone walling and hedge laying, experiencing pride as a result of achieving something worthwhile.⁷⁴
- 3.48 The European Centre for Migration and Social Care (MASC) at the University of Kent evaluated BTCV's partnership with Kent County Council and the Kent High Weald Project.⁷⁵ The report shows that asylum seeking young people gained benefits from the opportunity to take part in conservation activities during their time at a reception centre. The young people acquired transferable skills in countryside management techniques, and knowledge of working practices such as health and safety training, alongside accreditation for their achievements. Notable increases in self-esteem and confidence were observed and the outdoor work in the countryside was deemed to have had positive effects on the young people's physical and mental health. For

⁷¹ Leyshon M., (2003 – ongoing) A Life in the Country: Enabling Rural Futures for Young People http://www.exeter.ac.uk/cornwall/academic_departments/geography/research/staff-and-research-profiles/michael_leyshon_research.shtml

⁷² Leyshon, M. (forthcoming) Environmental Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Rural Communities: Problems and Prospects for the Inclusion of Young

⁷³ Macrae, R., Reilly C. (2007) 'Research summaries - young people and environmental volunteering' Volunteer Development Scotland, Centre for Excellence <http://www.vds.org.uk/Resources/Environment%20and%20Youth.pdf>

⁷⁴ Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTVC <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/BehaviourChange.pdf>

⁷⁵ Evaluation Report of 'Around the Weald' Project (2004-2007) A partnership project between BTCV, Kent High Weald Project and Kent County Council, BTCV http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:hAxtPfoVu0J:www2.btcv.org.uk/kent_aroundtheweald.pdf+evaluation&hl=en&sig=AHIEtbrjF6f_uQq4O8KuWJ9DuNZWa7A7Vw

this particular cohort of young people there were additional gains in improved English language skills and integration with the local community.

- 3.49 BTCV also runs nearly 100 Green Gyms, which aim to provide an opportunity for exercise while taking part in an environmental project. According to academic research 'green exercise' in the presence of nature is '*predicted to foster social bonds*'.⁷⁶ In their report *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*, Pretty et al. write "*Nature is good for health; green places are good for social capital.*"⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK, p18

⁷⁷ Pretty J, Angus C, Bain M, Barton J, Gladwell V, Hine R, Pilgrim S, Sandercock S and Sellens M. 2009. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*. Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society Occasional Paper 2009-02. University of Essex, UK, p26

Health outcomes: 'Are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy'

- Exposure to nature and increased physical activities, particularly outdoors, leads to positive physical and mental health outcomes where young people are supported to make better choices
- Therapeutic programmes that reconnect young people with nature have a beneficial effect on young people's emotional wellbeing
- Community planning based upon sustainable development impacts positively upon young people's health outcomes and can reduce health inequalities

3.50 The overarching programme for the delivery of health services to children is the National Service Framework and the Every Child Matters programme. The Government's child health strategy '*Healthy lives, Brighter futures*'⁷⁸ aims to provide opportunities to improve physical and mental health, and links closely to young people's wellbeing, recognising the interdependence of outcomes. In it there is explicit recognition of the impact between wider determinants of good physical and mental health, in particular the impact of the environment in terms of the home, local neighbourhood, schools and the community on outcomes. The '*Healthy Child Programme 5–19*' (October 2009) sets out the recommended framework of universal and progressive services for children and young people to promote optimal health and wellbeing. It outlines suggested roles and responsibilities for commissioners, health, education, local authority and other partners to encourage the development of high-quality services.

3.51 Much work has focused on the mental health and well-being of young people – a review of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health services recently took place⁷⁹ and a strategy to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the youth justice system was also recently launched.⁸⁰ Across the UK, one of the key aims in all the national health strategies is to reduce the health inequalities experienced by the most vulnerable children in our society.

3.52 An influential report by Dr. William Bird highlights the links between the natural environment, biodiversity and mental health⁸¹ detailing theory which states that experience of the natural environment can improve health outcomes. Dr. Bird draws on research into 'attention restoration theory'⁸² and 'psycho-physiological stress recovery theory'⁸³ According to Dr. Bird there are over 100 studies that support the attention restoration theory, which asserts that indirect attention allows us to hold our concentration with little or no effort, thus restoring the brain for more direct attention usage. The natural environment provides the most effective location for promoting this type of indirect attention. 'Psycho-physiological stress recovery theory' is based on people

⁷⁸ Department of Health (2009) 'Healthy lives, brighter futures – The strategy for children and young people's health' http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_094400

⁷⁹ Department of Health (2008) Children and young people in mind: the final report of the national CAHMS review http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_090399

⁸⁰ Healthy children, safer communities – a strategy to promote the health and well-being of children and young people in contact with the youth justice system (2009).

