

# Dynamic Organisations Need Engaged Staff and Informed Debate

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Welcome to the final issue of QLP-Y's *Youth Policy Review*. You will notice that, while we have retained the focus-specific sections, we have a different format from last time. This is because we felt that a newsletter format may make for easier reading, especially as policy information can sometimes be rather "dry". However, as policies themselves are fundamental in defining a course of action, then information about policies can provide a context for a course of action. Thus, despite sometimes being rather "dry," policy information is crucial to understanding workplace change.

Sometimes staff, especially staff working "on the ground", may feel that it is not necessary to be aware of policy changes: they will "do" any changes when they are asked. Additionally, some managers may not see policy information as necessary for staff below a certain grade and may feel that such information "overburdens" staff unnecessarily. This can result in staff who, whilst highly compliant, may find that their lack of understanding of the context for change makes dealing with the change more difficult. However, understanding the policy background to service change can lead to a clearer understanding of the change and is likely to be helpful in easing the transition to changed priorities and changed ways of working.

A member of public library staff once suggested to me "you don't need to have an opinion on everything". I couldn't disagree more! Indeed, I feel that a lack of opinion, may be said to be commensurate with a lack of engagement and as engaged staff are the lifeblood of a dynamic organisation, opinions are vital! All services benefit from informed discussion and debate at all levels but a lack of informed opinion is surely a very weak starting point for informed discussion, and this must be to the detriment of any service. However, an understanding of the policy background informing change can help to drive forward informed discussion.

Sometimes staff may be afraid to engage in debate because they feel that their organisation does not encourage this and that they will be perceived, negatively, as challenging. Perhaps it is time for any managers unhappy with debate to recognise that lack of debate on the part of staff does not necessarily signal engagement; that reflective practice and service development must involve challenge and debate and, ultimately, that

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the staff most ready to engage in informed debate may be some of those most committed to, and engaged with, service change.

Thus this issue of *Youth Policy Review* contains information about policy work and key initiatives in a range of areas. As it is the intention of QLP-Y to develop participants as reflective practitioners, it is hoped that *Youth Policy Review* will provide both a context for certain changes within local authority services and a starting point for informed debate. You will find that not all the work referred to contains specific reference to youth and/or to public libraries. However, awareness of work being done outside of these fields, either nationally or internationally, can inform our own work and a broad view is helpful in taking services forward.