

Think positively

Local authorities in England are required by law to deliver positive activities – The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is ready to help!

The vision of the Government's Positive Activities strategy published last year, which outlines what leisure activities for young people should look like in your area is thus: "Young people should be valued members of society, whose achievements and contributions are welcomed and celebrated. This means society viewing young people positively, not seeing them as a problem to be solved." It is a vision that The Duke of Edinburgh's Award supports – and one that you, as Award Leaders, are making a reality.

By law, local authorities now have a duty to provide positive activities for the young people in their area to do. The strategy looks at a ten-year plan for making these activities really worthwhile. Although it is an England-only strategy, there are efforts to improve the quality of provision for young people in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Luckily, by being involved in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award you are already doing everything necessary. Peter Cloke, the Director for Children and Learners, Government Office South West said: "The Government's vision of a universal service of targeted support for those who need it is one with which the Award accords".

Sadly, people who aren't involved with the Award probably don't know how spot on the work we already do is – so between us all we need to make sure that local decision makers can see how helpful the Award can be.

Empowering young people

There are three themes that run through the strategy: **Empowerment**, **Access** and **Quality**, which are all realised by the Award.

Empowerment is about creating a positive view of young people by allowing them to make decisions. The Award is based on this principle; it is all about empowering young people to make their own decisions, from their initial choice to take part to putting together their programme.

The **Access** theme focuses on places to go for everyone and engaging the hardest to reach. The Award can help because it is the only Award that is designed for every young person; a young person facing any sort of disadvantage or disengagement can achieve the same as any of their peers. This makes the Award unique and encourages over 30,000 young people experiencing significant disadvantage to take part every year.

Quality means making sure the activities for young people are excellent and run by skilled people. The Award works because skilled people from all walks of life collaborate. As a respected deliverer of training that is valued by volunteers, the Award will engage with the development of shared standards across the workforce.

There are a number of actions suggested in the strategy that the Award can help deliver. For example, there is a strong focus on supporting disadvantaged young people to do activities and influence services. When young people do the Award, they gain invaluable skills like self-confidence, leadership and teamwork that they

don't get through other methods of learning or development. These skills then help them represent not only their views but also consider those of the people around them. People doing their Award make a real difference to their communities; nationally the volunteering done by young people for their Award is worth over £13.5 million every year.

The best people to talk about their Award are young people and their leaders. Sumaiya from Huddersfield says: "It is very important for Asian young people to take part in the Award as the social skills gained mean that it's easier to fit into society".

The best time to make sure the decision makers around you appreciate the work you do, and show how the Award can help them meet their targets, is now. Why not get your Award Group to think of an unusual way to show council leaders how much work they do? Perhaps they could ask for an invitation to give a presentation to a council meeting on how their Award can help the council's targets? You can also flag this up to the decision makers in your school or youth group.

For further information on how you and the Award can help your local government to develop their strategies visit www.theaward.org/awardofficers.

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