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_109771

⁸¹ Bird, W. (2007) 'Natural Thinking - investigating the links between the natural environment, biodiversity and mental health' A report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

⁸² Kaplan R and Kaplan S (1995) The experience of nature: A psychological perspective. Ann Arbor, MI: Ulrich's, in Kaplan S. The restorative effects of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15, 169-182

⁸³ Ulrich RS (1983) Aesthetic and affective response to natural environment in Altman I and Wohlwill JF (Eds) *Behaviour and the Natural Environment*. New York: Plenum, pp85-125.

experiencing a reduction in stress following exposure to views of nature, which is likely to be caused by “an inherent reflex associated with the oldest part of the brain, the limbic system.”⁸⁴

- 3.53 There is evidence to suggest that contact with nature can play a key role in improving outcomes, particularly for those children with ADHD. The report alerts the reader to the worrying long-term consequences of childhood psychiatric illness, and the subsequent costs to society if these children are not given additional support. The costs to society (which might include becoming involved in crime or becoming pregnant) are estimated to be ten times higher by the age of 28 for those who had troubled childhoods.⁸⁵ Dr. Bird notes a study that found that “children undertaking outdoor activities in nature appear to improve symptoms of ADHD by 30% compared to urban outdoor activities and three fold compared to the indoor environment.”⁸⁶
- 3.54 The benefits to positive mental health outcomes from exposure to nature and physical activity have been demonstrated by many researchers.⁸⁷ In their paper ‘*Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathway*’ researchers from the University of Essex explain that it has been demonstrated that positive emotions and well-being improve health and long-term survival; the researchers draw our attention to the connection between mood and serotonin levels. A host of studies are drawn upon to demonstrate that ‘green exercise’, defined as “activity in green places (in the presence of nature)” is predicted to lead to positive health outcomes.⁸⁸ Research carried out by Mind into the benefits of ‘eco-therapy’ found growing evidence to support the further development of existing treatment options that include a natural approach, whether that be involvement in a horticultural programme or initiatives to encourage more people to take a walk in the park.⁸⁹
- 3.55 ‘Care farming’ is one example of a structured therapeutic programme where the participant is in connection with nature – it can provide improvements to physical and mental health including “increased self-esteem, enhanced well-being and beneficial changes in mood, an increase in self-confidence, trust in other people, calmness, formation of a work habit and the development of social skills and a sense of personal responsibility”⁹⁰ Care farms cater for a variety of people – according to an evaluation by the University of Essex “most care farms (83%) cater for people with learning difficulties, over half (51% of farms) provide a service for disaffected young people and 49% of farms cater for people with mental health needs.”⁹¹ In two recent studies on care

⁸⁴ Bird, W. (2007) ‘Natural Thinking - investigating the links between the natural environment, biodiversity and mental health’ A report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, p9

⁸⁵ Bird, W. (2007) ‘Natural Thinking - investigating the links between the natural environment, biodiversity and mental health’ A report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, p68

⁸⁶ Faber Taylor A, Kuo F and Sullivan W (2001) Coping with ADD. The Surprising Connection to Green Play Setting. *Environment and Behaviour*. 33 Jan 2001 pp54-77.

⁸⁷ Bingley A and Milligan C. 2004. *Climbing Trees and Building Dens: Mental health and well-being in young adults and the long-term effects of childhood play experience*. Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster; Paluska S A and Schwenk T L. 2000. Physical activity and mental health: current concepts. *Sports Medicine* 29(3):167-180 cited in Pretty et al. (2009) ‘Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways’, interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex

⁸⁸ Pretty et al. (2009) ‘Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways’, interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p24, p9

⁸⁹ Mind (2007) ‘Ecotherapy - the green agenda for mental health’ – available from http://www.mind.org.uk/help/ecominds/ecominds/mental_health_and_the_environment

⁹⁰ Pretty et al. (2009) ‘Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways’, interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p24, p5

⁹¹ Hine, R., Peacock, J., Pretty, J. (2009) Care farming in the UK: ‘Evidence and Opportunities, Department of Biological Sciences’, University of Essex, Colchester

farming Hine noted improvements in self-esteem and energy, coupled with a reduction in anger, confusion, depression, tension and fatigue.⁹²

- 3.56 As well as improvements to self-esteem, mood and stress it is clear that sustainable development approaches offer much potential to assist the government in its drive to get young people more physically active and leading healthier lifestyles. In the report '*Natural Fit*' the RSPB demonstrates that "*Outdoor activities, particularly walking, offer a cheap and accessible route to better health for all, and address many of today's pressing public health issues.*"⁹³ An example of innovative work in this area is a pilot run by Action for Children and the Ramblers Association which encouraged more families to take part in walks in their local area. The programme was evaluated by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC) based at Loughborough University and the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group (BHF HPRG) based at the University of Oxford, who found that the programme had the potential to make a significant impact on the lives of beneficiaries and conclude by making recommendations for a wider roll-out.⁹⁴ As Pretty et al. highlight high material deprivation leads to lower physical activity⁹⁵ and stress, poverty and low socio-economic status can be detrimental for mental health.⁹⁶ Efforts to improve health outcomes through sustainable approaches should focus on tackling deprivation in the bid to reduce health inequalities.
- 3.57 Community planning also has a key role to play here – if towns and transport systems are designed with active transport in mind young people will be encouraged to participate. To be effective their views must be incorporated, and taken into account, when the planning process takes place. Brunton et al. identified two interventions that are effective, promising and appropriate – namely '*the extension and improvement of cycle networks*' and '*the creation of tailored marketing messages for subsets of children, young people and parents – specifically geared to appeal to different ages, socio-economic classes, sexes and locations*'.⁹⁷
- 3.58 Additionally, there are many examples where young people's involvement in managing and growing crops in allotments was found to contribute to a variety of positive outcomes.⁹⁸ Not only do such activities increase understanding of the natural environment, they can enhance young people's development and potentially engage them with education in a fresh way. These programmes are also considered to impact on young people's eating habits and serve as a useful health promotion mechanism through the encouragement of cooking fresh produce.

⁹² Hine R, Peacock J and Pretty J. 2008b. Care farming in the UK: Contexts, benefits and links with therapeutic communities. *Int. Journal of Therapeutic Communities* 29(3); Hine, R. Peacock, J. and Pretty J. (2008a) Care Farming in the UK: Evidence and opportunities. Report for NCFI(UK). Available at: <http://www.ncfi.org.uk/documents/>

⁹³ Bird, W: 'Natural Fit – Can biodiversity and green space increase levels of physical activity?' http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Natural_fit_tcm9-133056.pdf

⁹⁴ Milton, K., Kelly, P. & Foster, C. (2009) Evaluation of the Ramblers Family Walking Programme – Furness Families Walk4Life. School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University.

⁹⁵ Lee R, Booth K, Reese-Smith J, Regan, G and Howard H. 2005. The Physical Activity Resource Assessment (PARA) instrument: Evaluating features, amenities and incivilities of physical activity resources in urban neighbourhoods. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 2, 13

⁹⁶ Mitchell R and Popham F. 2008. Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study. *The Lancet* 372, 1655-1660

⁹⁷ Brunton G, Oliver S, Oliver K, Lorenc T (2006) A Synthesis of Research Addressing Children's, Young People's and Parents' Views of Walking and Cycling for Transport. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

⁹⁸ Ofsted (2009) 'Education for sustainable development. Improving schools – improving lives' <https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Education-for-sustainable-development-improving-schools-improving-lives>

Environmental outcomes: 'Grow up in a safe and supportive environment'

- Approaches to safety and acceptable risk need to be balanced to ensure that efforts to protect young people do not prevent them from taking part in challenging activities that are beneficial
- Involving young people in the design of their local environment leads to better provision that more fully takes their needs into account
- Local planning decisions about facilities and the physical environment in urban and rural areas impact upon young people's levels of physical activity and health outcomes – sustainable development approaches reap benefits

3.59 Safeguarding remains a key priority on both the government's and the public's agendas. Over recent years the government has sought to develop a balanced approach to safeguarding that provides a comprehensive safeguarding framework whilst also recognising the importance of children and young people learning through experience, playing and taking reasonable risks. The government recognises that childhood is a time for learning and exploring, and that not only do young people need opportunities to learn about risk and how to keep themselves safe, playing and access to positive activities are essential for children's emotional development. The '*Staying Safe Action Plan*' was launched by the DfE in 2008 to improve children and young people's safety. The plan included universal safeguarding provisions to '*keep all children and young people safe and to create safe environments for them*'.⁹⁹ There has also been a commitment from the government to improve communities by providing places for children and young people to play with the introduction of the first national Play Strategy in 2008.¹⁰⁰ The DfE has also published guidance notes to protect young people from bullying in play and leisure provision.¹⁰¹

3.60 There is extensive literature on young people's relationship with place, particularly in terms of risk and their safety.¹⁰² Young people's ability to influence their surroundings has also been given much consideration. The long-term effects of improving young people's environments may be difficult to determine directly. Studies have demonstrated the significant correlation between young children's development and their neighbourhood environment.¹⁰³ There have been calls from Demos to "*reclaim the public realm with children and young people*" by making the argument that young people's needs can be aligned with other users of public space and making recommendations that could improve young people's quality of life and "*create places that are welcoming for all*".¹⁰⁴ A recent report from the University of Essex called for policy-makers to "*develop better provisions for teenage children aged 12-18 to congregate in their own communities*."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Staying Safe: Action Plan* - available at <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00151-2008&>

¹⁰⁰ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *The Play Strategy* – available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/play/downloads/PlayStrategy.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) '*Safe from bullying in play and leisure provision*'. – available at http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Safe_from_Bullying-Play_&_Leisure.pdf

¹⁰² See for example, Smith A., Rosenthal D. (1995) 'Adolescents' perceptions of their risk environments', *Journal of Adolescence* 18(2) April 1995, pp. 229 – 245, and Leonard, M. (2007) 'Trapped in spaces? Children's accounts of risky environments.' *Children and Society* 21(6), November 2007, pp 432 - 445

¹⁰³ Hin (2009), "Built environment and children's academic performance - A Hong Kong perspective", *Habitat International*, Vol. 33:1, pp. 45-51 (January 2009)

¹⁰⁴ Beunderman, J., Hannon C., Bradwell P. (2007) '*Seen and heard: reclaiming the public realm with children and young people*' London, Demos

¹⁰⁵ Pretty et al. (2009) '*Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*', interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and

- 3.61 In a project funded by the ESRC, Hugh Matthews and Melanie Limb explored young people's use of place and their views on their environment.¹⁰⁶ This large-scale qualitative investigation revealed that public outdoor places are indeed important to young people. The young people questioned considered traffic the greatest danger. More recently the perceived threat of gun and knife crime has grown as a key concern amongst young people – with resultant impact in terms of young people feeling afraid to go out or partake in community activities.¹⁰⁷ There is also evidence from the report '*Exploring the "Fourth Environment"*' that young people in rural villages often feel excluded and powerless.
- 3.62 One good example of an initiative to improve road safety was reported on by Richard Kimberlee in 2008. He found the '*Streets Ahead on Safety*' project run by Birmingham City Council encouraged young people to work with the highway authority, engineers and road safety officers to participate in decision-making around engineering plans for their local environment. The children conducted environmental audits and training sessions, increasing their knowledge about safety issues and acting as useful stakeholders in community development.¹⁰⁸
- 3.63 If we want young people to be active members of the community, spaces must be developed to be young people friendly and useable. In places where there are things to do young people are more physically active with the corresponding health benefits observable.¹⁰⁹ A recent report from Essex University echoes this finding highlighting the positive impact the built environment can have on children's physical activity through "*open space and leisure provision or negatively via increased road density perceived danger, and the presence of litter and graffiti.*"¹¹⁰ The authors also note epidemiological studies that reveal not only the association between health and green space but also note reduced recorded crime on urban estates with the '*presence of nature*'.¹¹¹ For young people, improved environments can produce behaviour change but structural development and provision of facilities alone may not be enough, For example there is research to suggest that activities in youth centres need to be structured for young people to develop skills.¹¹²
- 3.64 One of the challenges facing policy makers, practitioners and parents is how young people can lead more active lifestyles. In one recent study young people identified the following factors as key to any initiatives encouraging young people to be more active: the importance of fun, having the time to be physically active, the benefits of activity, being active with friends, the role of adults, and the importance of being able to access facilities in their neighbourhood.¹¹³ Studies

Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p10

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/ces/occasionalpapers/Nature%20Childhood%20and%20Health%20iCES%20Occ%20Paper%202009-2%20FINAL.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ Matthews, H., Limb, M. (2000) Exploring the 'Fourth Environment': young people's use of place and views on their environment (Children 5 – 16 Research Briefing <http://www.hull.ac.uk/children5to16programme/briefings.htm>)

¹⁰⁷ Action for Children (2008) 'Step Inside Our Shoes: Young people's views on gun and knife crime'

¹⁰⁸ Kimberlee, R. (2008) 'Streets ahead on safety: young people's participation in decision-making to address the European road injury 'epidemic', Health and Social Care in the Community, 16(3), pp 322-328

¹⁰⁹ Cradock et al. (2009) "Youth Destinations Associated with Objective Measures of Physical Activity in Adolescents", Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 45: 3, pp. S91 – S98 (Suppl. S)

¹¹⁰ Pretty et al. (2009) 'Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways', interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p10

¹¹¹ Pretty et al. (2009) 'Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways', interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex, p13

¹¹² Mahoney, Stattin, Lord (2004), "Unstructured youth recreation centre participation and antisocial behaviour development: Selection influences and the moderating role of antisocial peers", International Journal of Behavioral Development, Vol. 28: 6, pp. 553-560

¹¹³ Humbert, C., Bruner, S., Muhajarine, A., Girolami, O., Gryba (2008) "Using a naturalistic ecological approach to examine the factors influencing youth physical activity across grades 7 to 12", Health Education & Behaviour, Vol.

have found a relationship between the 'walkability' of the neighbourhood environment for youth and physical activity. Surveys are completed focusing on perception of local environment which are then compared to levels of self-reported activity.¹¹⁴ Again, perceptions of risk and the fear of crime impact on young people's ability to participate.

- 3.65 Access to sports facilities does not necessarily result in equal usage by all people. Limstrand investigated the interaction between characteristics of young people, their access to facilities and the characteristics of the facility.¹¹⁵ A Norwegian study found that adolescent girls used sports facilities least.¹¹⁶ Another study showed that how much physical activity girls undertook was associated with the resources within 0.75 miles of their homes.¹¹⁷ Similarly other studies have found that "*The road environment influences physical activity among youth in different ways, according to age group, sex and type of physical activity.*"¹¹⁸ There is little doubt that area-wide traffic-calming measures (for example changing the road network, road environment or introducing speed humps) reduce accidents and deaths.¹¹⁹ Findings from two hundred 20 mph zones in the UK indicate that traffic calming schemes have the potential to be even more effective. When comparing data before and after implementation, accident frequency was found to drop by about 60 per cent annually.¹²⁰
- 3.66 It is imperative that sustainable development approaches are taken in housing development. The available research evidence taken from the Families and Children Study (FACS) demonstrates that the duration of time children spend in bad housing will affect their vulnerability to poor outcomes. One report by NatCen concludes that "*interventions in housing provision for families are likely to lead to improvements in many other aspects of children's lives.*"¹²¹ These interventions may be around the development and management of outdoor play space too.
- 3.67 Many scholars have noted the link between wellbeing and the outdoors and emphasised the importance of access to nature and open green space.¹²² The location of schools in neighbourhoods can promote '*active travel*' which is physical activity undertaken through necessity. Pretty et al reference a study by Vandergrift and Yokad from 2004, which found that young people are more likely to walk to work and school if they live in dense neighbourhoods compared to those who live in areas with the most 'urban sprawl'. The researchers define sprawl

35: 2, pp.158-173

¹¹⁴ Rosenberg et al. (2009) "Neighborhood Environment Walkability Scale for Youth (NEWS-Y): Reliability and relationship with physical activity" Preventive Medicine, Vol. 49: 2-3, pp. 213 -218

¹¹⁵ Limstrand (2008), "Environmental characteristics relevant to young people's use of sports facilities: a review", Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, Vol. 18: 3, pp. 275 – 287

¹¹⁶ Limstrand, Rehrer, "Young people's use of sports facilities: A Norwegian study on physical activity", Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, Vol. 36: 5, pp 452 - 459 (July 2008)

¹¹⁷ Pate et al. (2008) "Physical activity and neighborhood resources in high school girls", American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 34: 5, pp. 413 - 419

¹¹⁸ Carver, Timperio, Crawford (2008) "Neighborhood road environments and physical activity among youth: The CLAN study" Journal of Urban Health – Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, Vol. 85: 4, pp. 532 – 544

¹¹⁹ Bunn, F and others (2004) 'Area-wide traffic calming for preventing traffic related injuries (Cochrane Review)', The Cochrane Library, 1 24; Elvik, R (2001) 'Area-wide urban traffic calming schemes: a meta-analysis of safety effects', Accident Analysis and Prevention, 33, 3, 327-36 [from "Traffic calming and childhood injury on the road" Highlight No. 207, National Children's Bureau 2004.]

¹²⁰ Webster, D. and Mackie, A. (1996) Review of Traffic Calming Schemes in 20 mph Zones. TRL 215 .Transport Research Laboratory

¹²¹ Barnes, M., Butt, S., Wojtek T. 'What happens to children in persistently bad housing?' (2008) National Centre for Social Research, London

¹²² Pretty et al. (2009) 'Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways', interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex (cite Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Bingley & Milligan, 2004; Thomas & Thompson, 2004; Louv, 2005; Ward-Thompson et al., 2006, 2008)

as “increases in the amount of developed land, holding population constant”. They explain how, “The sprawl effect produces new location patterns that are considerably displaced from a town center.”¹²³ This can limit transport options so that travel by car can seem the only possibility. However, considerations of sustainable development can improve urban design and therefore influence how physically active young people are.

- 3.68 As indicated in the preceding section on health, good environments can promote good health by reducing fatigue and lowering stress. More pleasant environments have been found to encourage exercise and reduce the number of people who are overweight. Furthermore, where there is more green space it has been found that there are higher levels of social capital, with better measurements of belonging and social activities. This suggests that there will be more frequent use of outdoor space, and positive interactions if planners consider the impact the local environment can have.

¹²³ Vandergrift D and Yoked T. 2004. Obesity rates, income and suburban sprawl: an analysis of US states. *Health and Place* 10, 221-229 in Pretty et al. (2009) ‘Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways’, interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES), Occasional Paper 2009-2 University of Essex , p17

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 There is convincing evidence to demonstrate that sustainable development can improve outcomes for young people. There are many ways that policy-makers and those that commission, plan and deliver services can further incorporate sustainable development into their work. To date the focus has been on improving social and economic outcomes, but it is possible, and increasingly recognised as important to deliver synergistic outcomes, which do not neglect the role of wider environmental factors.
- 4.2 Progress towards improving outcomes for young people through sustainable development is already taking place at two levels – firstly at the level of the individual in terms of their own health, development and employability and secondly to ensure the context in which they exist is most suitable to provide the structures to support these interventions, such as efforts to promote local communities and kick-start the regeneration needed to improve local environments.
- 4.3 Planners can impact on outcomes for young people through their decisions to improve local transport provision, housing and available outdoor space. It is important to involve young people in this process. Services for young people can demonstrate improved outcomes through interventions that build resilience and enhance wellbeing through giving young people a greater understanding of the wider environment of which they are a part.
- 4.4 The literature demonstrates that engagement and readiness for employability can be achieved through youth work interventions that take a sustainable development approach. This can be enhanced if young people are in a context where sustainable development considerations have influenced the design-processes of other provision. It is of little use to skill up young people without a parallel move to ensure local economies are strong and appropriate employment opportunities are available. As such for a sustainable development approach to be most effective in improving outcomes for young people a twin-track technique is required.
- 4.5 Work with young people that takes a sustainable development approach can support young people to become healthy and resilient, to achieve their aspirations and make a contribution with a sense of involvement in wider society. Outcomes will be greatest if this takes place in a setting that recognises the importance of sustainable development in the decisions made around place and provision.
- 4.6 From a comparative examination of the wider literature around wellbeing there is evidence that sustainable development approaches do improve outcomes. There is also evidence that services that take a sustainable development approach can achieve real improvements in indicators of personal wellbeing – which include emotional wellbeing, having a satisfying life, vitality, resilience and self-esteem.¹²⁴ Positive functioning (which researchers define as autonomy, competence, engagement, meaning and purpose) can also be improved through sustainable development.
- 4.7 Sustainable development approaches enhance social wellbeing, i.e. supportive relationships, trust and belonging. Sustainable development can produce a virtuous circle: not only do programmes enhance social wellbeing; they also improve personal wellbeing, which will in turn impact positively on young people developing relationships, trust and belonging.

¹²⁴ Michaelson, J., Abdallah, S., Steuer, N., Thompson, S., Marks, N (2009) National Accounts of Wellbeing – bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet, nef, London.
<http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/learn/download-report.html> (accessed 24 February 2010)

5. Next Steps – looking ahead

- 5.1 There is strong evidence to demonstrate that taking a sustainable development approach in planning can have a positive effect on the lives of young people. It is harder to assess the impact of service-level attempts to work with young people from a sustainable development outlook.
- 5.2 Many services for young people do now consider the impact of their activities on the environment but fewer use sustainable development as a guiding structure in which to frame their efforts to improve outcomes. Those projects that do have often not been evaluated on this basis and more research would be helpful in determining whether these services are more effective than other traditional youth provision in improving outcomes.
- 5.3 The goal of this literature review has been to explore the wider influence on young people's outcomes taking in the broader categories of health and personal development as well as the impact of the young person's local environment and community. It would be beneficial now to examine what difference it makes to a young person to be involved in a sustainable development project in terms of improvements to their wellbeing and positive outcomes across the life course.
- 5.4 It may be useful to take some of the tools for measuring the concerns of young people personally, locally and globally to evaluate the contribution of sustainable development approaches to these goals.
- 5.5 Policy makers and service-planners would be highly recommended to consider the impact on improving outcomes for young people that could be achieved through sustainable development approaches.
- 5.6 There is evidence to suggest that young people can benefit from involvement in projects where they co-produce their own outcomes through sustainable development approaches. Through sustainable development approaches young people can improve their local communities and take part in active positive activities and they can be supported to increase their resilience, skills and confidence so that they can fulfil their potential. Efforts to improve outcomes in this way will produce brighter employment aspirations, better functioning young people, and more pleasant communities. In order to maximise these improved outcomes investment in the infrastructure must take place, so that housing, transport, facilities and streets are designed and equipped to best meet the needs of these young people.
- 5.7 In practical terms this means involving young people in planning processes, engaging them in enjoyable and worthwhile ways. It means taking a young-person friendly approach in all decision-making at a local level, and ensuring that these commitments are made with an eye to the long-term so that young people can benefit beyond their initial involvement in improving their locale.
- 5.8 This requires a commitment to skill up young people now so that they become the ambassadors of sustainable development for the next generation.
- 5.9 Taking a sustainable development approach across all spheres of planning and supporting young people to develop skills, social responsibility and an active role in their communities can help them to achieve the best quality of life possible now without crucially having a detrimental effect on the future.

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Linking Positive Outcomes for Young People with Sustainable Development Case Studies List

	Project	Outline
1.	'Moving On' Renfrewshire Action for Children	Young men make positive changes in their lives on re-release from prison
2.	'2XL' Brathay Trust	Urban young people reduce youth crime, and develop leadership
3.	'Global Youth Action' DEA	Young people explore and take action on global issues that matter to them
4.	'Pitch 4 Change' Envision	Young people bid for delivery funding for sustainable community projects
5.	'Bikes 4 All' Groundwork Leicester	Excluded young people recycle bicycles in alternative education provision
6.	'Climate Change Champions' Groundwork London	Youth and adult community action on an urban housing estate
7.	'Walk4Life' Ramblers Association + Action for Children	Families experience the benefits of walking together
8.	'Dearne Valley Green Heart' Education' Royal Society for the Protec- tion of Birds	Students design e-media to serve the local community and environment
9.	'Forest School' ru-ok? + Brighton & Hove Youth Offending Team + Sussex Wildlife Trust	Young offenders and substance misusers experience outdoor learning
10.	'IMPACT' Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside	Young people engage through conservation volunteering
11.	'GYGSAW' + 'GreENGAuGE' Wiltshire Wildlife Trust + Wiltshire Council	Rural young people join together to engage with sustainability

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